



## Final Report

April 2023

Presented by:



**GREEN BICYCLE CO.**

*Building conscious communities*

Green Bicycle Co.  
1117 N 8th Street  
Sheboygan, WI 53801

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# Acknowledgements

We are very grateful for the partnerships and support we received from the community for this project.

- The National Trust for Historic Preservation
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum
- Sheboygan County LGBTQ Alliance
- John Michael Kohler Arts Center
- Sheboygan Hmong Mutual Assistance Association
- Sheboygan Hmong Women's Society
- Sheboygan Mead Public Library
- Sheboygan County League of Women Voters
- Live Forever Project
- Women in Politics Interviewees:
  - Amanda Salazar
  - Angela Ramey
  - Barb Felde
  - Betty Ackley
  - Deb Sabol-Williams
  - Grazia Perrella
  - Janet Ross and Maeve Quinn
  - Kathleen Donovan
  - Kristy Yang
  - Leslie Laster
  - Marilyn Montemayor
  - Nanette Bulebosh
  - Rebecca Clarke
  - Roberta Filicky-Peneski
  - Suzanne Speltz
- LGBTQ Interviewees:
  - David Pittner
  - Nina Soul
- Hmong Play Writers:
  - Written by: Yer Yang
  - Script revised by: Blia Vang, Yeng Vang, Phai Yang, Mai Yia Vang, Stacey Wolf, Sheila Yang, and Mai Her
  - Stage Play Revised by: Houa Vang
- Hmong Play Director:
  - Houa Vang
- Hmong Play Cast:
  - Houa Vang from Hmong Woman Society
  - Houa Vang the play director
  - Luther Yang
  - Devin Vue
  - UJ Xiong
  - Sheila Yang
  - Malina Yang
  - Jasmine Xiong
  - Shiane Luaj Ntxhi Yang, Sophia Nkauj Hmoob Yaj, Carson MuajHmoo Yang, Naomi Xiong
  - Leahness Her, Charlie Vang
  - Devin Vue, Brian Yang, Charlie Vang, Tux Yang
  - Jasmine Xiong, xai xiong, Leahness Her

There are others that participated in the project that are not listed, and we are extremely grateful for their contributions.

# Project Timeline

1. November 2021 - Presentation to the Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum (Museum) Board of Directors.
2. November 2021 - Grant writing commenced.
3. December 2021 - Submitted application.
4. March 2022 - Notified of grant award.
5. April 2022 - Public announcement of grant award. Partner outreach, research, and program development commenced.
6. September 2022 - Traveling Exhibit – We Will Always Be here: Wisconsin's LGBTQ+ Historymakers reception with Sheboygan County LGBTQ Alliance.
7. October 2022 - Women in Politics presentation with Sheboygan County League of Women Voters and Live Forever Project at Green Bicycle Co.
8. November 2022 - We Crossed The River to Meet Our Fate "YAV TOM NTEJ" A Play by Yer Yang and Directed by Houa Vang at JMKAC.
9. February 2023 - Winter Ball Pride 2023 Fundraiser - shared the Sheboygan County LGBTQ Alliance History page announcement.
10. February 2023 - Project Presentation at Plymouth High School by Ava Stroessner with Green Bicycle Co. and Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum (Museum) in attendance.
11. March 2023 - Prepared final website copy for Museum and Sheboygan County League of Women Voters.
12. April 2023 - Sharde final presentation with Museum and the community. And shared the final report and website copy.

## How did this project come to be?

Several circumstances led us to this opportunity.

Green Bicycle Co. “creates conscious communities” and “adds people to the equation.” Through each we engage with, we are continuously seeking ways to do this.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, together with National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), is pleased to announce the recipients of the Telling the Full History Preservation Fund. Made possible with support from NEH through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, the Telling the Full History grant program helps interpret and preserve historic places of importance to underrepresented communities across states and territories of the United States.

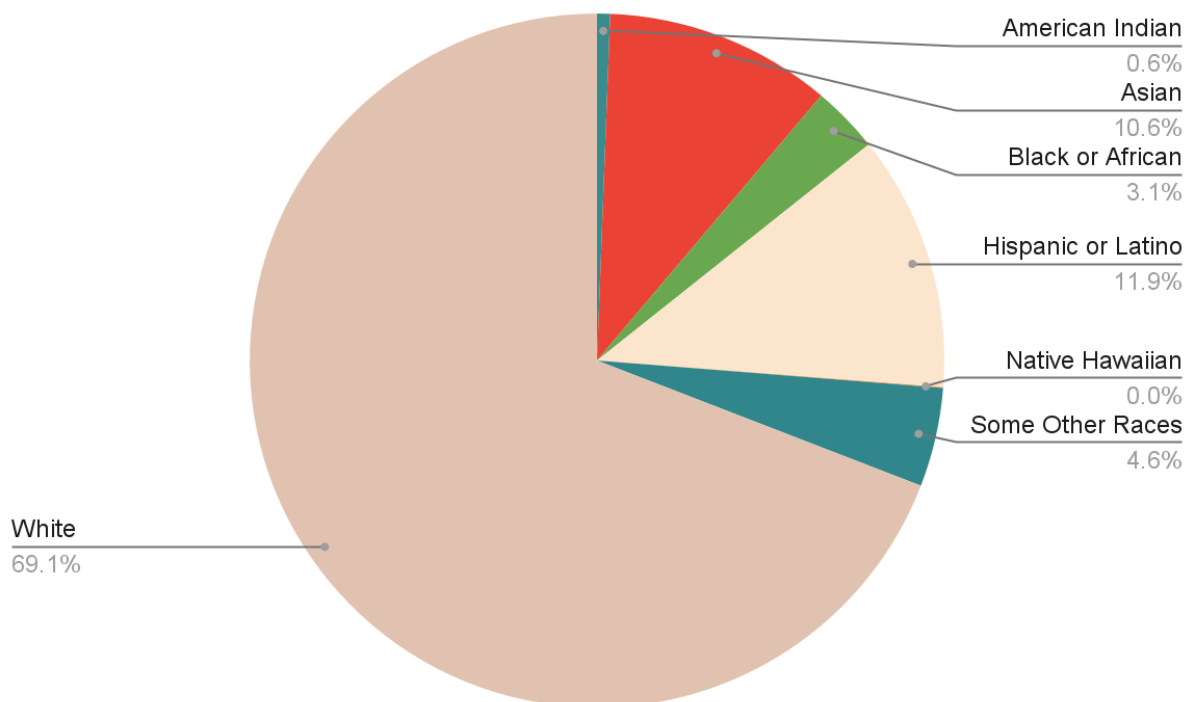
When we saw the opportunity for this grant opportunity from a search on grants.gov, we were just finishing a multi-year project of Cultural Asset Mapping that sought to increase representation, ownership, and a sense of belonging. Underrepresentation was on the front of

our minds along with the often overlooked, intangible ways to reach the goals such as relationship building.

The grant opportunity caught our attention. Not for us to do it alone, but for us to do what we do - collaborate with multiple groups to make connections, identify gaps, and identify resources. The most obvious core partner for the project was Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum (Museum). We met with the Executive Director, Travis Gross, to share our idea and the potential direction for the project. He liked the idea and agreed to share it with the Museum's Board of Directors, and they agreed to hear out pitch.

## Developing the Project and Writing the Grant

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the City of Sheboygan has a population of 49,929<sup>1</sup> people and the following race and ethnicity breakdown.



When outsiders think of Sheboygan County, they often think of “beers, brats, and bars.” For those with a more personal connection to the city, they may think about cheese, chairs, bathroom fixtures, and supper clubs. And while all of these components are indeed a significant part of Sheboygan’s history and culture, they are hardly the full story. This project seeks to provide a new understanding of Sheboygan County’s history and contributions by

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census 2020: DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171) ([link](#))

underrepresented populations whose contributions are so often left out of the historical narrative.

The purpose of this project is to celebrate select communities' important and varied history, as well as provide education and instruction for community-based archiving. This project will also serve as a template for developing new connections and digital platforms for other underrepresented populations in the City of Sheboygan.

By creating a collaborative and community-based archive and digital resource space, Sheboygan County's history will be understood through the lens of the underrepresented populations of women, LGBTQIA+ community, and Hmong people.

We made our pitch and agreed to move forward together. Green Bicycle Co. took the lead on writing the grant and developing the project. The Museum already had a Grant.gov account and SAM<sup>2</sup> and DUNS<sup>3</sup> registrations needed to apply for federal funding. Additionally, this organization is a 501(c)(3). Travis accessed the grant and added Green Bicycle Co. staff to the application. In turn, Green Bicycle Co. created a shared Google folder with the application questions for us to review as the project progressed.

An important part in the process was identifying project partners. We connected with partners that we already had established relationships with or had crossed paths with through other projects or presentations - so they understood our work and our team. (Intangible Asset: Trust).

We reached out to Sheboygan County LGBTQ Alliance (Alliance), John Michael Kohler Arts Center (JMKAC), and Hmong Women's Society. We received letters of support from both the Alliance and JMKAC.

## The Award

The Museum was happy to inform us that our project was one of 80 grantees, of over 400 applicants, across the county. We were awarded half, \$25,000, of the original grant request, \$50,000, and we adjusted the scope of work accordingly. The most significant shift was to focus on the City of Sheboygan rather than Sheboygan County. The Museum contracted with Green Bicycle Co. for the project.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://sam.gov/content/home> The System for Award Management (SAM) is the Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS. A SAM Registration is Required to Bid on Government Contracts and to Receive Grants.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dnb.com/> D-U-N-S® stands for "data universal numbering system." D-U-N-S® numbers are issued by Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) and consist of nine digits. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) adopted the use of D-U-N-S® numbers to track how federal grant money is dispersed, but they are now being phased out in favor of a unique entity identifier (UEI) assigned by the System for Award Management (SAM). Until April 3, 2022, the D-U-N-S® number will be the authoritative identifier.

# Project Staff

The Green Bicycle Co. project team members include:

- **Heather Cleveland, AICP, Founder & President:** Heather is a certified planner through AICP (American Institute of Certified Planners) and holds a BS in Civil Engineering and a Master of Urban Planning degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Heather has a vast array of experience in environmental consulting and non-profit organizations. She is a compassionate listener and visionary that quickly sees processes and systems and finds inspiration and challenge from different viewpoints and experiences.
- **Barbara Alvarez, Community Educator:** Barbara has a Masters in Information Science from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign and an Advanced Specialist Certificate in Information Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has spent a decade helping professionals, organizations, and businesses improve their information access, develop media and literacy skills, build meaningful relationships, and share their powerful stories.
- **Ava Stroessner, High School Intern:** Ava is currently a senior at Plymouth High School and plans to attend college to study business and sustainability with an interest in fashion marketing in the fall. Ava participates in various extracurriculars and clubs through her school and has stepped into many leadership roles where her determination and problem solving skills shine.

## High School Internship

As part of the project, we hired a high school intern to assist with research, community outreach, and other tasks. It's an opportunity to connect youth with community work while providing an opportunity for them to learn.

Ava Stroessner accepted the position and her first day was Wednesday, June 27, 2022. Ava is a senior at Plymouth High School during the 2022-2023 school year.

Ava transcribed the interviews Barbara has been conducting and working alongside Heather with the LGBTQ+ portion of the project. Ava attended a LGBTQ Alliance meeting with Heather and will attend more in the future. Ava has also been researching the Hmong community and how they came to Wisconsin and Sheboygan County.

## The Project + Community Engagement

The purpose of the Telling the Full History Project is to “develop a better understanding of the role that underrepresented communities played in the history and evolution of Sheboygan County, as well as educating and creating a model for continued data collection, communications, and partnerships.”

Green Bicycle Co. acted as the organizer and facilitator for this project and led a group of representatives from women, LGBTQIA+, and Hmong communities in Sheboygan County. These members met regularly and determined the best strategies for dialogue with their communities and to share these stories. Three organizations assisted with community connection and engagement:

- Sheboygan County LGBTQ Alliance
- Hmong Women's Society
- Sheboygan County League of Women Voters

These communities were selected because they are organized, established, have a strong presence and are underrepresented in our community and at the Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum on an on-going basis.

Engaging, listening, and follow-up were key parts of the community engagement process. To ensure the project was mutually beneficial, the direction for each community pivoted and evolved through the process.

As each community group had different dynamics, organization, and direction, three engagement methodologies emerged organically that suited each community respectively as described in the next section.

## Community-Based Participatory Research

In order to collect stories from marginalized voices, one must approach the project thoughtfully by building trust with the community. The three different models that we utilized (Liaison, Committee, and Support) allowed community members to guide us throughout the process.

This is a key component of a participatory project. By definition, according to the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology, a Community-Based Participatory Research<sup>4</sup> (CBPR) is a way for researchers and community members “to collaborate as equals in the research process.” Through this approach, community members inform project facilitators of community needs, data collection processes, and considerations for sustainability and longevity.

As such, we recommend that anyone who intends to collect stories from underrepresented voices be mindful of the participatory nature of this project. More specifically, we recommend these following steps that are rooted in the CBPR methodology.

1. **Flexibility:** Be flexible in how the partnerships are developed, organized, and how often they meet. Prioritize the preferences of community members. This will help build trust.

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<https://oxfordre.com/anthropology/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.001.0001/acrefore-9780190854584-e-225.jsessionid=A176D4BB8461E3510B37C7D87B80F09D>



2. **Collaboration:** Build upon existing community work. As we found with the Hmong Community and LGBTQ+ Alliance, community initiatives were already underway. However, they needed direction and infrastructure which we were able to provide.
3. **Consistency:** Involve partners in how the data is collected and disseminated. Provide regular updates through emails, committee meetings, and/or educational gatherings about the progress of the project.

Above all, CBPR breaks down power dynamics between researchers or facilitators and community partners by relying on the unique strengths and perspectives of participants. The benefits of CBPR were introducing us to community organizations and members, building trust and enthusiasm for the project, and exploring where these stories can be housed or shared.

When we set out to “tell the full history,” we were committed to collecting and sharing stories from underrepresented communities. However, we have learned that the process of collecting data is just as important as the final product. It is through flexibility, collaboration, and consistency that we could work on a project that will have a sustainable impact.

## Community Engagement Methodology

### Women (Liaison Model)

The objective of the Women’s Task Force is to investigate any suffrage connections in Sheboygan County, give voice to the untold stories, and educate the community about voting rights in Wisconsin. Because Wisconsin was the first state to ratify the 19th amendment<sup>5</sup>, this is an important history that needs to be told. Barbara Alvarez, a Community Educator and Information Specialist at Green Bicycle Co., oversaw this task force.

In order to develop the Women’s Task Force, Barbara had initial meetings with the Sheboygan County League of Women Voters. These meetings allowed Barbara the opportunity to explain the scope of the project and gain their support. We mutually agreed upon events that they could participate in and ways that they could promote the grant within their network. Most importantly, this relationship introduced Barbara to several community members who have already done research and events about suffrage in Sheboygan. These events had not been documented through formal process or consolidated with other suffrage stories. The Task Force gave an opportunity to bring work that has already been done in the community and bring it into this project.

Those connections allowed us to collect 16 interviews from women who have run for office. Through these interviews, we learned about the unique historical and contemporary experiences of female politicians in Sheboygan. These stories not only helped us learn from

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wpr.org/how-wisconsin-became-first-state-ratify-19th-amendment>

underrepresented voices, but also built up enthusiasm for this project and community stories. It also introduced us to the Live Forever Project, a grassroots organization who has collected local stories for at least seven years. Through this partnership, we were able to learn from their own collection methodologies, as well as learn how the stories could be turned into artistic expressions.

On Sunday, October 23, we hosted a project update for Women & Politics at Green Bicycle Co. This was in partnership with the Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum, the Live Forever Project, and the Sheboygan County League of Women Voters. At this event, we shared progress of the project, learned about how to vote in upcoming elections, and poets from the Live Forever Project shared their creations. We had nearly more than 30 people come to this event, which demonstrated the enthusiasm for the Telling the Full History Fund.

## LGBTQIA+ (Committee Model)

The objective of the LGBTQIA's Task force is to work with members of the Sheboygan County LGTBQ Alliance (Alliance) to find goals for the project together. Heather Cleveland, Community Developer, LGTBQ Ally, and member of the LGTBQ Alliance Leadership Committee, oversaw the taskforce.

The Alliance offered a letter of support for the project during the grant writing process. This is noteworthy because Heather was already present at the meetings, volunteering when opportunities arose, rather than a cold request. Building authentic relationships is an important and often overlooked part of connecting with the community.

Once the grant was awarded, Heather met with the Alliance and presented the project concept including that the Sheboygan LGTBQ community was one of three communities that we would be working with. At the meeting, eight people signed up to join the project committee and also identified several projects in neighboring communities including:

- Our Voices: LGTBQ+ Stories of Northeastern Wisconsin ([link](#))
- Legends of Drag: Portraits by Harry James and Devin Antheus ([link](#))

We briefly explored opportunities for collaboration or complementary concepts and moved away from the idea when it did not gain momentum.

We also learned that the Museum would be hosting a traveling exhibition from the Wisconsin Historical Society "Traveling Exhibit – We Will Always Be here: Wisconsin's LGBTQ+ Historymakers" in August and September. After discussion with several Alliance members, we decided to host two scanning days. One at the Museum in collaboration with a reception for the traveling exhibit and another at the Mead Public Library.

While at the scanning day at the Museum, a lesbian couple stopped in to share photos from their wedding day - one of the first lesbian couples to wed in Sheboygan County when same sex marriage was legally recognized in Wisconsin on October 6th, 2014. From their story, we

pivoted and narrowed in the project to collect stories and identified several people to interview, including David Pittner who grew up in Sheboygan, Wisconsin and recently retired from his job at Kohler Company in Kohler, Wisconsin and Nina Soul who recently moved to Sheboygan, Wisconsin and opened a business, Spiritual Vibes, on Michigan Avenue in Sheboygan, WI.

Barbara conducted the interviews, and Ava reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. Ava continued to connect with and update the Alliance throughout the project by attending the monthly meetings.

With a small committee, including the Alliance Chair, Carolynn Lee, Ava, and Sarah Engel-Streicher, we moved forward to design a “History” tab for the Alliance’s website that including national, state, and local history, the interviews, and an opportunity for the community to submit their stories.

## Hmong Community (Support Model)

The objective of the Hmong Community Task force was to support the already defined history project that needed support. Heather Cleveland, Community Developer, and Sheila Yang, Hmong Community Leader, oversaw the committee.

The collaboration was primed after Sheila attended Green Bicycle Co.’s Cultural Asset Mapping presentation at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (JMKAC). From that presentation, she had a glimpse into our work. We met for lunch to discuss opportunities for future collaboration and potentially this project.

Once the grant was awarded, Heather connected with Sheila and presented the opportunity to the Sheboygan Hmong Mutual Assistance Association. The direction for the collaboration was open, and we really wanted to assist them with something they already had in mind but did not have the capacity or connections to move forward.

Around the same time as the meetings with the Hmong community, a meeting with another partner, the JMKAC, revealed that the Hmong community was working on a play that the late Hmong leader, Yer Yang, wrote about the history of the Hmong people.

The next presentation was to the Hmong Women’s Society. From that meeting, it was determined that Heather would work with the Hmong Women’s Society Play Committee. Heather’s two main points of contact were Sheila and Mai Her. They were already working towards presenting the play and needed support to help it move forward.

At the first Play Committee meeting, it was clear to everyone that someone with theater experience was needed to transform the story into a play format. With our project team connections, we connected with a long-time community theater person, Hilary Mukavitz. She helped the group format the play into scenes and helped the Play Committee understand all the

components involved in play production including costumes, sounds and lighting, direction, and set design.

Once the play began coming together, Mai reached out to the Hmong community for the lead actor roles. This is when the magic happened. The two lead actors, Houa Vang and Luther Yang, both had theater experience. Houa recently graduated from college with a degree in film and Luther participated in the Sheboygan North High Theater program.

Houa took the lead as Director and further developed the script. With her leadership, the play script, and the additional connections to the Hmong community, the play came together. Multiple rehearsals were held each week.

JMKAC hosted the play in their beautiful annex space. JMKAC also welcomed people from the Hmong community to assist with sounds and lighting and other technical aspects of the play.

## Exhibitions

### Sheboygan Women in Politics History

To date, sixteen stories have been recorded and transcribed. There are plans for these files to be uploaded and hosted on the Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum website. The Live Forever Project will also have the opportunity to upload and host these files to their own website. This digital exhibit will contribute to a community archive for the Historical Society & Museum.

### Sheboygan LGBTQ History

The “History” page on the Sheboygan County LGBTQ Alliance website is developed and live. It includes national, state, and local history in addition to featuring two interviews with Sheboygan residents. At the Winter Ball, postcards were shared announcing the webpage and welcoming people to contribute to. The website will be linked on the Museum’s website.

### Sheboygan Hmong “We Crossed the River to Meet our Fate”

The Sheboygan Hmong Women’s Society hosted a play about the history of Hmong people, “We Crossed the River to Meet our Fate” within an exhibition that included Hmong food, music, clothing, and performances. The entire event was documented by the Hmong community, and the play was recorded and shared on the Suab Hmong Broadcasting Youtube Channel.

# Impact

The impact of this project has been significant. In addition to collecting 18 oral histories from women and LGBTQIA+ members, we also supported a play about the history of Hmong people and the creation of history web pages for several organizations.

The impact of this project can be broken down into three key takeaways:

- Community Connections
- Reflection and Dialogue
- Education

1. **Community Connections:** By building relationships through different community engagement models, we were able to develop connections that we may not otherwise have formed. For example, through conversations with the Sheboygan County League of Women Voters, we were introduced to members of the community that have already conducted research about women's suffrage in Sheboygan. Those members then introduced us to the Live Forever Project which collects stories and turns them into artistic expressions. Therefore, the Telling the Full History Fund was able to introduce various organizations and members with one another. This has the potential to lead to more sustainable community-based projects.
2. **Reflection and Dialogue:** This project included interviewing members from the community about their own experiences in Sheboygan. It also focused on supporting the Hmong community in connecting with resources to share their history through a play. Additionally, the Alliance website allowed for future sharing with the LGTBQ community. Such initiatives required participants to reflect on their own positionality, history, and actions within Sheboygan and consider what the future holds for Sheboygan. These reflections were recorded, transcribed, and will be shared on a website. This will encourage others in the community to reflect on these stories and how they connect with their own experiences in Sheboygan. Such reflection fosters dialogue between community members. Through regular Task Force meetings, as well as Telling the Full History Fund gatherings, we opened dialogue with the community about women in politics, LGBTQ+ needs, and Hmong history.
3. **Education:** A major impact of this project has been — and will continue to be — educating the community about the experiences of voices that have historically been underrepresented. Through interviews, a play, and a history website with continued story collection, there are a variety of modalities for people to learn about women in politics, the LGBTQ+ community, and the Hmong community. These will continue to be fostered on a website that shares these stories and takeaways. We have had conversations with teachers who are interested in incorporating these resources in their curriculum. Additionally, community organizations will be welcome to use these findings in their own community-based events and programs.

# Challenges

**Who asked for this?** Green Bicycle Co. created the concept for the project and brought it to the partners including the Museum and community organizations. With that, at times we lacked a unified understanding of the goals of the project. However, because we worked together with each community, we did work towards goals that we determined together, but for the systemic goals of the project, it will take a vision from all groups.

**Shift from the status quo.** The grant and our community favors honoring, celebrating, and recognizing buildings and artifacts when it comes to history, but for underrepresented groups, that is not necessarily an option. Additionally, more recent history may not always be recognized as historic and worthy. The Museum is accustomed to creating exhibits and educational programs within their campus, and we were offering a new model of going to the communities for the connections. A shift at the National level of broadening history, but it is slow to evolve in our community.

**Limited capacity.** All of the community organizations that we partnered with were either fully or mostly volunteer driven. The Museum has a small staff with their own on-going duties. Additionally, schools and students are at capacity. This impacted the engagement of the work at times and may impact the sustainability of the work long term.

# Recommendations

**Webpages.** We recommend adding a Project Page to the Museum's new website and link to completed project works:

- Link to Sheboygan County LGBTQ Alliance's History page.  
<https://www.sheboyganlgbtqalliance.org/history>
- Link to the SUAB HMONG NEWS Channel "We Crossed The River to Meet our Fate "YAV TOM NTEJ". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTG-mMC8KhW>
- Link to the Sheboygan County League of Women Voters history page (coming soon).
- Host the Sheboygan Women in Politics interviews.
- Share the Live Forever Project poems and the song.
- Share resources for others to tell their history.

## Federal Grants

We recommend the Museum uses their grant writing tools to help community organizations that do not have those tools. Be sure to write in administrative fee for the work, but also ensure there is value to the partnership:

- Qualifying to apply for federal grants is an intensive and intimidating process.  
Registering for the application portal and obtaining and maintaining the necessary DUNS and SAM registrations. The Museum has this already set-up.
  - D-U-N-S® stands for "data universal numbering system." D-U-N-S® numbers are issued by Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) and consist of nine digits.

- System for Award Management (SAM).
- Partner with organizations on historical projects.
- This may be a capacity issue for the Museum, but it is an even larger barrier for underrepresented organizations.
- This may not be in the scope for the museum today, but perhaps it can be considered in the future.

### **Beyond the Building**

Consider moving beyond the Museum's building for exhibitions, education, and engagements. With this in mind, consider holding workshops to assist people in the community to tell their history. Small inclusions lead to more inclusions leads to big inclusions leads to representation.

### **Continue Outreach**

Continue work on the Hmong Long-Term Exhibit, ensuring it's an opportunity rather than an obligation, with the Hmong Women's Society and others in the Hmong community. Also, look for opportunities to meet people where they are at by attending their meetings and finding the opportunities to weave in history to the work and how the Museum can assist. Lastly, when traveling exhibits or special guests are featured at the Museum, reach out to a local community organization to partner and host a reception together to build awareness, relationships, and stronger connections in the community.

## **Closing**

Thank you for the opportunity to work on this project with three underrepresented communities who are often left out of the historical narrative in the City of Sheboygan. Our hope is that it sparked a better understanding of a new, relational direction for the Museum which will connect the organization to Sheboygan's varied and diverse communities, helping honor intangible histories.