The guide to hosting Alabama’s Bicentennial Traveling Exhibit in your community
Let the Celebration Begin!

Congratulations on being selected as one of 67 communities in the state of Alabama to host Making Alabama, a Bicentennial Traveling Exhibit, the story of Alabama becoming a state and the pivotal decisions that shaped its history.

In partnership with the Alabama Bicentennial Commission and Alabama Department of Archives and History, Alabama Humanities Foundation is bringing this Smithsonian-quality centerpiece exhibit to all 67 counties over an 18-month period, from March 2018 to November 2019. Alabama became a state on Dec. 4, 1819, but our story began long before.

At the heart of this project is AHF’s own mission to foster learning, understanding and appreciation of our people, communities and cultures. And every aspect of the exhibit will reflect the fulfillment of that mission and vision.

From Alabama’s beginnings, when Native Americans roamed our land, traversed our mountains and navigated our waters to today’s melting pot of cultures, ideas and technology, Making Alabama will indeed be the history of our state and its people. Curious. Complex. Compelling.

The exhibit will tell the story of becoming Alabama as a state and look well beyond modern day and into the future in a thoughtful, provocative, interactive and innovative way. It will examine the key moments in history that defined Alabama.

It not only will tell the story of Alabama’s evolution, it will offer opportunities for host communities and counties to tell their own history. It will share that story from different perspectives in a variety of ways, providing a catalyst for enlightening conversations and laying a firm foundation for critical thinking and understanding differing viewpoints.

The exhibit design features eight periods of the state’s history as well as providing a section to tell your region’s history and your community’s story.

Four transportable exhibits will travel within quadrants of the state during the 2018-2019 celebration of the Bicentennial, which is expected to draw more than 200,000 people to tour them.

In the tradition of the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street, it will be a Museum of Alabama coming directly to towns and cities throughout the state.

This exhibit has the power to reach and teach young and old alike about the rich history of this place we call home. But better yet, it serves as a bridge of understanding of our state’s history and its impact on where we are today and where we head in the future. It contains vintage photos, artifacts, videos, audios and historic narratives designed to educate, entertain and inform. Interactive components are designed to engage those touring even more for a memorable experience.

In the pages that follow, we will guide you through the process of hosting Making Alabama, ensuring that you have all the tools and resources to successfully host this exhibit.

We thank you for joining our celebration as we collectively say in such a special way: Happy 200th Birthday, Alabama!

Armand DeKeyser
Executive Director
Alabama Humanities Foundation
We all belong to a larger-than-life story, over two hundred years in the making. As Alabamians, our story is being crafted by the moments that both define and refine who we are. A tightly woven tapestry of trials, triumphs and transformations, this vibrant tale celebrates our commonalities and honors our individualities. It is an epic adventure, twisting its way through the peaks and valleys of the past and taking hopeful turns for the future.

Its plot is steeped in little-known secrets and monumental events forever carved in history. Its setting spans every county in the state and features a full and fascinating cast of local, unsung heroes and world-famous champions of change.

Welcome to the unprecedented, unabridged and often unexpected story of Making Alabama. A Bicentennial Traveling Exhibit.
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Planning for Your Exhibit

CHOOSING YOUR SPACE

Minimum space requirement for your traveling exhibit is 1,000 square feet of open space and ceiling no lower than 10 feet.

The exhibit consists of 8 solidly built panels secured by solid bases. Kiosks will be stationed at each panel and will contain a computer tablet measuring at least 18.4 inches. The tablets will be programmed to delve deeper into subject matter.

One video is included in the exhibit. Access to electrical outlets is recommended, however, the interactive components consist of computer tablets, which will need to be recharged nightly during your exhibit period. You will need eight to 16 outlets for recharging these tablets, and you will be provided with two back-up batteries.

Depending upon how large your local exhibit is, you will require additional gallery space to include it. Be sure to consider wall space for wall hangings, such as vintage photos, and floor space for cases for artifacts.

The venue must be handicapped accessible, and you will want to choose a space with plenty of parking and ease of accessibility to the public.

The building in which the space is housed should be secure with the ability to be locked so that there is no access when project officials are not in the building or exhibit space.

PICKING YOUR PROJECT TEAM

Choosing the most effective team to ensure your success as a host community is vital. Various levels of expertise should be included.

The project director should be well versed in event planning with strong organizational skills.

SUGGESTED PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS ARE:

1. Representative of city and/or county government
2. Business representative
3. Retired educator
4. IT/Technology representative
5. Venue representative (museum curator, building coordinator, etc.)
6. Construction/Contractor Representative
7. Media Representative
8. School Superintendent or designee
9. Fundraiser with knowledge of local sources and connections
10. Program Planner
SUGGESTED COMMITTEES:

- Onsite Programs/Special Events
- Offsite Programs/Special Events
- Local Exhibits
- Installation Team
- Education
- Publicity/Marketing
- Budget/Finance
- Docents/Volunteers Scheduling
- Docents Training
- Technology
- Business/Industry Liaison
- Facilities/Venue Management
- Reception
- Tours Registration
- Community Services Coordination
- Opening Ceremony/Ribbon Cutting
- Volunteer Team

ANNOUNCING YOUR SELECTION

Being named a host community is a huge honor. In essence, your community is making history! Identify news media outlets, social media sites, civic club enewsletters and print newsletters and develop your own, simple website and social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, to spread the news. Keep that database handy and use it to publicize the exhibition and any associated activities and events.

A sample announcement press release template for your use follows. Disseminate a press release and photo to those outlets for your official announcement.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

(Your Town)     FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Publicity Chair    DATE:
Phone:    
Email:    

(Your Town) named host community for Alabama Bicentennial exhibition

Alabama Humanities Foundation selected YOUR TOWN as one of only 67 in the state to be a host community for Making Alabama. A Bicentennial Traveling Exhibit in celebration of Alabama becoming a state 200 years ago, Dec. 4, 2019.

This traveling exhibit will crisscross the state for 18 months, beginning in March 2018 and ending just before Dec. 4, 2019, drawing regional crowds during its two to three-week engagements.

Making Alabama will be presented in YOUR TOWN DATES at LOCATION. Exhibit days and hours will be DATES AND HOURS.

“What an exciting opportunity for our city and county,” said Making Alabama YOUR TOWN Project Director NAME. “This is not only a chance for us to learn more about the history of Alabama and its story of becoming a state, it also gives us an opportunity to showcase our community’s own history and story.”
While Making Alabama is a free exhibit – free to the host community and free to the public – presenting the local exhibit and planning collateral events and activities may incur expense.

The local exhibit is your community’s opportunity to put its own signature on this historic event. An area of the Alabama exhibit will be reserved for your local community’s exhibit – a place to display historical narratives, artifacts and photographs, which will be complementary to the overall exhibit.

Once your committee decides the scope of your local exhibit and the content to be included, appoint a fundraising subcommittee of individuals who have a network of contacts in the community and in government (city, county and state), who will see the value and invest in your effort.

To help you with local fundraising efforts, Alabama Humanities will contribute $1,000 to the local organization sponsoring your exhibit. The funds can be requested within 6 months of the beginning date of your program with a brief description on how the funds will be used. All funds will supplement and/or augment efforts by the local organizing committee.

Local donors should be recognized in a prominent place on a donor board near the entrance of the exhibit.

Develop a budget based on the design and content of the exhibit and any programming the committee might identify as part of the engagement.

While the exhibit admission is free, you may want to consider placing a donations box at the entrance or exit of the exhibit, where those attending can deposit donations. No donation is too small, and it gives attendees an added feeling of being a part of this event.
RECRUITING YOUR DOCENTS

Docents are the guides for your exhibit. Just like a tour guide offers memorable anecdotes to make tours more interesting and effective, your docents will need to be members of the local community who can educate, entertain and enlighten.

Retired teachers tend to make the best docents, but don’t limit your pool of prospective docents. Public officials knowledgeable about your community’s history, history buffs and trained historians, retirees and other civic minded individuals are excellent sources to act as docents.

You will need a pool of about 30 docents to cover your hours of operation. For example, if your schedule is for three weeks, five days a week, eight hours a day, you will need four docents per day on four hour shifts.

Your committee will need a docent recruiter, a docent trainer and someone to schedule docents during the exhibit engagement.

The docent will need to be familiar with the Alabama history depicted in Making Alabama, and a docent handbook will be provided for each docent covering the high points of the exhibit. However, the exhibit panels and the interactive computer tablets will tell the actual story of Alabama’s journey to statehood.

The docent’s main area of focus will be the local exhibit. The most successful local exhibits feature docents who have the ability to explain the local history, talk informatively about photos and artifacts and offer personal anecdotes about the local community’s history.

Docents can also be used as those who welcome groups and individuals to the exhibit, giving an overview of what to expect as they tour these historic displays.
EXHIBIT DESCRIPTION

Eight 8-foot by 8-foot panels with metal bases comprise the state exhibit. A customizable, complementary section will be designed for host communities.

The eight periods of history to be illustrated on each state panel will be:

1. Pre-history to 1700, natural environment and an introduction to the exhibit.
2. 1700-1815: The Creek War and Statehood
3. 1815-1860: Settlement and Slavery
4. 1860-1875: Secession, Civil War and Reconstruction
5. 1875-1940: Political Power and the Constitution of 1901
6. 1940-1965: World War and Civil Rights
7. 1965-1990: Economic and Social Adjustment
8. 1990-2020: Our Alabama

Each state panel will contain a narrative overview of the period of history with a collage of imagery to illustrate each era.

Two oversized, interactive, touch screen computer tablets will be stationed at each panel, featuring narratives with the ability to “drill down” to viewpoints, perspectives, contrasting and/or complementary stories, historical facts and quotes for each display group.
The host community exhibit section is designed to complement the look of the state exhibit while allowing the host community to display historical artifacts, newspaper articles, postcards and other items relating to the community’s own history.

This is your opportunity to put your very own signature on this historic event and your community’s place in making Alabama. This portion can be as large or as small as your community desires or conditions dictate.

Ask for old photographs and artifacts from citizens of your community. If photographs and artifacts are loaned to the local exhibit committee, you must provide a loaned artifact form. You may find a template on our website at makingalabama.org.

You could consider using a high resolution scanner for old photographs and papers without having to be loaned the originals.

Put together oral and written histories and present them. Display books, histories, genealogies or any writings about your community.

Each community will receive a vertical banner (approx. 2’ x 6’) representing the county as it is displayed in other Alabama Bicentennial programs. This banner will remain with the community after the exhibit is completed. The example to the right is representative of how a county’s banner will appear.

**Hits. Howlers. Helen Keller**

The voices of Colbert County have inspired the world. Muscle Shoals was once a sleepy spot on the banks of the “Singing” Tennessee River. But when a music producer opened Fame Studios, he tapped into a whole new kind of sound. They called it “The Muscle Shoals sound.” It was gritty, raw and magical. And it transformed this town into a creative hub for some of the greatest musicians on earth. Famous artists flocked to the Shoals to play alongside a soulful local mix of choir singers and self-taught instrumentalists. Such legendary tracks as “Mustang Sally,” “Wild Horses” and “Tell Mama” were recorded here. But Colbert County is also well known for its tribute to a more primal sound. In a sacred spot in Freedom Hills, there’s a coon dog graveyard where howling hunting dogs from all over the nation are laid to rest. Not too far down the road, visitors can explore Ivy Green. This quaint cottage is the childhood home of Helen Keller, one of the most courageous and outspoken activists of the twentieth century.
LOCAL PROGRAM IDEAS

Collateral programming in the host community, whether onsite or apart from the venue, is important to the overall impact of the exhibition.

There are plenty of resources from which to draw. AHF provides a list of Bicentennial Scholars on its website at makingalabama.org. Choose a speaker to present at your local library. Pick an Alabama-focused documentary from Alabama Public Television’s programming and show it at a local auditorium.

Do you have a local theater troupe? Have them dress in period costume and study characters to play – either from your local history or from Alabama history.

Plan tours of local museums and historic sites in your community.
Gather oral histories and present them in an appropriate setting.
Let students have a ‘scavenger hunt’ at the exhibit, gathering facts from the exhibit narratives instead of items.
Put on a play about your community’s history.

Since the Bicentennial actually spans three years from territory to statehood,Alabama 200 has designated a theme for each year. They are:

- 2017—Exploring Our Places
- 2018—Honoring Our People
- 2019—Sharing Our Stories

Build programs and activities in your own communities around those themes. Exploring Our Places might be an historical site in your community. Honoring Our People could be special recognition of your citizens – past and present -- who have made a difference. Sharing Our Stories may be special speakers from your community, sharing their perspectives or place in the community’s history.
 STATEWIDE PROGRAMMING PLANNED

Traveling art exhibits, a postcard exhibition, various speakers, and other activities are planned throughout the state during the celebration. For a listing, go to alabama200.org.

Counties and communities are creating events and/or branding existing events as Bicentennial commemorations. Mobile, Birmingham and Huntsville, as well as the state’s five capital sites, will host significant public events. The commemoration’s finale will take place in the state’s capital city of Montgomery on Dec. 14, 2019 – the day Alabama achieved statehood.
Getting the message out about the exhibit and the activities you plan is the cornerstone of a successful exhibit.

Announce the exhibit in the local newspaper, on radio, on TV, in your Chamber’s newsletter and any other civic or church group that produces a newsletter. Keep them updated on plans and activities as they progress, providing information and photos.

Launch a Facebook page. This can be one of the most effective ways to keep your neighbors informed on the progress. Encourage citizens to “like” or “follow” your page, and KEEP IT FRESH. Post photos, produce videos with your smartphone and post those. The more you can put out there to keep interest alive, the more buy-in your community will have. And don’t forget to encourage them to SHARE your posts to extend your reach.

Create a Twitter account and post from planning meetings, activities, etc., generating even more interest.

Develop an Instagram account and post your photos.

People obtain information on all kinds of platforms. Be sure and use all platforms available to you for more far-reaching, effective messaging.
The Education Committee of Alabama 200, the overall organization for the Bicentennial, is developing teacher lesson plans for use in all grades. They may be found at alabama200.org or you may access the link on makingalabama.org as they become available.
No need to reinvent the wheel for this exhibition. Organizers have been hard at work for the past two years, creating and gathering resources from which you can draw. They may be found at alabama200.org and makingalabama.org. Check them out!

In addition, Alabama 200 is conducting a series of regional workshops around the state to help communities plan their own celebrations and utilize all resources available.

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makingalabama.org
POWERPOINT FOR HOST COMMUNITIES

Following is a short, 6-slide PowerPoint simply giving an overview of the Making Alabama exhibit. You can use it for a starting point for talks to civic clubs, groups, schools and organizations about the exhibit coming to your community. It is also included in a downloadable form on makingalabama.org under the Resources tab.
CONTENT OVERVIEW

• 8 x 8 foot panel collages
• Interactive tablets
• Historic photographs
• Facts and dates
• Back stories
• Perspectives

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE

• Traveling to all 67 counties
• Up to three week stops
• April 2018-November 2019
• Requires 1,000 square foot minimum

MAKING ALABAMA, A TIME TO:

• Recognize Alabama’s 200 years as a state
• Learn by looking back, delving deeper and focusing forward
• Experience our state’s storied history
• Find your own place in the making of Alabama
Thanks our supporters for making this exhibit possible