# Resource 12

## How to Organize an Oral History Project

Use this tool to create an Oral History Project.

One of the most significant values that educators can instill in students is a respect and reverence for elders. By accessing their memories, stories and traditions, teachers can integrate students as members of the community and support life-long learning.

### Preliminary question:

- What are the basic aims of the oral history project?
- How will the community (or others) likely view the project while it is taking place? After it is finished?
- Who will use the tape recordings and/or resulting transcripts or videos in future years?
- How will the project's resulting memoirs be used?

### Mid-range goal and questions:

- What is needed (funds, equipment, people) to reach the project’s larger goals?
- What goals are unrealistic? Should some goals be postponed or eliminated?
- What are the group’s principal assets, its talents, strengths, experience, insights and other positive features? What are its limitations, its weaknesses and inabilities that should be considered early in the project?
- When can a reasonable completion of the project be expected? What is the time frame? How much can be accomplished? Should this cause a revisiting of the goals?

### Practical parameters:

- Write out both general and specific goals.
- Involve a group or committee in formulating the project’s goals.
- Identify deadlines, financial limitations and other factors that will affect results.
- Make assignments for those responsible for the project. List each person’s priorities and tasks.
- Devise a checklist to be used in monitoring and evaluating the project.
- Throughout the project, encourage each person to discuss and think about the goals.
Selection of Oral History Subjects

- How should oral history be explained to a community?
- How do local historians select and narrow their choices?
- Should a local oral history project focus on recording life histories or should it strive to record interviews of clusters of people all recalling similar events, eras or circumstances? Should there be a mix of these interviews?

Resources for Oral History Projects

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<td>Llano Grande Center for Research and Development</td>
<td><a href="http://www.llanogrande.org">www.llanogrande.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>My History Is America’s History Guidebook, National Endowment for the Humanities</td>
<td><a href="http://www.myhistory.org/guidebook/">www.myhistory.org/guidebook/</a></td>
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<td>The American Folk Life Center</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lcweb.loc.gov/folklife">www.lcweb.loc.gov/folklife</a></td>
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<td>The Foxfire Fund</td>
<td><a href="http://www.foxfire.org">www.foxfire.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Smithsonian Folk Life and Oral History Interviewing Guide by Marjorie Hunt</td>
<td><a href="http://www.folklife.si.edu">www.folklife.si.edu</a></td>
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