Italian American Task Force (IATF)

Step 2 — Defining the Commission's Mission and Public Purpose

Purpose

To define a clear, credible, and enduring public purpose for a proposed state Italian and Italian American Cultural and Heritage Studies Commission. The mission should guide its legislative proposal, educational priorities, partnerships, governance, and long-term accountability.

Why Establish a Permanent Commission?

A permanent, legislatively authorized commission can provide continuity beyond individual events, organizational leadership changes, and temporary initiatives. Its value lies not in permanence alone, but in creating a reliable public framework for educational resources, historical understanding, and cooperation among educators, scholars, cultural institutions, and communities.

Educational Mission

The proposed commission should support accurate, evidence-based study of Italian and Italian American contributions within the broader American and world experience. Educational resources should help teachers connect relevant history with existing subjects and standards, rather than prescribe a single interpretation. Students should encounter historical facts and evidence, consider differing perspectives, ask questions, and reach their own informed conclusions.

Cultural Mission

The commission should encourage appreciation of Italian and Italian American heritage, including immigration, civic life, language, science, medicine, the arts, literature, commerce, and public service. It should also recognize the shared influences and relationships among cultures. The commission's identity is Italian and Italian American; its educational benefits are universal.

Partnership Through Education

The commission should work with existing Departments of Education, schools, colleges, universities, historians, and cultural organizations. Its role is to offer research, educational materials, and opportunities for cooperation—not to displace established educational authorities or compete with organizations already serving the community. Each partner retains its independent identity and mission.

Public Benefit

The public case for a commission rests on broader access to trustworthy historical information, classroom and community learning, cross-cultural understanding, and an enduring institutional resource for future generations. Proposed activities should be evaluated against these public benefits.

Relationship to Existing State Agencies

The commission's legislation and operations should respect the responsibilities of the state's Department of Education and other appropriate agencies. Educational collaboration, review procedures, appointments, and reporting arrangements must be designed for the particular state rather than copied without examination from another jurisdiction.

Legislative and Institutional Objectives

A mission statement should help prospective sponsors understand the commission's public purpose and practical responsibilities. State organizers should consider an appropriate statutory mandate, membership and appointment structure, nonpartisan operation, transparent use of resources, reporting expectations, and continuity across changes in leadership.

Guiding Philosophy

We do not seek to replace what exists. We seek to strengthen it through education, resources, and collaboration. The commission should earn trust through historical accuracy, intellectual openness, public accountability, and constructive partnerships.

Step 2 Deliverable

A concise mission and public-purpose statement suitable for review by the organizing committee, educators, community partners, and prospective legislative sponsors. It should explain what the commission would do, whom it would serve, why a permanent public institution is warranted, and how it would collaborate with existing agencies.

Implementation Guidance

Use this document as a planning framework. Refine the mission through discussion with local educators, organizations, and public officials; adapt terminology to the state's legislative and educational framework. Distinguish proposed activities from established accomplishments when describing the New Jersey model.

This document is an IATF planning resource, not an official NJIHC governing document. This edition is a reconstructed publication draft based on the Step 2 framework; it has not been checked word-for-word against the earlier working draft.