This text was entered electronically into the application for an America 250 Community Grant. It was submitted December 16, 2024, by Dr. Carole W. Troxler as a volunteer for ACHPC and in consultation with its chair and the county planning director. 1.

Project Title Recognizing the Historic Ballpark Community

Applicant Type Government Entity

Request Amount \$7607.00 (Cost Share is \$3952.00, for project total of \$11,559.00)

Applicant/Project Sponsor Alamance County Historic Properties Commission

Contact Name Rodney Cheek, Chair

Organization Alamance County Historic Properties Commission

County Alamance

Website <u>Historic Properties Commission – Planning Department</u>

Job Title Chair, Alamance County Historic Properties Commission

E-mail <u>Rcheek3754@gmail.com</u>

Phone Number (336) 376-3754

Address Alamance County Planning Department

201 W. Elm St. Graham, NC 27253

IRS letter attached Y EIN Number

PROJECT DIRECTOR

Project Director Name James Shields

Organization African American Cultural Arts and History Center

Job Title Director

Email <u>aacahcenter@gmail.com</u>

Phone Number (336) 343-2193

Address

2381 Corporation Pkwy

Burlington, NC 27215 (physical address)

PO Box 2653

Burlington, NC 27216 (mailing address)

BUDGET OFFICER

Budget Officer Name Matthew Hoagland

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Organization Alamance County Historic Properties Commission

Job Title Planning Director, Alamance County Planning Department

Email <u>planning@alamance-nc.com</u>

Phone Number (336) 570-4052

Address Alamance County Planning Department

201 W. Elm St. Graham, NC 27253

PROJECT SUMMARY

Type of Project Local Marker, Local Exhibit

The Alamance County Commissioners charge the Alamance County Historic Properties Commission (ACHPC) with preserving districts and landmarks that embody essential elements of the county's culture and history for the purpose of educating and enriching the lives of residents of the county and state.

Ballpark Community is an historically African American community in the Town of Elon. The proposed project would present Ballpark to the public through three activities and their publicity auxiliaries: 1) an exhibit in the African American Cultural Arts and History Center in Burlington, 2) a historical marker at the most culturally significant site in the community, a cemetery, and 3) a lecture program about the formation of the Ballpark Community as a Freedmen's settlement, with distribution of the documented article on which the public program will be based.

Recent research for the article has documented the age of the community – far older than the twentieth century name, "Ballpark." Moreover, evidence of early community cohesion includes the formation of a church that underwent a denominational shift c. 1920 and continues today, using and maintaining its cemetery.

This research of the Freedmen's settlement will be shared with the African American Cultural Arts and History Center, a partner in the project. Further, the AACAHC proposes to research and create an exhibit of the history of the community up to the present. Elon First Baptist Church, Elon University, and Alamance County Historical Association (ACHA) will provide auxiliary activities to educate the public about the community's history.

AMERICA 250 THEMES

The theme to which the proposed project resonates most is COMMON GROUND. Also, it embodies the theme GATHERING OF VOICES

Historically, the Ballpark Community has been perceived as having grown up around Elon College as a convenient location from which residents walked to menial jobs at the college and in the homes of its employees. Although personal and familial ties formed within this somewhat symbiotic relationship, and

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the college recognized the excellent work of two long-serving employees from the community prior to c. 1970, the social distance between the college and town, on one hand, and the Black community on the other typified prevailing norms of the segregation era. The first history of the college, (1982), ignored the Black community, and the town's 1976 Bicentennial history pamphlet mentioned the Ballpark area but acknowledged ignorance of any of its background. The railroad track was the marker of separation, a fact reflected in 2020 when the church in the community joined with a nearby white church in a march through the town in protest of white-on-Black police killings: as the mingled groups crossed the railroad in leaving Ballpark, younger Black participants ran across the tracks, shouting excitedly.

This project would celebrate a Reconstruction Era Freedmen's settlement next to the railroad. Recent research documents the existence and stability of the settlement and gives evidence of the continuity of a congregation that began as Lutheran in the 1870s and became Baptist in the 1920s.

Moreover, the recent research traces the connection between the Freedmen's settlement and the railroad company's choice of a site for a freight stop that textile manufacturers requested in the 1880s. The availability of local laborers for loading and unloading cotton and cloth attracted mill owners, and thereby the railroad company, to the Black settlement. Two mill owners and other white people moved to the freight stop, called "Mill Point". It also drew the founders of Elon College, which they established there in 1889. The Mill Point station became the Elon College station and added passenger service. Through this sequence, the Freedmen's settlement that was the origin of the Ballpark Community figured strongly in the location of the school and town known as Elon College. Elon University and Elon First Baptist Church, (the successor to the late nineteenth century Lutheran/Baptist congregation) will provide materials and equipment for the marker dedication, embracing their part of the COMMON GROUND to which the United States aspires.

Oral, photographic, and artifactual sources of the community's history in the decades after its formative period offer opportunities for research and public display. The African American Cultural Arts and History Center (AACAHC) in Burlington will partner with the Historic Properties Commission in the proposed project. The director of the Center is eager to interview residents of Ballpark Community for living memories, photographs, and cultural items. To create and mount an exhibit of the community's history would be the ideal starting point for the Center's aim to present histories of historically Black communities throughout the county. This will add hitherto underrepresented voices to THE GATHERING OF VOICES.

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PROJECT NARRATIVE

The project will present the history of the African American community known in the twentieth century as Ballpark Community. It is in the Town of Elon in Alamance County, North Carolina.

The community long has been perceived as having grown up around Elon College, which was founded in 1889, as a convenient location from which employees of the college and its faculty could walk. A 1999 history of the county established that the selection of a site for the college ultimately originated from the pre-1880 existence of African American laborers living near the railroad. This information clarified the common ground between the college and the Black community, reversing the relationship between their origins. The finding has been incorporated into Elon University's origin story but remains little known among the public, including the residents of the Ballpark Community.

Black families living near the railroad in the late 1860s formed a settlement of Freedmen who left records of a continuous community now known as Ballpark. At least seven of them men had served in the United States Colored Troops. The group's earliest known written record is a tax assessment listing thirty-three men in 1869. The federal census of the following year shows eighty-one people in their families. One expression of the cohesion of the founding community was the formation of a congregation of worshippers who sought outside funds and leadership (and thereby appear in outside records). They approached Lutheran bodies, reflecting their familiarity with that denomination during their enslavement on nearby farms. Records of Lutheran synods show the church's activity from the mid-1870s into the 1920s. After some families moved to Greensboro c. 1920, the remnant joined with others in the area to organize a Baptist church. Their original building lay adjacent to the Lutheran Church building and near its cemetery, which continues in use by the Baptist Church. The cemetery, with its earliest graves unmarked, is the oldest intact artifact of the Freedmen's settlement with which the Ballpark Community originated: COMMON GROUND, indeed.

Key items in the project are 1) the erection of a historical marker at the cemetery by the Alamance County Historic Properties Commission and 2) research into the post-1920 community by the African American Cultural Arts and History Center in nearby Burlington. The AACAHC proposes to mount an exhibit based on the 1860s-1920s findings and the result of its projected research into oral, photographic, and artefactual sources in the Ballpark Community. This will add hitherto underrepresented voices to the GATHERING OF VOICES being highlighted by the America 250 Program.

The Historic Properties Commission is the project sponsor, and the AACAHC is its partner. The Director of the AACAHC, James Shields, is the proposed director of the project. The Planning Director for Alamance County, Matthew Hoagland, is a county-designated member of the Historic Properties Commission and is the proposed financial officer for the project. Other Alamance County organizations will provide in-kind materials and services: Elon First Baptist Church, Elon University, and the Alamance County Historical Association.

Planning for the proposed project has proceeded among the five groups, coordinated by Carole W. Troxler, who is affiliated with the Alamance County Historical Association and Elon University, a neighbor of Elon First Baptist Church, and familiar with the work of the Alamance County Historic Properties Commission and the African American Cultural Arts and History Center. There was one inperson conference, and most communication occurred by telephone and email.

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The major items in the funding request are 1) historical marker (\$2,890.00) and 2) expenses for researching and building the exhibit (\$3,500.00, exclusive of cost share).

The project will meet these needs of the public:

- Presentation of local history that is accessible, accurate, and enjoyable.
- Recognition that perceptions and expectations of history vary, particularly with time and social norms.
- Understanding that the experiences of one person, one's family, one's identity group are part of a mosaic that is the American experience.
- Cognitive knowledge that grounds one in one's place and time within a larger framework that includes ethnicity, national identity, and humanity.
- An enhanced understanding of "how we know what we know" about our past.

The target audiences for this project:

- People who are curious about what has happened in the past in Alamance County and North Carolina.
- African American people wanting recognition and outside validation of the experiences of their people.
- African American people who may be distrustful of outsiders bringing attention to African American culture and history.
- Other BIPOC persons who do not identify as African American.
- White people who are engaged in, or approving of, anti-racist work.
- Other white people who may visit the lecture program, the exhibit, or the marker dedication.

Expectation of audience numbers:

- 150-200 for the marker dedication.
- 200-300 for the exhibit during 2026, which will continue past 2026.
- 50-75 for the Alamance County Historical Association program.

Personal disclosure from the originator of the proposed project:

The 1860s-1920s work mentioned above was done by Carole W. Troxler, Professor Emerita of Elon University and the writer of this proposal. Since 1970, she has researched intermittently for the origins of the Ballpark Community. During the 1990s, while researching for a history of Alamance County, she

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learned that an African American settlement had been the formative factor in the Elon College founders' selection of the college site. At that time, the staff of the State Archives of North Carolina showed her the 1869 tax assessment. It was only in the summer of 2024, however, in the context of a larger Reconstruction project, that the links between the Freedmen's settlement and the congregation that maintained intergenerational continuity appeared. Troxler then prepared a manuscript for an article, tentatively titled, "Reconstruction Era Origins of 'The Ballpark Community' in Elon, North Carolina." As she finished it, she understood that the Ballpark Community deserved recognition and that highlighting its history would fit the purposes of the America 250 Program. At that point, she contacted the Alamance County Historic Properties Commission and other organizations mentioned in this narrative, and they responded positively. Her work in preparing the grant proposal has been done with the HPC's approval and encouragement, but she is not a member of the HPC.

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EXTERNAL REVIEW

A reviewer will be designated by Dr. Rod Clark, Chairman of Department of History and Geography, Elon University, from faculty who are expert in Reconstruction/African American/Twentieth Century United States History. The reviewer will examine the Troxler article, its documentation, and the text of the proposed marker prior to ordering the marker. The reviewer will examine the proposed exhibit prior to its opening. The reviewer will make a written report covering both items for inclusion in the project report.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

The Alamance County Planning Director or his designee will prepare and issue Press Releases for ACHPC. The releases will go to the newspapers in the county as well as in neighboring cities, to the Burlington and Greensboro TV stations, and to the public radio stations within listening range. The Press Releases will announce the Alamance County Historical Association program, the marker dedication, and the exhibit opening. All press releases and social media platforms that are selected will identify the role of America 250 NC as a funding source and briefly describe the project. Publicity will be coordinated with the county-wide America 250 group. Rodney Cheek, chair of ACHPC or another designated member will send by email information about the proposed project and invitations to its events to interest groups tentatively listed in the PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS portion of this application.

DELIVERABLES/EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 1. Approximately 30 copies of Troxler article, "Reconstruction Era Origins of 'The Ballpark Community' in Elon, North Carolina," either purchased from the publisher or reprinted by Alamance County Historical Association with permission of publisher.
- 2. Audio tapes and photographs resulting from research interviews among Ballpark Community by AACAHC.
- 3. Press releases and email letters from ACHPC.
- 4. Program about the history of the Ballpark Community hosted by ACHA.
- 5. Purchase and installation of local historical marker by ACHPC.
- 6. Public dedication of marker using tents, chairs, water service, table, microphone, and speakers provided by Elon University by loan and by contract with their usual rental providers.
- 7. Exhibit on history of Ballpark Community, c. 1860-present, mounted in AACAHC.

MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

- Distribution of Troxler article: number of positive responses to offers of a copy and subsequent placement.
- Audiotapes and photographs: number of interviewees and number of items collected for display in exhibit and added to the AACAHC's collection.
- Press releases number and use by media.

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Program for ACHA: number of attendees

• Installation historical marker: date installed.

• Dedication of historical marker: number of attendees.

 Mounted exhibit: number of visitors on opening day and after, to the time of the final report

PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS

Research for the post-1920 history of Ballpark Community will be conducted by James Sheilds, the Director of the AACAHC and director of the proposed project. It will take place in the homes of residents of Ballpark Community and in consultation with Elon First Baptist Church, located in the community. Oral records of interviews and copies of photographs provided by residents will be used in the AACAHC exhibit and will become part of the AACAHC's permanent collection. The AACAHC is open to the public. Its web site is www.aacahcenter.org.

The dedication of the proposed marker in the Ballpark Community will be open to the public, and the Alamance County Historic Properties Commission will pursue media coverage for the event.

All events of the Alamance County Historical Society are open to the public and announced on its Facebook page. In addition, the press releases from ACHPC will include it as well as the exhibit opening and the marker dedication.

Further, information about the proposed project and invitations to its events will be sent by email to the Historical Society of North Carolina, the North Carolina Association of Historians, the North Carolina Community Memory Coalition, the Alamance County Community Remembrance Coalition, the Alamance Racial Equity Alliance and Collaborative (via Impact Alamance), Alamance Racial Equity Alliance, Burlington/Alamance School System, Alamance Community College, Alamance Ministers, Elon Ministers, Ministerial Fellowship Alliance of Alamance County, and perhaps others a month prior to the events.

Parking for the marker dedication will be available in a nearby lot on the Elon University Campus and at the Elon Town Hall, also nearby.

Participants will be invited to sign a visitor list at the marker dedication and exhibit. A designated member of ACHA will do a head count for their program.

LONGEVITY/IMPACT

Components of the project will enhance the profile of Alamance County for tourism by adding to the quality and diversity of the county's offerings. Both the exhibit and the marker have long-term expectations. ACHPC is an appointed advisory body of the county commissioners and will oversee upkeep of the physical marker. Elon First Baptist Church regularly mows the grass where the marker will be placed, as well is the rest of the cemetery, which the church keeps well. The AACAHC will own the exhibit and the materials from which it will be based as part of their collection. Distribution of copies of the Troxler article will get it into schools and other places that do not subscribe to the publication where it will appear.

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PARTNERSHIPS

The sponsoring applicant for the grant is Alamance County Historic Properties Commission (ACHPC), an unpaid 9-member body appointed by the county commissioners to advise it on the preservation and designation of Alamance County's historic resources. The county planning director is part of the commission and the financial officer for the proposal.

The major partners, in terms of in-kind contributions and receipt of funds, are Elon University and the African American Cultural Arts and History Center (AACAHC).

The Vice President for Advancement at the university has secured the institution's willingness to follow through on the items listed in this application and in the letter of support.

The AACAHC is the major physical and financial beneficiary of the proposed project and provides the director of the project.

Elon First Baptist Church, as the symbol and current embodiment of continuous community cohesion of the Ballpark Community, welcomes the recognition of the community, provides the location for the marker, and will help the AACAHC's research into the community's post-1920 life.

The Alamance County Historical Association promotes research and publication of Alamance County's history and provides a program of broad appeal at its annual general meeting.

PROJECT TIMELINE SUMMARY (Tentative)

May 2025

Secure date in May 2026 for program on history of the Ballpark Community, hosted by ACHA.

June 2025 or one month after announcement of the grant.

Secure calendar for marker dedication and exhibit opening (James Shields leading, with Elon First Baptist, Elon University)

July 2025

Begin research in Ballpark Community for post-1920 experiences (James Shields)

September 2025

External review of Troxler article and marker text provided to Matthew Hoagland by Dr. Rod Clark or his designee in Elon University Department of History and Geography. This should be done prior to ordering the marker.

Order, pay, schedule delivery of marker and arrange for and schedule its installation (Hoagland).

October 2025

Prepare press release and hold for future distribution (Hoagland or designee in Planning Dept).

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Design brochure incorporating content of press release and find its cost for future printing. (Hoagland or designee in Planning Department) *The press release and the brochure may be adjusted to include any change in the date of the Exhibit Opening.*

November 2025

Complete Ballpark interviews, their oral recordings, and copies of photographs to be used for exhibit (Shields).

Ensure that programs in this project are included in publicity of county-wide America250 events (Rodney Cheek).

January 2026

Begin design and construction of AACAHC exhibit (Shields).

Print brochures (Hoagland or designee in Planning Department).

Email invitations listed in PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS and others as may be selected, directing attention to attached image of brochure. (Rodney Cheek, Chair, ACHPC).

April 2026

Complete construction of AACAHC exhibit (Shields).

External review of the exhibit by Dr. Rod Clark or his designee.

Resend the January Email as a reminder.

May 2026

Send out press releases by May 10 (in advance of ACHA program, the earliest event in this project).

ACHA program on history of Ballpark Community

Print and pay for copies of Troxler article (Hoagland or designee).

August 2026

Secure brief speakers and finish all plans for marker dedication (John Barnhill, Elon University); ministerial staff of Elon First Baptist Church; Mayor of Elon Emily Sharpe, coordinated by Rodney Cheek, chair of ACHPC.

September 2026

Dedication of marker under direction of ACHPC, Rodney Cheek.

October 2026

External review of historical accuracy for marker and exhibit to be given to James Shields, project director, by Dr. Rod Clark or his designee for inclusion in final project report.

November 2026

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Submission of Project Report by James Shields and Matthew Hoagland, as directed by America250 Program.

BUDGET SUMMARY 2026

Salaries and Wages.

\$1.200.00 is budgeted for James Shields, for researching and building the exhibit. \$600.00 is COST SHARE and \$600.00 is GRANT.

\$600.00 Carole Troxler, volunteer, for securing and coordinating pardners, writing and filing application, 30 hours @ \$20 = \$600. \$200.00 is budgeted from GRANT, and \$400.00 is COST SHARE from Troxler.

Travel

\$500.00 GRANT is budged for automobile mileage between AACAHC and Ballpark, (round trip 20 miles), and to nearby Gibsonville, for interpersonal research, and also for trips to obtain supplies and equipment, computing \$.67/mile.

Supplies, Materials, Equipment to AACAHC, all from GRANT

\$500.00 Cost of photo duplication, oral recordings.

\$300.00 5 foam board posters @\$60

\$600.00 3-4 retractable banners(for pop up exhibits)@ \$150

\$1,000.00 for building materials for exhibit

Contracts

\$2,890.00 GRANT. Sewah Studios for marker (quote)

Miscellaneous Costs

\$325.00 COST SHARE from Elon University, for speakers, microphone, and outdoor setup. Cost estimate is from Carey Sound.

\$2,627.10 COST SHARE rental of tents, chairs, by Elon University. Poythress Tents pricing

\$50.00 GRANT Rod Clarke evaluation of project's historical research

\$200.00 GRANT speaker's fee to ACHA for free public program

\$367.46 GRANT for copies of research article, based on quote from Brand Connect.

\$400.00 GRANT for publicity brochure, based on local printing websites.





336-584-5657



info@elonfbc.org



113 Lynn St, Elon, NC 27244

715 N Church St, Burlington NC, 27215

December 15, 2024

Mr. Matthew Hoagland Director, Alamance County Planning Department Graham, NC 27253

Dear Mr. Hoagland,

I hope you are well. I am Rev. Dr. James H. Wilkes, Jr., the Senior Pastor of Elon First Baptist. I am writing regarding the cemetery where the proposed historical marker is to be placed.

We wish to confirm that Elon First Baptist Church is the legal owner of the land where the cemetery is located. Furthermore, we grant permission for the erection of the historical marker at this site.

Please let us know if additional information is required to facilitate this process.

Because of His Resurrection,

Rev. Dr. James H. Wilkes, Jr.

Senior Pastor

Elon First Baptist Church

ORDER FORM

Order No	QUUTEUTUZ9	BOL	1	Incentive	1.00	Order Date	11/23/2024
Cust No		Inv Code	Α	ABC		Ship By:	
DILL	RODNEY CHEEK, CHAIR ALAMANCE COUNTY HISTORIC PROPERTIES COMMISSION						
BILL TO:							
	201 W ELM ST.						
	GRAHAM, NC 27253						
	Phone: 336-570-4053						
	Email: rcheek3754@gmail.com						
SHIP TO:	RODNEY CHEEK, CHAIR						
	ALAMANCE COUNTY HISTORIC PROPERTIES COMM						
	201 W ELM ST.						
	GRAHAM, NC 27253						
	Phone: 336-570-4053 Email: rcheek3754@gmail.com						
	MARKER					MOUNTING	
Size Ht	30	Size Width	42	Ltr Sz	1	CORE CAP FOR POST	4" OCTAGONAL
attern	North Carolina	Two Sides	SAME	Surface Mount Options:			
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Plate Color	MED. GREEN	Letter Color	GOLD	Rail Color			Rail Type NONE
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America 250 NC Local Grants Community Programs

https://www.america250.nc.gov/

Eligible Activities

- Public art or mural with America 250 NC connection
 - O Using one of the three <u>America 250 NC themes</u>, develop a public art project, such as a mural or free-standing piece of art that is freely available for public viewing
 - o If possible, use local or NC artists for the work

Wayside

 Work with DNCR Wayside Committee and approved vendor to add wayside(s) in county to the "Revolutionary Routes" statewide trail. Subject to eligible wayside categories, placement restrictions/requirements.

Local marker

- Work with DNCR and approved vendor to erect a local marker connected to the America 250 NC themes. Subject to eligible marker categories, size and design, placement restrictions/requirements.
- Optional school-based program for students to identify and propose a local marker in a community

Local exhibit

- o Exhibit must be inside a public space open or to the public.
- o Must display the interpretative panels through 2026 at a minimum
- O All content and images must be approved by America 250 NC prior to publication/installation. Use of images and sources must be cited.
- The introductory panel and any accompanying printed material must display the America 250 logo and cite the America 250 NC project as a funder. See promotional materials for guidelines.
- O Grant recipients must obtain a permanent and transferable right for themselves and America 250 NC to use any images, wording, design, and layout. Recipients will make sure that the images can be used by recipient and or America 250 NC in promotional materials. Exceptions must be preapproved by America 250 NC.

• Online exhibit

- o The website materials must be made available to America 250 NC and a link provided to the content to be shared via America 250 NC's website.
- o Must agree to maintain and update the website materials through 2026 at a minimum
- All content and images must be approved by America 250 NC prior to publication. Use of images and sources must be cited.
- The introductory materials and any accompanying printed material must display the America 250 NC logo and cite the America 250 NC project as a funder. See promotional materials for guidelines.
- O Grant recipients must obtain a permanent and transferable right for themselves and America 250 NC to use any images, wording, design, and layout. Recipients will make sure that the images can be used by recipient and or America 250 NC in promotional materials. Exceptions must be preapproved by America 250 NC.

Research

- Research to support development of a local America 250 NC program, such as a walking tour, driving tour, or other public program.
- Research on a particular location or building that would result in a report useful for planning America 250 NC programming such as a tours or educational programs
- Research to create printed resources, such as a map, walking or driving tour, brochure or webpage that highlights local America 250 NC programs or resources
- Research resulting in a publication should comply with expected formatting and citation structure, please see the North Carolina Historical Publications' "Style Guide for Authors and Editors" under Quick Links.

• Educational Outreach

- Support for local school field trips to State Historic Site, state museum or local historical program
- O Student competition with America 250 NC thematic link (ex. Bake-off with historic recipes, essay contest, poster contest, or art projects)
- o Development of America 250 NC themed, NC curriculum aligned, lesson plan with local resource connection

• Event expenses

- o Annual or new festival with clear America 250 NC connections in branding and themes
- Speaker fees
- Living history program
- o Printing expenses for program, map, brochure, or tour
- o Tours of local America 250 NC sites and locations

Ineligible Activities

- Capital expenses
- Artistic materials and equipment not related to America 250NC activities
- Non-America 250NC mission-related operating costs
- Equipment costs (cameras, computers, hard drives, etc.)
- Fundraising efforts
- Lobbying
- Costs related to any project whose primary purpose is to promote partisan political or religious ideologies
- Scholarship assistance
- University faculty salary and costs that are not directly related to the approved project
- Food and alcohol