Step 7 — Sustaining the Commission's Educational Mission

From Legislative Permanence to Lasting Educational Achievement

Purpose

To help a newly established state commission translate its legislative mandate into sustained, credible educational work, responsible governance, measurable public benefit, and leadership continuity. A commission's existence is a beginning; its enduring value is demonstrated through what it teaches, preserves, and makes accessible.

1. Put Education at the Center

Adopt a written annual educational plan aligned with the commission's statutory purpose and the responsibilities of existing educational authorities. Prioritize historically accurate, properly sourced materials that encourage students to examine evidence, consider differing perspectives, and think independently.

The New Jersey experience, including the Universality of Italian Heritage approach, illustrates how Italian and Italian American contributions can be connected to subjects already taught. Another state should develop resources appropriate to its own curriculum standards, teachers, and communities.

2. Establish an Annual Program of Work

At the beginning of each year, agree on a manageable set of priorities, responsible leads, deadlines, resource needs, and evidence of completion. Programs may include teacher resources, professional development, public lectures, student projects, oral-history initiatives, archival partnerships, and university collaborations.

Separate proposed activities from funded or approved commitments. Start with work the commission can actually deliver, then expand based on demonstrated capacity.

3. Sustain Partnerships Without Replacing Them

Maintain active relationships with schools, higher education, historians, libraries, museums, Italian American organizations, other cultural groups, and public officials. Define each partnership's purpose and the contribution expected from each participant.

The commission should coordinate and support useful educational opportunities without assuming control of partner organizations or intruding on the legal authority of education agencies.

4. Govern Responsibly and Transparently

Keep bylaws and operating procedures current, subject to applicable state law. Maintain meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, committee assignments, financial records, conflict-of-interest procedures, and public reports as required.

Clarify which decisions belong to commissioners, officers, committees, staff, or partner agencies. Provide an orientation packet to every incoming commissioner.

5. Protect Historical Accuracy and Intellectual Credibility

Use a documented review process for educational publications and digital resources. Identify authors, sources, review dates, corrections, and permissions. Seek qualified educational and scholarly input and distinguish documented facts from interpretation.

Make space for legitimate historical debate and independent inquiry. Nonpartisan education and intellectual integrity are continuing obligations, not one-time declarations.

6. Measure Results and Report Public Benefit

Select a few meaningful indicators rather than measuring success only by event attendance. Possible measures include materials developed and reviewed, educators reached, schools using voluntary resources, partnerships sustained, student projects supported, archival items preserved, and feedback received.

Publish an annual account distinguishing completed results, activities underway, and future proposals. Report resource use in the manner required by state law and applicable funding agreements.

7. Plan Financial and Administrative Sustainability

Identify realistic recurring expenses, administrative needs, available state support, eligible private contributions, and in-kind assistance. Prepare an annual operating plan and maintain appropriate controls over expenditures and records.

Do not assume that legislative authorization guarantees a particular appropriation. Funding and administrative arrangements must be confirmed in the state's governing framework.

8. Develop Future Leadership

Create a succession plan for officers, committee chairs, institutional contacts, and records custodians. Provide mentoring, written role descriptions, and regular opportunities for newer participants—including younger Italian Americans and educators—to take on meaningful responsibilities.

Continuity depends on passing along institutional knowledge rather than relying indefinitely on a small founding group.

9. Preserve the Institutional Record

Maintain an organized archive of enabling legislation, appointments, meeting records, reports, educational materials, program evidence, correspondence, media, and permissions. Establish secure access, retention practices, and a clear handover process consistent with applicable state requirements.

Historical records are both an accountability tool and a resource for future educational work.

10. Review, Adapt, and Renew

At least annually, review the commission's mission, accomplishments, partnerships, resource constraints, and emerging educational opportunities. Seek feedback from educators and participating communities. Revise priorities without abandoning the statutory purpose.

A lasting commission should be stable in mission and responsive in practice.

Step 7 Deliverable

A three-year sustainability plan, supported by an annual educational work program, named responsibilities, a succession and records plan, and a reporting schedule. The plan should identify near-term actions and matters requiring legal, financial, or administrative confirmation.

Sustainability and Succession Checklist

☐ Adopt an annual educational work plan with named leads and deadlines

☐ Confirm procedures for educational review and source documentation

☐ Maintain current partner contacts and collaboration agreements

☐ Approve governance, records, and financial procedures as applicable

☐ Set measurable annual outcomes and a reporting calendar

☐ Identify realistic operating resources and administrative support

☐ Orient new commissioners and document committee responsibilities

☐ Establish leadership succession and mentoring practices

☐ Maintain an accessible, responsibly managed institutional archive

☐ Review progress and update the three-year sustainability plan

Commission Sustainability Planning Record

Priority / action	Responsible person or partner	Target date / evidence

Implementation guidance: Adapt this framework to the commission's actual enabling law, state administrative requirements, educational policies, and available resources. IATF may offer experience and examples, but each state commission remains responsible for its own decisions and operations.

This is an IATF planning resource, not an official New Jersey Italian Heritage Commission governing document or legal advice.