



Innovative and Sustainable Leadership at Museums and Historic Sites

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) created a new Museum Support & Statewide Services Division as of October 1, 2025. According to Commissioner Garrett Donnelly (Midland, Texas), its purpose is “to explore new ways to better assist museums across Texas focusing on building stronger connections between our state historic sites and museums—large and small—for the benefit of the public.”

The Division’s draft mission is *to inspire, support, and connect the people who do Texas history by providing them with innovative resources and strategic partnerships that advance museum excellence, foster public engagement, and strengthen community-centered stewardship.*

Partnerships leverage shared resources and varied perspectives, creating a win-win scenario where the THC and your museum or historic site benefits more than we could alone. The best partnerships combine different but complementary skills.

You are invited to plan next steps to expand THC’s reach and collaboration.

- Inez Wolins, Division Director, Museum Support & Statewide Services
- Ellen Cone Busch, Museum Services Director
- *Vacant*, Assistant Museum Services Assistant Director
- Emily Hermans, Chief Educator
- Danielle Christian, Preservation Programs Education Coordinator



Innovative and Sustainable Leadership at Museums and Historic Sites

January 8-9, 2026, Conference Center, Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site

Day 1. Leading with Clarity—Optimizing Your Museum’s Future

8:30 – 9:15 AM	Welcome and Introductions
9:15 – 10:30 AM	Session 1: Leading Change in Your Organization Identify the major challenges facing your museum, explore barriers that make change difficult, and learn practical leadership tools for guiding your organization through transition.
10:30 – 10:45 AM	Break
10:45 AM – 12 PM	Session 2: Mission, Vision, & Values for Leadership Assess the clarity and usefulness of your mission, vision, and values, and discover how strong alignment can improve decision-making, focus priorities, and strengthen organizational culture.
12 – 1:30 PM	Lunch (included on-site) and time to explore the newly reopened Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site on your own.
1:30 – 2:15 PM	Session 3: Reimagining Museums & Historic Sites Explore what “reimagining” means for relevance and resilience and identify one area of your visitor experience most ready for new ideas, creative thinking, and strategic improvement.
2:15 – 3:45 PM	Session 4: Innovation for Sustainable Museums Use design thinking and human-centered approaches to generate new ideas, explore potential future scenarios, and develop a small “10% experiment” you can test in the next 60–90 days.
3:45 – 4 PM	Break
4 – 5 PM	Session 5: Transforming Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site Jonathan Failor, Complex Manager, shares how Washington-on-the-Brazos reimagined its visitor experience through mission-driven decision-making and considers which strategies might apply to your own institution.
5 – 6 PM	On-Site Networking Reception



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Day 2. Implementing What Matters—Strategic Thinking and Action Planning

8:30 – 9 AM	Welcome Back and Warm-Up
9 – 10:15 AM	Session 6: Strategic Thinking for Museums and Historic Sites Apply strategic tools such as Porter’s Five Forces and scenario thinking to identify a key opportunity facing your museum and outline a recommended direction for moving forward.
10:15 -10:30 AM	Break
10:30 – 11:15 AM	Session 7: Start with the End in Mind— Designing Goals that Deliver Clarify the difference between outputs and outcomes and practice writing meaningful results statements that define success and guide strategic choices for your museum.
11:15 – 12 PM	Session 8: Measuring Impact and Evaluating Success Learn simple, practical ways to evaluate your work by linking outcomes to indicators, identifying barriers to assessment, and recognizing what support would strengthen your evaluation efforts.
12 – 1:30 PM	Lunch (included on-site) and time to explore the newly reopened Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site
1:30 – 2:45 PM	Session 9: Community Engagement Assess your current approaches to community engagement, identify audiences you want to reach more effectively, and explore ideas for building deeper, more reciprocal relationships.
2:45 – 3 PM	Break
3 – 3:45 PM	Session 10: Final Reflections & One-Page Action Plan Synthesize insights from the workshop to create a concise action plan that clarifies your priorities, next steps, and indicators of progress for your organization.

3:45 – 4:15 PM	Session 11: Prioritizing Statewide Support Review the common issues raised in the workshop and participate in a facilitated process to identify which statewide supports would most strengthen Texas museums and guide THC’s future planning.
4:15 – 4:30 PM	Closing

Course Instructors

Max A. van Balgooy

President, Engaging Places LLC

Max A. van Balgooy is co-editor of *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions*, a best-selling anthology of two dozen essays by leaders in the field; an assistant professor in the museum studies program at George Washington University, where he teaches courses on museum management; and on the editorial board of *Curator: The Museum Journal*. He was previously director of the History Leadership Institute, which provides professional development for mid-career and advanced professionals working in history organizations, and director of interpretation and education at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. These experiences provide a rich source of ideas for EngagingPlaces.net, a blog about the opportunities and challenges facing historic sites and house museums.

Ken Turino

Senior Search Consultant, Museum Search and Reference

Ken Turino managed community partnerships and resource development, focusing on exhibitions and community engagement for 24 years at Historic New England. A noted public historian, Turino has published extensively on interpreting historic sites and LGBTQ+ history. He co-edited *Reimagining Historic House Museums* (2019) and *Interpreting Christmas at Museums and Historic Sites* (2024). Ken is active on the AASLH Council and teaches workshops on historic houses. He consults for museums on interpretive planning and interpreting LGBTQ+ history at such institutions as Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, the Gibson House, and Connecticut Landmarks. He also teaches on exhibitions and interpretation of historic sites at Tufts University and recently led a weekend learning course at Harvard University.