Italian American Task Force (IATF)

COMMISSION BLUEPRINT I STEP 4

Building Statewide Partnerships

A practical framework for developing a statewide coalition around an enduring educational mission.

Purpose

To establish a broad, credible statewide coalition capable of supporting a proposed permanent Italian and Italian American heritage studies commission through education, community participation, and informed legislative engagement.

The organizing committee should welcome partners around a shared public mission without requiring them to abandon their existing activities, leadership, or organizational identities.

Why Statewide Partnerships Matter

Legislators and educators should see that a proposed commission is more than the project of a single association or locality. Statewide participation can bring historical collections, professional expertise, regional perspectives, and continuity to the effort.

A coalition does not need unanimous agreement on every issue. It needs a clearly stated educational purpose, transparent decision-making, and a willingness to work together.

1. Map the Statewide Landscape

Identify Italian American cultural and civic organizations, heritage societies, educational associations, historians, libraries, museums, universities, youth groups, business and professional networks, and relevant public institutions.

Record each organization's geographic reach, educational interests, existing programs, appropriate contact person, and possible contribution. Avoid presenting an organization as a supporter until it has expressly agreed.

2. Invite Participation with a Clear Message

Present a concise explanation of the proposed commission: its public educational mission, why a permanent institution may be useful, what the New Jersey experience illustrates, and how each state will shape its own approach.

Invite discussion rather than demand endorsements. Ask what partners already do, what resources they could share, and what concerns the proposed commission should address.

3. Bring Educators into the Conversation Early

Include teachers, curriculum specialists, school administrators, historians, and higher education representatives in the planning process. Ask how reliable historical materials could complement existing courses, standards, and classroom needs.

The proposed commission should support educational professionals and respect the authority of state and local education agencies. Educational credibility must be developed through qualified participation and careful review of evidence.

4. Respect Organizational Independence

Make clear that participating organizations retain their own officers, membership, finances, events, and missions. Participation in the coalition does not transfer authority to IATF or to another organization.

Use a simple written statement of shared purpose. Distinguish informal interest, active participation, and formal endorsement; do not treat them as interchangeable.

5. Establish a Practical Coordination Structure

Designate a state facilitator or small coordination group to schedule discussions, maintain records, circulate materials, and track agreed actions. Include regional representation when practical.

Set meeting agendas, record decisions, identify responsible individuals and due dates, and make it easy for partners to join later. The organizing committee remains accountable for its own decisions.

6. Develop a Shared Educational Agenda

Identify two or three achievable opportunities, such as gathering historical source materials, introducing educators to existing curriculum resources, planning a statewide information session, or documenting local Italian American contributions.

Early cooperative projects can demonstrate seriousness and help partners test how they will work together before legislative language is drafted. Distinguish proposed activities from programs already completed.

7. Prepare for Legislative Conversations

Identify public officials willing to learn about the initiative, but avoid assuming sponsorship or support before it is confirmed. Prepare an accurate briefing describing the proposed mission, potential partners, the New Jersey model, and unresolved questions about structure, cost, and administration.

The coalition should remain nonpartisan. Engagement with legislators should be factual, respectful, and open to questions about public benefit and accountability.

8. Sustain Participation

Communicate progress regularly, recognize contributions accurately, invite younger generations into meaningful roles, and create ways to share responsibilities. Keep a record of commitments and follow through on them.

Plan for turnover in volunteer leadership. The coalition should be capable of continuing its work even when an individual facilitator steps aside.

Step 4 Deliverable

A Statewide Partnership Register and Outreach Plan that identifies potential partners, documents actual responses and commitments, assigns follow-up responsibilities, and summarizes educational opportunities and unresolved questions.

The register should be maintained privately by the organizing committee. Public lists of supporters should include only those who have authorized their inclusion.

Implementation Guidance

Begin with a manageable set of conversations, then broaden outreach across the state. Do not delay progress until every organization has joined. Use the New Jersey experience as a reference, while adapting outreach, governance, and educational relationships to the state's circumstances.

IATF may provide examples, introductions, and practical guidance. Each state's organizing committee remains responsible for its own coalition and decisions.

Appendix — Statewide Partnership Register

Duplicate this worksheet for each prospective partner. Record only confirmed commitments.

Field	Working notes
Organization / institution	
Region / community served	
Contact / role	
Educational or cultural interests	
Potential contribution	
Outreach date / method	
Response (interested / participating / endorsed)	
Follow-up owner and date	
Permission for public listing?	
Questions / next action	

Planning resource prepared by IATF. This is proposed guidance, not legal advice or official NJIHC policy. Historical and legislative references should be checked against original records.