Italian American Task Force (IATF)

New Jersey Model Reference Checklist

Purpose

To provide prospective organizing committees, Italian American organizations, educators, and legislators with a documented reference to New Jersey's experience establishing and operating a permanent Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission.

This checklist will help interested individuals explain the commission model to their colleagues, answer reasonable objections, and identify the resources needed to pursue a comparable initiative in their own states.

1. Legislative Foundation

Obtain the original New Jersey enabling legislation: P.L. 2001, Chapter 343.

Identify the Commission's statutory mission, responsibilities, and authority.

Examine the legislative history and circumstances surrounding its establishment.

Document the roles of legislative sponsors and community advocates.

Identify provisions that may be adapted to another state's legislative requirements.

Question to answer: What makes a legislatively established commission more enduring than an informal committee or volunteer organization?

2. Organization and Governance

Review the Commission's original membership and leadership structure.

Examine appointment procedures, terms of service, and representation.

Identify the responsibilities of officers, committees, and advisory councils.

Review administrative arrangements and reporting responsibilities.

Distinguish statutory requirements from internal operating practices.

Question to answer: How can a commission maintain continuity, accountability, and effective leadership?

3. Educational Mission and Accomplishments

Examine the Universality of Italian Heritage curriculum project.

Identify the educators, historians, and academic advisors involved.

Document relationships with the Department of Education, schools, and universities.

Collect examples of educational resources, professional development, and classroom applications.

Identify how fact-based education and independent critical thinking are supported.

Question to answer: What educational resources can a commission contribute without interfering with existing educational authorities?

4. Cultural and Community Partnerships

Document relationships with Italian American organizations and cultural institutions.

Examine statewide congresses, conferences, and community outreach programs.

Identify collaborations with universities, museums, libraries, and historical organizations.

Review opportunities for cultural preservation and intergenerational participation.

Document examples of organizations working together while maintaining their independence.

Question to answer: How can a commission strengthen existing cultural organizations rather than compete with them?

5. Resources, Administration, and Sustainability

Review the Commission's early use of public and private resources.

Identify administrative support, staffing arrangements, and volunteer contributions.

Examine funding and development activities.

Identify practical operating requirements and potential costs.

Document approaches to institutional continuity and responsible stewardship.

Question to answer: What resources are necessary to begin, and how can a commission operate responsibly over time?

6. Documented Results

Compile the Commission's historical reports and program summaries.

Identify educational initiatives and measurable accomplishments.

Document publications, documentary productions, and public presentations.

Assemble photographs, correspondence, and records of significant milestones.

Distinguish completed accomplishments from proposals and initiatives still under development.

Question to answer: What concrete results demonstrate the public value of the commission model?

7. Adapting the Experience to Another State

Identify relevant state legislative procedures and public commission structures.

Research existing educational agencies and potential partnerships.

Identify participating cultural and community organizations.

Determine which features of the New Jersey model are transferable.

Record legal, financial, administrative, or political considerations requiring state-specific guidance.

Develop a preliminary action plan for the organizing committee.

Question to answer: What can our state build upon, and what must be adapted to our circumstances?

Supporting Evidence

Each completed checklist item should eventually identify:

The relevant source document or historical record.

A concise explanation of its significance.

Its practical application to another state's initiative.

Any limitations or questions requiring additional verification.

Guiding Message

We are not asking other states to begin without experience. We are offering them an established foundation to study, adapt, and build upon.

The New Jersey experience demonstrates how legislative recognition, educational expertise, cultural cooperation, and community commitment can be brought together in service of a continuing public mission.

The Italian American Task Force seeks to make that experience accessible to others.

This checklist is an IATF planning resource. Completion of an item requires supporting documentation; it does not imply that every feature of the New Jersey model is appropriate for every state.