



NLC

NATIONAL
LEAGUE
OF CITIES



AMERICA250



**Celebration
Toolkit**

An Invitation from NLC

Dear Municipal Leader,

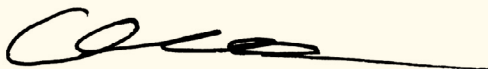
As we mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the National League of Cities (NLC) will showcase the unique contributions of America's cities, towns and villages and the unique opportunity this milestone presents for local communities across the country. This historic occasion is not only a time to reflect on the past—it is an opportunity for local leaders to inspire civic pride, strengthen community engagement and look to the role cities, towns and villages will play in creating a vision for the next 250 years together.

While the semiquincentennial will be marked nationally, its true impact will be felt locally. Communities of all sizes have an important role to play in shaping how this celebration reflects the values, history and aspirations of their residents. As the level of government closest to the people, local leaders are uniquely positioned to make this anniversary meaningful and inclusive.

We encourage you to consider how your city, town or village can participate—whether through events, educational programs or initiatives that foster dialogue about our shared history and future. This is a moment to celebrate the progress made over the past 250 years and to ask: How are we building for the next 250?

Together, let's use this milestone to promote civility, strengthen civic engagement and create a vision for the generations to come.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to your community. We look forward to seeing how you make this celebration your own.



CLARENCE E. ANTHONY
CEO & Executive Director
National League of Cities



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Introduction

In July 2026, America will celebrate 250 years of independence and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. A cornerstone of America's founding story is local governance, and as the country marks this milestone, local communities are invited to celebrate in ways that connect them to this rich history and tells the promise of America's next quarter century.

As our country evolves, it is local communities who are shaping the next 250 years. From the bonds we nurture between our residents -- despite differences -- to the physical spaces that we create for meeting, learning and growing together. NLC has created this toolkit to help spark ideas for activities and events that local leaders can initiate to join the celebration of America's 250th birthday.

ABOUT AMERICA250

America250's mission is to celebrate and commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, marking America's semiquincentennial. We aim to inspire our fellow Americans to reflect on our past, strengthen our love of country, and renew our commitment to the ideals of democracy through programs that educate, engage, and unite us as a nation.

ABOUT LOCAL GOV 250

Local Gov 250 is a collaboration of local government associations and interested professionals to educate and celebrate "democracy at the doorstep" facilitated by cities, counties, regional councils and tribal governments.



How to Use This Guide

This guide is a resource for municipalities looking for inspiration for its America250 celebration. All 50 states have created commissions that are coordinating and leading commemorations within their state. NLC encourages every municipality to join in marking this historic milestone in a way that matches your community's resources.

Social Engagement

Don't forget to tell NLC all that you are doing. Tag us on any of our social channels, and use the hashtags **#nationalleagueofcities** and **#America250!**



[Facebook](#)

[National League of Cities](#)



[Instagram](#)

[@leagueofcities](#)



[X](#)

[@leagueofcities](#)

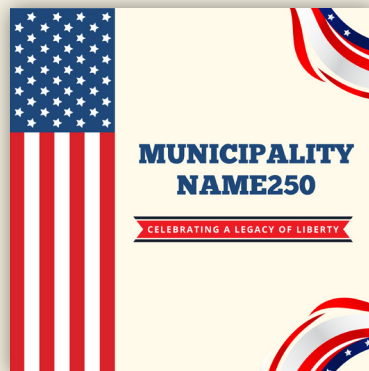


[LinkedIn](#)

[National League of Cities](#)

DOWNLOAD SOCIAL GRAPHICS

Download these customizable graphics from NLC to help showcase how your community is celebrating America's 250th birthday.



**DOWNLOAD
RESOURCES**



LIGHT TO UNITE

The [National Flag Foundation](#) is encouraging cities to light up a building on July 4, 2026, at 9 PM. Light to Unite was endorsed by NLC and is a simple way to celebrate. If you decide to light a build, tell NLC about it and [register your event](#).

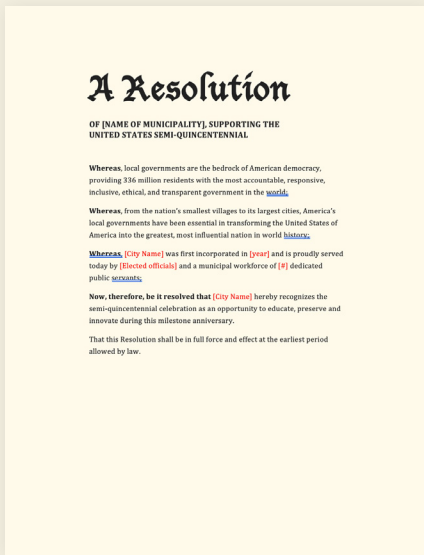


AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

The American Battlefield Trust preserves America’s hallowed battlegrounds and educates the public about what happened there and why it matters. The American Battlefield Trust and the Daughters of the American Revolution have teamed up to create a the “American Revolution Experience”, which includes an online exhibit and traveling experience. You can find more information about the traveling exhibit [here](#).

Proclamation Templates

NLC has created two proclamation templates that can be downloaded and personalized for your city, town or village.

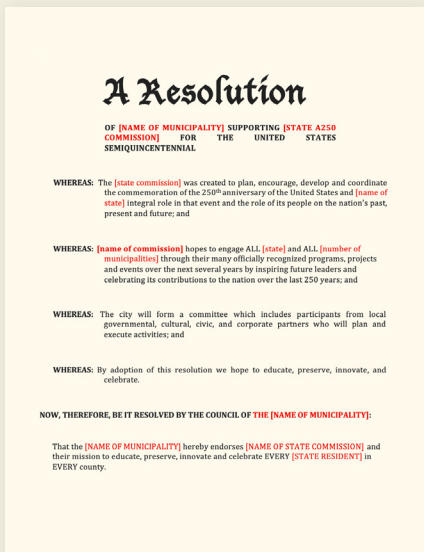


GENERAL RESOLUTION PROCLAMATION TEMPLATE

This template recognizes the 250th anniversary.



DOWNLOAD RESOURCE



CITY-STATE COMMISSION PROCLAMATION TEMPLATE

This template recognizes the 250th anniversary with your county or state commission.



DOWNLOAD RESOURCE

Ways to Celebrate America's 250th Anniversary

Below are a few ideas for planning celebrations of the 250th anniversary. Activities are categorized for engagement around education, preservation, cultural highlight, sports, community service, and digital engagement. Feel free to adapt any of the ideas to match your community's needs.



DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Be sure to update and record your community's participation and engagement of the celebration.

- ▶ **Update City Website:** Add an America250 landing page, event calendar, or highlight section featuring community achievement over the past 250 years.
- ▶ **Update Social Media Logo:** Incorporate a "250" design or commemorative theme to your city's logo or social media graphics.
- ▶ **Create Videos:** Capture what the 250th anniversary means to your community. Feature local historians, students, or residents sharing oral histories, personal reflections, or hopes for the next 250 years.



EDUCATION

The 250th anniversary offers opportunities to educate and expand understanding of your community or lift up the country's history.

BASIC

Community Read: Choose one book that reflects an important aspect of the American identity or local history and encourage the community to read. Take it a step further and host a community discussion about the book.

(cont. next page)



CULTURAL RECOGNITION

These ideas are focused on understanding and affirming your community's cultural identity.

BASIC

Encourage “250 of Something”: Create public art or community challenges using the theme of 250 (e.g. 250 flowers planted, 250 thank you notes written).

Light Up City Hall or City Building: Select and plan to light up a building on July 4, 2026. If you decide to light a building, [tell NLC about it](#).

INTERMEDIATE

Host a Contest: Encourage creative submissions (e.g. essays, art, photography) focused on local history, the meaning of 250 years, or your community's vision for the future.

Sponsor a Billboard: Celebrate your community's America250 story with a public billboard.

ADVANCED

Sell Merchandise: Offer commemorative America250 items to build excitement and raise funds for local events.

Fireworks or Parade: Organize traditional celebrations like a parade or fireworks that bring the community together.

Local Heroes Competition: Recognize individuals who embody the spirit of service or your community. Consider a local version of the [Champions initiative](#) being organized by Local Gov 250.

America's Potluck: [Utah250 introduced the potluck](#) for its state celebration of America250. Consider hosting your own community potluck where residents bring dishes that represent their family traditions, cultures or local history.

Banner Creation: Design banners showcasing your community's local history or the history of the United States. Consider partnering with schools, civic groups or local artists.



VOLUNTEER SERVICE

BASIC

Little Free Library Book Drive: Collect books for a Little Free Library in your community. Don't have a Little Free Library? Visit Little Free Library's website to start your book exchange.

INTERMEDIATE

Host Distribution Walk/Drive: Host a donation drive of new or gently used books for readers of all ages related to the American Revolution. Find a date and distribute them among [Little Free Libraries](#) in your community.

***Bonus Idea:** Before distribution, meet at a local public library and write notes of encouragement to slip in the donated books, especially for younger readers!*

ADVANCED

Service Projects: Organize volunteer days to commemorate America250 through community service. Events could include planting commemorative trees, cleaning up parks or graves, or assisting veterans. Partner with your local volunteer and service organizations.



606,580
hours volunteered

Add your volunteer hours to the count!

Help us make 2026 a **record setting year** of volunteer service. Join people and organizations across the country in giving back — from service projects to donations — to honor America's 250th. **Add your volunteer hours!**

Add my individual hours

Add my organization's hours

Taken from <https://america250.org/america-gives/>

Telling Your America250 Story

There are multiple ways to tell your community's story using America250 as a highlight. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- ☑ **COLLECT LOCAL LEADER STORIES:** Launch a Story Corps style collection of stories from leaders across your community. These can be featured on the city's website, library, YouTube or another digital channel.
- ☑ **MONTHLY SOCIAL MEDIA POST** that highlights historic moments from your community. Consider a 'This Day in History' template.
- ☑ **INVITE A MEMBER OF CONGRESS** to an event.
- ☑ **SEND OUT PRESS RELEASES** about your event, contest or activity to get the media involved.
- ☑ **WRITE AN ARTICLE** for local/regional newspaper.
 - ☑ Is there a person or event tied to the local area from the Revolutionary War period or another historic moment in the country's history over the past 250 years.
 - ☑ Compose a piece on a community event



Tips for Planning an America250 Event

As you plan your events, prioritize coordination, collaboration and communication. Here are a few tips to help with planning.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING

- ▶ **Establish a Dates & Deadlines Document:** Track progress with key milestones, communication plans, and target completion dates to ensure the event stays on schedule.
- ▶ **Develop a Budget:** Outline anticipated costs and allocate resources effectively to cover all event needs – this should include honorariums, awards, supply needs, etc.
- ▶ **Engage Community Partners:** Reach out to local businesses, organizations, and potential sponsors to explore partnership and donation opportunities.
- ▶ **Create Event Materials:** Design flyers and promotional materials to share with schools, libraries, local businesses, and other community outlets – Canva is a free tool with different template designs.
- ▶ **Form a Working Group:** Assign specific roles to each member, designate a group leader, and establish clear responsibilities to ensure smooth planning and execution.

OUTREACH

- ▶ **Design Social Media Graphics/Press Outreach:** Develop engaging graphics for local government social media channels, and coordinate press outreach to amplify awareness.
- ▶ **Invite Key Stakeholders:** Extend invitations to community leaders, members of Congress, and other relevant officials to participate and support America250 community efforts.

- ▶ **Develop a Staffing Plan:** Prepare a comprehensive plan detailing staff roles, volunteer needs, and assignments to ensure all event operations are covered.
- ▶ **Prepare Talking Points:** Draft a set of talking points or a brief script, incorporating relevant America250 messaging and local connections. Share these talking points with your council and municipal staff.
- ▶ **Schedule Speakers or Performances:** Identify local historians, performers, or youth groups to add dynamic content.
- ▶ **Identify Event Location Needs:** Map out venue layout, parking, accessibility, and permits (if applicable).
- ▶ **Plan for Safety & Accessibility:** Include first aid, ADA compliance, security, and contingency plans for weather or emergencies.
- ▶ **Coordinate Vendor / Supply Needs:** Food trucks/caterers, equipment rentals, signage, audio/visual support, items for service project (if applicable).

EVENT EXECUTION

- ▶ **Track RSVPs & Registration:** Use an online platform to manage attendee numbers and maintain communication (if applicable).
- ▶ **Invite media**

