

Understanding the SHPO Workforce



*An Examination of
Internal & External
Conditions with
Recommendations
for Improvement*

March 2025



NC SHPO

National Conference of
State Historic Preservation Officers

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Part 1. Introduction

State Historic Preservation Offices, or SHPOs¹, are an integral part of the statutory and regulatory system of historic preservation in the US. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966² established state historic preservation programs under the leadership of State Historic Preservation Officers appointed by the Governors, made provisions for the employment of “professionally qualified staff” to undertake the mandated responsibilities of the state programs, and created a system of evaluation of the state programs by the National Park Service. There are SHPOs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the 5 US Territories, and the 3 Freely Associated States. The duties of SHPOs, established by federal statute, include:

- Conducting statewide survey and inventory of historic properties.
- Identifying and nominating properties to the National Register, with the participation of the state’s historic preservation review board.
- Preparing and implementing a statewide historic preservation plan.
- Administering federal historic preservation assistance (currently, this includes grants and rehabilitation tax credits).
- Advising and assisting federal and state agencies in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities.
- In collaboration with stakeholders, ensuring that historic preservation is taken into consideration at all levels of planning and development.
- Providing public information, education, training, and technical assistance related to historic preservation.
- In cooperation with local governments, developing local historic preservation programs and administering the Certified Local Government (CLG) program.
- Conducting consultation with federal agencies on the effects of undertakings on historic properties through the “Section 106” process (also referred to as “review and compliance”).

Each SHPO must ensure that they “have full-time access to a historian, architectural historian, and archeologist” – their “professionally qualified staff” referenced above - who

¹ This report generally uses the acronym “SHPO” broadly to refer to a State Historic Preservation Office, rather than to the specific official who serves as the State Historic Preservation Officer.

² The NHPA is now codified at [54 USC 300101 et seq.](#)

meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards (PQS).³ In practical terms, most SHPOs employ far more than the statutory minimum number of PQS-qualified staff, as their participation and oversight is required to perform the full range of statutory duties.

SHPOs receive financial support from the National Park Service (NPS) for these statutory duties through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), which was established in 1976 and today provides annual grants on an apportionment basis.⁴ Currently, the required fund split is 60% federal funds to 40% non-federal match, and 10% of the federal funds must be passed through to CLGs. Most SHPOs are housed in state government agencies and rely on support from state budgets to meet the non-federal HPF match to comprehensively perform federal statutory duties, and to provide additional support to stateside preservation programs.

At the 2023 Annual Meeting of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO), several members raised concerns about staff recruitment, salaries, and a lack of qualified applicants to replace a growing number of retirements, which is compounded by rising workloads. To study this issue in depth, NCSHPO established a Workforce Committee in July 2023 to examine both internal and external factors contributing to what appears to be a challenging landscape, and to understand how we as SHPOs might best serve our extremely dedicated professional staff, who form the backbone of preservation work across the nation.

³ See 36 CFR 61; [“Historic Preservation Fund Grants Manual”](#), National Park Service, State, Tribal, and Local Plans and Grants Division, accessed 2025; [“The Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualifications Standards”](#), U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Acquisition and Property Management, accessed 2025; and [“Professional Qualifications Standards”](#), NPS, accessed 2025.

⁴ All SHPOs receive a guaranteed minimum apportionment, with additional funds distributed according to a formula that takes into account land area, population, and the number of residential structures over 50 years old. [“Historic Preservation Fund Apportionment Update”](#), National Park Service, State, Tribal, and Local Plans and Grants Division, accessed 2025.

The current state apportionment formula was implemented in federal fiscal year 2023 using 2020 Census data. Currently (using FY2024 numbers), SHPOs share an annual appropriation of approximately \$62 million.

The NCSHPO Workforce Committee Charter states:

Hiring and retaining a qualified workforce is essential to maintain the efficacy and legal obligations of State Historic Preservation Offices. Understanding the state of our current and pipeline workforce has been a concern among SHPOs for several years. States have reported difficulty in filling positions with traditionally qualified staff, with known vacancy rates as high as 30%.

The purpose of the NCSHPO Workforce Committee is to examine both the internal conditions and the external forces impacting employment and staffing within State Historic Preservation Offices throughout the United States. The work of the committee is intentionally narrowly focused and will primarily be a collection, synthesis, and analysis of data. The focus of this research will be on the programs and the professional personnel “required” by the HPF to fully staff a SHPO office: Historian, Architectural Historian, and Archaeologist as defined by the SOI Professional Qualifications Standards.

The Workforce Committee was comprised of two subcommittees with specific goals:

1. **Internal Subcommittee:** This subcommittee focused on understanding the existing workforce, examining the current staff of SHPOs. The subcommittee gathered data about salaries, staffing levels, staff tenure, turnover, and retention; rates and lengths of vacancies; and benefits and retirement programs. The Internal Subcommittee also collected some information about the overall level of fringe benefits offered by states in addition to salaries. Additional data gathered by this subcommittee was analyzed to understand what attracted staff to work in a SHPO, as well as their overall job satisfaction once employed.
2. **External Subcommittee:** This subcommittee examined the existing pipeline – both education and work experience - to jobs within SHPOs. This work included identifying existing preservation programs across the country, the certifications and trainings provided, and what level and types of degrees are being granted. This subcommittee also obtained information from private employers in the cultural resources management (CRM) field.

This report is the result of the surveys, meetings, research, and analysis of this Committee.



Photo courtesy of Connecticut SHPO

Photo courtesy of Wisconsin SHPO

Many thanks to the NCSHPO members and staff who led, participated in, and organized the Workforce Committee and its efforts, including:

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1.1 Study Goals and Methodology

The efforts of the Workforce Committee were intended to help SHPO offices better understand the SHPO workforce in a national perspective and to identify strengths, weaknesses, and challenges of employment within SHPOs by:

- Establishing a committee comprised of State Historic Preservation Officers and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officers (DSHPOs) representing a variety of states and program perspectives.
- Creating a baseline that defines the current status of SHPO offices, providing an accurate and measurable snapshot of the current workforce that will allow for comparisons among offices.
- Developing survey reporting and analysis that may be used in advocating for additional funding and for increasing appropriation levels to recruit and retain qualified staff.
- Collecting information regarding the degrees, training, and career paths that lead to SHPO employment.
- Collecting information about recruitment efforts, including academic and professional qualifications for employment as well as recruitment strategies and best practices.
- Understanding the flow of SHPO staff to and from other employment or opportunities.
- Creating a report which addresses recommendations for specific action, for best practices, and for future study.



SHPO staff visit West Side Market, Cleveland, Ohio.

Courtesy of Ohio SHPO



Visiting Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse.

Courtesy of Maryland SHPO

1.2 Executive Summary

NCSHPO's goal for this report was to collect sufficient data about the SHPO workforce to examine SHPO concerns, including staff recruitment, salaries, and a lack of qualified applicants to replace a growing number of retirements coupled with rising workloads – and discuss how the data illuminated trends and supported or disproved perceptions. Data gathering and analysis needed to establish reasonable points of comparison across widely differing SHPOs; therefore, the committee's work focused on the common ground: those staff in SHPOs who are performing federal statutory duties, most of whom are paid in full or in part using federal HPF funds. In addition, NCSHPO wished to look to the future and learn more about the next generation of potential SHPO professionals through the lenses of education and work experience, which involved partnering with outside organizations for outreach and participation. Workforce Committee members contributed their experiences from administration of diverse SHPO offices and developed key takeaways and recommendations within a national SHPO perspective.

In creating this report, NCSHPO sought to perform an internal look at SHPO offices, as well as to evaluate external forces and partners, dividing the work into two subcommittees which met regularly from June 2023 through August 2024.

The Internal Subcommittee conducted its investigation of the existing SHPO workforce in three sequential parts.

1. A **SHPO Workforce Survey** was distributed via Google Forms and sought high-level information about the structure, staffing levels, and funding of each SHPO office.
2. The **Workforce Census** requested that each SHPO office complete an Excel spreadsheet with information about positions performing mandated federal duties; information collection included job duties, vacancy rates, incumbency rates, and salaries.
3. A **SHPO Staff Survey** was distributed via Google Forms to SHPO leadership (consisting of State Historic Preservation Officers and their Deputies), who were asked to distribute the survey to their staff members who perform mandated federal duties. This anonymous survey included questions about the respondents' years of experience, job responsibilities, benefits, job skills, job satisfaction, and perceptions of positions outside of SHPOs.

The External Subcommittee examined the education and recruitment pipelines for SHPOs in two discrete surveys.

1. A **survey for educational institutions** was released to academic programs in preservation, architecture, archaeology, and history with the cooperation of the National Council on Preservation Education (NCPE). Through responses to the SHPO Workforce Survey, SHPOs assisted in identifying preservation education programs in their areas. The survey produced a snapshot of the current state of preservation education, including data on enrollment and graduation rates, training and coursework, as well as financial assistance and work experience offered to students.
2. A **survey of cultural resources management (CRM) firms** was sent to leadership in private CRM firms with the partnership of the American Cultural Resources Association (ACRA), a membership group for the CRM industry. Firm leaders were asked about the preparedness of new graduates for positions for the field as well as the firm's recruitment challenges.



Idaho SHPO at premiere of “Idaho's Nuclear Navy” (a mitigation documentary). *Courtesy of Idaho SHPO*



Arizona SHPO staff go underground...on a site visit to a mine. *Courtesy of Arizona SHPO*

Summary of Participation

While not all SHPOs responded to the committee's surveys, there was broad representation, with 50 of 59 SHPOs answering the SHPO Workforce Survey. The Workforce Census, which collected specific information regarding individual staff positions, garnered 41 responses covering 881 positions. The survey responses represent a wide variety of funding levels; however, in terms of geography, the western states are underrepresented in the final data.

Over 450 SHPO staff members responded to the anonymous SHPO Staff Survey and provided candid answers related to their jobs and their overall work experience.

In addition, Workforce Committee members held a session at the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) Forum in West Palm Beach, Florida in August 2024 to share information and encourage feedback and discussion. The session, entitled *The Historic Preservation Workforce: Current and Future*, was attended by private and public sector preservation professionals and SHPO staff, who provided their insights and comments on data and trends. Much of the information gathered in our surveys was echoed by those attending the session.

Nearly 60 educational institutions responded to the survey issued with the cooperation of NCPE, and 28 ACRA members responded to the CRM firm survey. Furthermore, the committee gathered data and information from NCPE and ACRA leadership as well as general observations from SHPOs about factors that may affect the training, hiring, professional development, and retention of workers in public or private preservation careers.



SHPO staff site visit to Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin House in Buffalo, New York. *Courtesy of New York SHPO*



Reviewing preservation treatments at Pemaquid Lighthouse, Maine. *Courtesy of Maine SHPO*

Summary of Key Findings

A summary of key findings is provided below, while a more detailed version of these findings is in Part 9.

1. While federally mandated work is the same across the nation, SHPOs operate in a **variety of different environments with varying constraints.**
2. Since most are located within larger agencies of state governments, **SHPOs have limited autonomy in setting job classifications, pay scales, starting salaries, or incremental pay increases.**
3. **Relatively few SHPOs have other dedicated revenue streams.** Even HPF competitive grant programs do not cover costs and, in fact, may create additional staffing burdens and costs.
4. Staffing levels and funding are major concerns for most SHPOs. Nationally, approximately 63% of HPF funding is expended on payroll, and yet **the funding available is often not sufficient to staff all the mandated federal duties of a SHPO.**
5. Concerns about **insufficient staffing levels were expressed at the staff level**, with SHPO staff who were surveyed reporting that their offices have insufficient staff to do necessary work, support new initiatives, or to serve all areas of their states.
6. The **SHPO workforce tends to stay with their SHPOs for the long term** – often until retirement.
7. Because of the long tenure of many staff in the preservation field and at their current SHPO, they embody decades of experience, and **retirement often means a substantial loss of institutional knowledge.**
8. **SHPO staff salaries are highly dependent on state government budgets and HR requirements with no guarantee to increase over time.**
9. **SHPOs have high position vacancy rates**, especially for positions with responsibilities in archaeology and Certified Local Government programs.
10. **SHPO staff salaries are not in line with the educational requirements of their positions, nor are they comparable to those of others**, especially federal employees, who do the same type of work.
11. **Many of those who make their careers in SHPOs find job satisfaction and stability**, citing work-life balance, general collegiality of SHPO staff, values-oriented missions, and a commitment to public service.
12. Educational institutions surveyed presented a positive picture of the future workforce, with **stable or increasing enrollment in their programs** and broad course offerings, from research and history to classes in construction practices and mediation.

13. **CRM employers surveyed felt that 75% of candidates and new hires did not enter the job market with the necessary skills to do the job** and that the employer had to make a substantial investment to provide training.
14. The educational pipeline delivers candidates who require additional on-the-job training in any preservation sector. SHPOs and other **employers need to provide additional training.**
15. The surveys confirmed that in addition to specialized education and training, **SHPO employees need a variety of “hard” and “soft” workplace skills to be successful.**
16. **SHPO staff feel that it is necessary to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards if working in a preservation-related position.**
17. While benefits, including paid time off, state pensions, and insurance benefits contributed to job satisfaction and tenure of current SHPO staff, the largest number responded that that the **highest motivating factor was the opportunity work in their chosen field.** They also valued their colleagues and the opportunity for public service.
18. **The need to recruit, train, and retain the next generation of preservation professionals and leaders is acute and ongoing.** Meeting the challenge starts with getting pre-college students interested in the field, continues through the provision of paid internships for those in undergraduate or graduate programs, and persists in the need for training, growth, and meaningful mentorship throughout a career.



SHPO and FEMA staff survey damage after Hurricane Sandy.
Courtesy of New Jersey SHPO



SHPO staff at Sunset Cemetery, Manhattan, Kansas.
Courtesy of Kansas SHPO

Summary of Recommendations

A summary of recommendations is provided below, while a more detailed and expansive version of these recommendations can be found in Part 10.

1. NCSHPO, SHPOs, and partners should continue **advocating for federal funding** for SHPOs to support the administration of mandated federal responsibilities.
2. Additional advocacy is needed to encourage **additional state funding** to support SHPOs.
3. NCSHPO and SHPOs should explore **additional revenue streams**, mainly at the state level.
4. Additional advocacy is needed to ensure all SHPOs can **participate in NPS competitive grant programs**, and that they are compensated commensurate to their workload for those programs.
5. NCSHPO and SHPOs should continue to **regularly update data on SHPOs** and their workforce to allow comparisons over time and track national trends, conduct surveys of SHPO staff members, and collect additional topical information, including about internships.
6. NCSHPO should foster **direct collaboration amongst SHPOs for best practices on workforce related topics**, including revenue streams, recruitment, staff retention, training, transition planning, and engaging with universities and their students.
7. NCSHPO should establish an **Academic Collaboration Committee** which can carry forward engagement with partners about SHPOs and their workforce needs.
8. NCSHPO should convene a **summit among NCSHPO, ACRA, NCPE, NPS, and ACHP to discuss the disconnect between academic training and skills needed in the workplace**. This group of partners should also discuss specific training opportunities, potential audiences, and model or pilot programs.
9. NCSHPO should follow up with NPS regarding the **status of updates to the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (PQS)** and to share the results of this report.
10. NCSHPO should form a **work group to examine the PQS**.

1.3 Next Steps

NCSHPO hopes that this report assists SHPOs in understanding the national context of SHPO employment, in meeting its challenges, and in planning for the future. Workforce challenges likely cannot be met without cooperation across many sectors, including federal, state, and local governments; nonprofit advocates; private sector employers; educational institutions; and industry groups. Younger staff in particular should be encouraged to participate in efforts and discussions that will allow us to rise to the challenge and shape the field as we move forward.

In order to continue the dialogue, NCSHPO intends to:

1. Continue advocacy, in cooperation with partners, for increased federal funding for SHPOs to support their administration of duties under federal statute, and funding from all sources to support and augment historic preservation activities.
2. Include additional workforce-related questions in the NCSHPO annual member survey to allow comparisons over time.
3. Form working committees or host regular round tables for collaboration amongst SHPO staff on best practices on important topics identified in this report.
4. Form a working committee to examine the PQS and make recommendations about how they might be updated.
5. Identify and create opportunities for dialogue and partnership with academic programs, ACRA, NCPE, NPI, NPS, ACHP, and others related to preservation education.
6. Invite feedback. Recognizing that many voices have contributed to and will continue to shape this conversation, we invite you to [**Share Your Feedback on This Report!**](#)

Part 2. Data Gathering from SHPO Offices

2.1 Methodology for SHPO Workforce Survey

The Internal Subcommittee began its work by reviewing the relevant portions of previous biennial surveys of NCSHPO members, which collected information about SHPO structure, staffing numbers, HPF apportionment, and overall budget. The subcommittee also reviewed the HPF Manual and the information required in the NPS HPF annual report, which SHPOs must submit for their apportionment, to identify good points of comparison across SHPOs. The subcommittee determined that a single survey designed to capture all the desired detailed information about the SHPO workforce would simply be too long and unwieldy. Instead, the subcommittee decided to issue two surveys in sequence, allowing the second survey to build on the first, and allowing them to have different formats.

The subcommittee's approach to the first survey was to ask broad questions about each SHPO's staffing numbers, HPF apportionment, sources of funding, programs, work locations, and schedules. While some of these questions are also asked in the NCSHPO biennial survey, the subcommittee felt it was important to collect the information at one time and from a single response source to ensure consistency of the data. In addition, the survey asked about the workforce pipeline, specifically staff members' employment prior to joining the SHPO, their subsequent employment after leaving the SHPO, and recruitment efforts for staff. At the request of the External Subcommittee, three questions focused on preservation education and outreach to K-12 schools and universities. The subcommittee made a deliberate effort to phrase questions in a way that avoided or minimized personal interpretation, and to ask questions that allow for comparisons across SHPOs whose budget and staffing situations are very different. For example, the survey provided guidance about how the term "SHPO" should be interpreted, which was to include staff performing state and federal historic preservation related duties but to exclude staff in museum or historic site operations. Similarly, questions sought to enable points of comparison based on HPF apportionment and required match, rather than solely on overall SHPO budgets.

The link to the first survey was distributed via email to SHPO leadership by NCSHPO staff on October 20, 2023, with a due date of November 15, 2023. It was also posted on the SHPO/DSHPO Forum maintained by NCSHPO. One response was requested from each SHPO. On November 15, NCSHPO sent a follow-up email extending the due date for responses to November 30. Later responses were also accepted and incorporated into the data set.

2.2 Methodology for the Workforce Census

While the first survey was circulating, the Internal Subcommittee reconceived the second survey as an Excel spreadsheet, which came to be called the Workforce Census. Here, SHPO leadership would enter detailed information about individual staff positions. Instructions noted that respondents should include “only staff who are performing your SHPO's mandated federal responsibilities under the HPF⁵ (regardless of how they are funded).” For each position listed in the spreadsheet, information was collected about what HPF program area(s) the staff member works in, vacancy rates, difficulty of filling the position, preparedness of applicants to perform position duties, position status (full time/part time, permanent/contractual/term limited, supervisory/nonsupervisory), percentage of cost that is supported by HPF funds, incumbency, and current and anticipated future salary ranges.

Like the first survey, the Workforce Census was distributed via email to SHPO leadership by NCSHPO staff and posted on the SHPO/DSHPO thread of the NCSHPO Forum, with one response requested from each SHPO office. The Workforce Census was distributed on November 27, 2023, with a requested due date of December 20, 2023. Ultimately, Workforce Census responses were received through March 30, 2024 and included in the data set. The Internal Subcommittee reviewed each SHPO's response and reached out to the respondents for clarifications or additional information. In addition, minor modifications and corrections to the responses were made where needed to standardize the data and facilitate data analysis. Data was then compiled into one dataset, and the positions were grouped together in two ways: 1) positions sharing the same primary program area and 2) all positions working within a particular program area. The data could then be analyzed, and comparisons made by program as well as by state.

In responding to the Workforce Census, SHPOs provided salary information for nearly all positions. Salaries were selected from a drop-down menu containing salary brackets in \$5,000 increments. Instructions were provided for the conversion of part-time employees, or employees paid hourly, into an approximate annual salary. The census requested both the salary of the current incumbent and the anticipated hiring salary range for position, as if it were currently under recruitment. For data compatibility reasons, it was necessary to use an average salary for each bracket; the analysis within this report is based on this.

⁵ This alludes to the program areas outlined in the HPF Manual, for consistency in data collection and ease of reference by SHPOs.

2.3 Response Rates for SHPO Workforce Survey and Workforce Census

The SHPO Workforce Survey and the Workforce Census were sent to 50 states, the District of Columbia, the five US territories, and three freely associated states, for a total of 59 SHPOs. The SHPO Workforce Survey garnered 50 responses, which included two of the five territories and two of the freely associated states, for an overall response rate of 85%. Forty-one respondents completed the Workforce Census, for an overall response rate of 69%. The Workforce Census gathered information about 885 SHPO positions.

Eleven SHPOs completed the SHPO Workforce Survey but not the Workforce Census; three SHPOs completed the Workforce Census but not the SHPO Workforce Survey. Therefore, it is worth noting that the SHPOs sampled in the SHPO Workforce Survey do not exactly correspond to the SHPOs sampled via the Workforce Census.

The committee felt that the high overall response rate provided a good representation of the status of SHPOs, despite a low participation rate from western states.



Consultation at Pleasant View Farm, Kentucky.
Courtesy of Kentucky SHPO



Underwater archaeologist at the Sardinia shipwreck,
Door County, Wisconsin. *Courtesy of Wisconsin SHPO*

2.4 Respondents to the SHPO Workforce Survey and Workforce Census

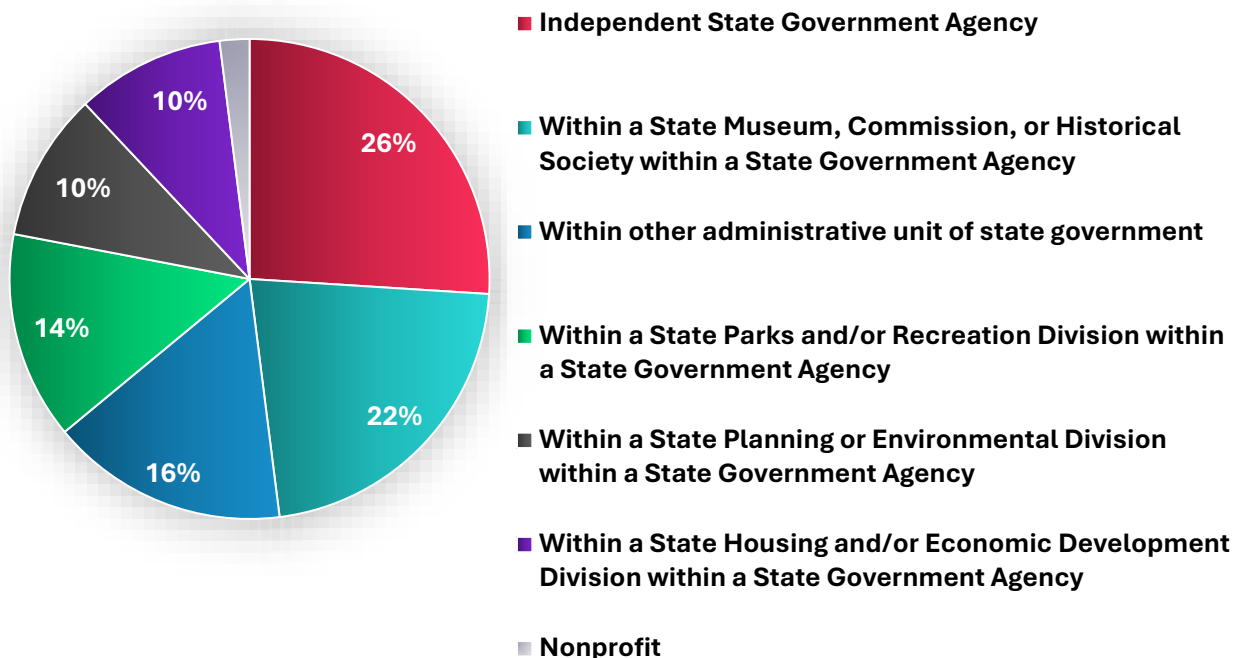
Note: For the purposes of this report section, “SHPOs” refers to SHPOs responding to the workforce survey and census.

SHPO Structure

The vast majority of SHPOs responding to the survey (71%) are located within another state government agency, with a minority (27%) being independent state agencies. One SHPO reported being a nonprofit. Among SHPOs within other state agencies, the most frequent responses were “within a state museum, commission, or historical society” and “within a state parks and/or recreation division” (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: SHPO structure

SHPO Workforce Survey



HPF Apportionment Bracket

SHPOs responding to the survey belonged to all apportionment brackets, with the lowest bracket (under \$500,000) having the least representation in the survey. The highest apportionment in FY2023 is \$2,178,979, while the lowest is \$316,369. The majority of SHPOs, both overall and within survey respondents, fall into the \$750,000 to \$1.25 million apportionment range (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: SHPO participation in SHPO Workforce Survey by HPF apportionment bracket

SHPO Workforce Survey

HPF Apportionment (FY 2023)	# SHPOs participating in SHPO Workforce Survey	Total # of ALL SHPOs in this HPF apportionment bracket	% response rate in this HPF apportionment bracket
under \$500,000	3	6	50%
\$500,000 to \$750,000	5	5	100%
\$750,000 to \$1 million	10	12	83%
\$1 million to \$1.25 million	21	24	88%
\$1.25 million to \$1.5 million	6	7	86%
over \$1.5 million	4	5	80%
TOTAL	49	59	



Advocates from Washington State including SHPO Dr. Allyson Brooks, visit DC. *Courtesy of Washington SHPO*



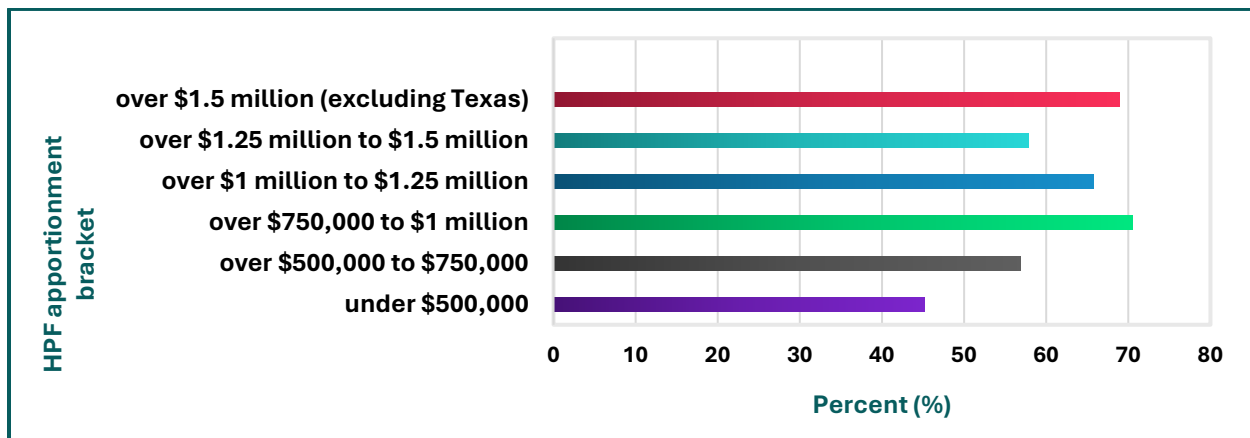
DSHPO Jennifer Flood addresses the statewide conference in Columbus. *Courtesy of Georgia SHPO*

Payroll Costs

Total SHPO payroll costs, inclusive of all funding sources and all staff performing state and federal historic preservation related duties, ranged from approximately \$200,000 to \$5.75 million (excluding Texas, which represents an outlier registering at over \$24 million due to their larger state property portfolio). Nationally, approximately 63% of HPF funding is expended on payroll (See Figure 3). A few SHPOs spend none of their HPF funding on staff costs, while a few spend their entire HPF apportionment on staff costs. Nationally, approximately 48% of SHPO total payroll is funded by the HPF.⁶

Figure 3: Percent of HPF spent on payroll by HPF apportionment bracket

SHPO Workforce Survey



The vast majority of SHPOs (78%) cite their **primary source** of payroll funding not covered by HPF to be “state operating funding.” Twelve percent (12%) of respondents indicated that their state had dedicated revenue streams (such as contract archaeology, bond funding, or funds through the state motor vehicle administration) that provide their most significant non-HPF source of payroll funding. A small number reported SHPO-generated income or other state or federal agency funding (such as competitive grant funding, pass-through funding, embedded staff, etc.) as a primary source. A single SHPO reported that there was no other source other than HPF for funding SHPO staff payroll. The responses were spread widely across SHPO locations. Looking beyond the HPF and primary non-HPF funding

⁶ As an illustration of the two statements about percentages: if an imaginary SHPO has an HPF appropriation of \$1 million, and it spends the national average 63% of that appropriation on payroll, that comes to \$630,000 of HPF funds spent on payroll. For that same imaginary SHPO, if it adheres to the national average of 48% of SHPO total payroll funded by the HPF appropriation, its total payroll is \$1,312,500.

sources discussed above, many SHPOs report a diverse range of **additional funding sources** to support payroll. Among these, SHPO-generated income and funding from another federal or state agency are the most common (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Non-HPF funding sources for payroll costs

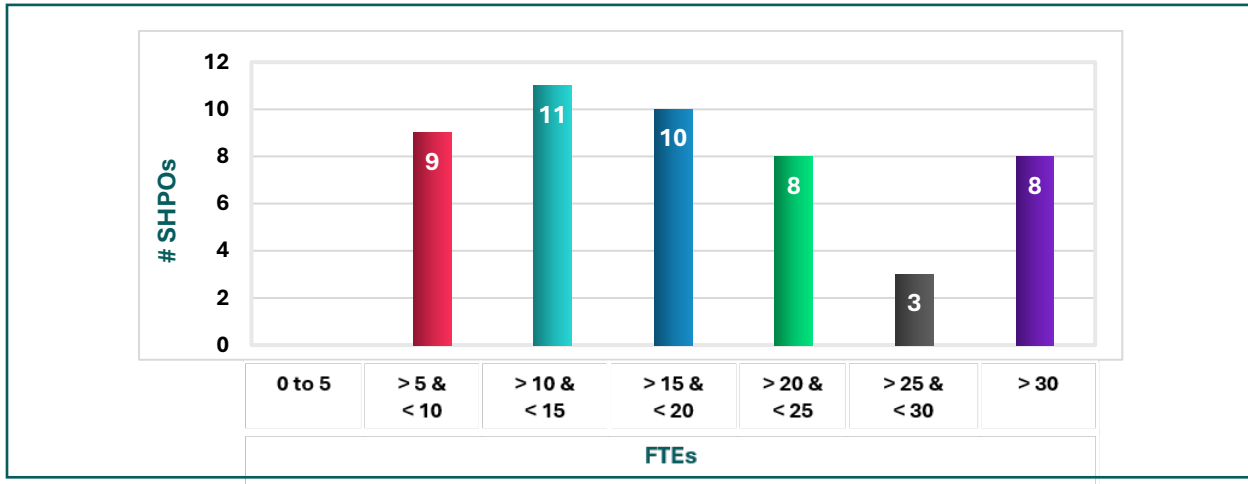
SHPO Workforce Survey

FUNDING SOURCE	SHPOs reporting this as primary non-HPF funding source	SHPOs reporting this as an additional non-HPF funding source
SHPO-generated income <i>program or application fees, GIS data subscriptions, etc.</i>	2	25
Funding from another federal or state agency (DOT, Forest Service, etc.). This may be competitive grant funding, pass-through funding, embedded staff, etc.	2	25
State operating funding <i>annual appropriation, general fund support, etc.</i>	38	4
State dedicated revenue streams for the SHPO <i>gaming revenues, license plates, transfer taxes, etc.</i>	6	5
Private grants or donations	0	4
None	1	11
Other <i>state capital bond funds; private contracts w/ utilities</i>	0	3

SHPO Staff Size

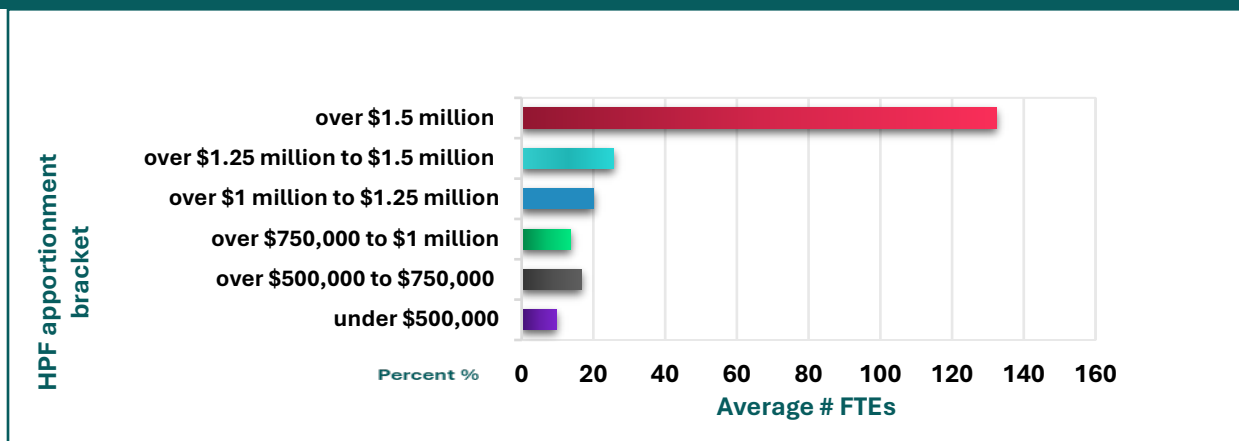
Among SHPOs responding to the SHPO Workforce Survey, most SHPO offices range in size from 6 to 25 persons on staff (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Staff size of participating SHPOs: total FTEs (Full Time Equivalents) on payroll **SHPO Workforce Survey**



Broken down by apportionment bracket, the very largest SHPOs, each receiving over \$1.5 million in HPF funding, have a much higher average staff size than the rest of the SHPOs sampled (See Figure 6).

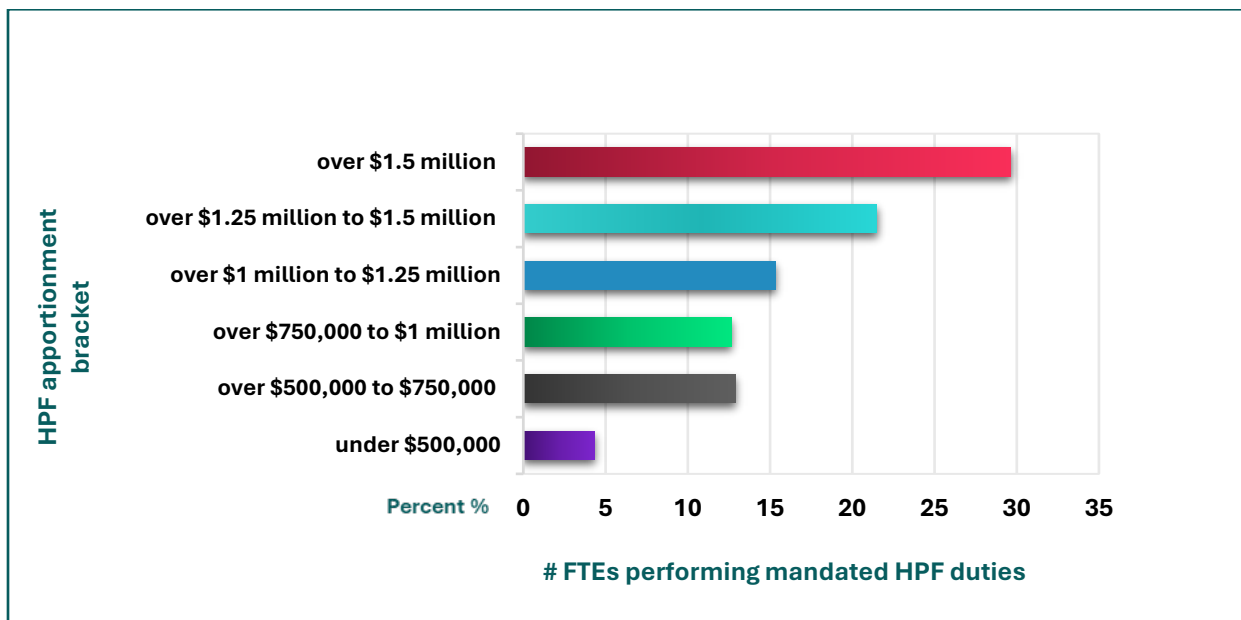
Figure 6: Average number of FTEs in the SHPO, by HPF apportionment bracket **SHPO Workforce Survey**



Looking specifically at the SHPO staff who perform mandated federal responsibilities provides a better point of comparison across SHPOs. Among SHPOs sampled, the number of FTEs (full time equivalents) performing mandated federal responsibilities (regardless of how they are funded) ranged from 3 to 40, with an average of 16 (median of 13) (See Figure 7).

Figure 7: Permanent FTEs performing federally mandated duties, by HPF apportionment bracket

SHPO Workforce Survey



The vast majority of SHPO staff performing federally mandated duties are permanent rather than contractual/term limited; SHPOs in all but the largest HPF apportionment bracket are likely to have contractual staff performing those duties. SHPOs with the smallest HPF apportionment are the most likely to use their HPF funding to hire contractual staff to perform federally mandated duties.

SHPO Program Areas

The Workforce Census provided data about SHPO staff performing federally mandated duties. Of the 881 positions reported, 380 were identified as having only one job program area, which means that across all SHPOs, 55% are reported to work in multiple program

areas. Based on primary program areas (where each reported position is counted once), the highest numbers of SHPO staff work with Section 106 Review/Review & Compliance (217), National Register (91), Preservation Tax Incentives (88), Administrative/Fiscal (81), and GIS/Data Management (70). Based on multiple job program areas (where each reported position may be counted multiple times), the highest number of SHPO staff have some job duties in Section 106 Review/Review & Compliance (319), followed by Survey & Inventory (154), Administrative/Fiscal (150), National Register (126), and Preservation Tax Incentives (125). Nationally, the lowest reported number of staff in a program area was Maritime Archaeology, with 8 positions.

Staff working as the State Historic Preservation Officer or in Maritime Archaeology, Administrative/Fiscal, and GIS/Data Management positions were more likely than others to work within only one program area.

Remote and Flexible Work

Approximately half of SHPOs allow flexible or hybrid working.⁷ An additional quarter of SHPOs allow remote work on a case-by-case basis. Twenty-two percent (22%) of SHPOs either work entirely in the office or allow remote work only in extenuating circumstances. Two percent (2%) of SHPOs have transitioned to fully remote work; anecdotally, some of those SHPOs no longer have a physical office location. Compressed schedules (such as working four ten-hour days per week, for example) are outright allowed only in 44% of SHPOs. An additional 24% would allow this in extenuating circumstances.

Pipeline

In recruiting staff, SHPOs report using state job boards, PreserveNet (a website maintained by Cornell University students funded by the National Council for Preservation Education), and word of mouth as the primary mechanisms for spreading the word. The SHPO or agency website, state or national professional or nonprofit organizations, and the NCSHPO Forum were also widely used. Fewer used Indeed or similar general job board, social media, or university listservs. A low number attend job fairs to find new employees.

The majority of both permanent and contractual employees taking positions in SHPOs were previously either students or worked in the private sector (CRM firms, architecture and engineering firms, etc.). Incoming permanent employees were otherwise likely to have

⁷ The responses to this question represent the conditions at the time of the survey (2023-2024). States continue to reexamine their remote work policies.

worked for state or local government, another SHPO, or a preservation related non-profit. Incoming contractual employees were otherwise likely to have worked in state government or higher education, or to have only held in-discipline internships or non-preservation related positions. Overall, it seems that permanent employees were much more likely to have previous relevant work experience in preservation than contractual employees, although a large number of both groups were hired directly out of school.

Permanent employees leaving SHPO employment were most likely to be retiring, while a large number of the others who were leaving SHPOs were taking positions in the private sector or with federal agencies. Some moved to other state agencies or other SHPOs.

Respondents were less certain where contractual employees went after leaving SHPO employment. Many seem to have transitioned into permanent positions within the same SHPO, others moved to the private sector or another state agency, and still others went back to school. Many respondents selected “other,” which was not defined.

SHPO Engagement with Students

SHPOs reported that they primarily engage K-12 students through informal in-person contact at fairs, community events, school events, and similar programs. Some are reached through classroom instruction, and fewer through internships, summer camps, or scout programs. Other examples of K-12 student outreach tended to involve partnerships with other agencies or organizations.

To engage university level students, SHPO respondents indicated that their staff are quite likely to give lectures to university classes, but less likely to be the sole instructor for an entire course. Internships were also cited as a way to engage higher education students, with paid internships being about twice as common as unpaid internships. College work study programs and AmeriCorps/Vista and similar programs were cited by a few SHPOs. Other higher education contacts with SHPOs included paid limited term employees, student researchers using SHPO collections, and reaching them at statewide conferences.

Part 3. Data Gathering from SHPO Staff Members

3.1 Methodology for SHPO Staff Survey

Having distributed the SHPO Workforce Survey and the Workforce Census to SHPO leadership in late 2023, in early 2024 the Internal Subcommittee began drafting a survey to be completed by SHPO staff members. The focus of this anonymous survey was to understand what SHPO staff see as the pros and cons of working for a SHPO and to obtain enough "profile" data on respondents (years in workforce, which program area they work in, etc.) to be able to identify trends in the data. The survey was also a way to obtain more granular data about what positions SHPO staff held previously (vs. the more "impressionistic" data gleaned from the Workforce Census, which was completed by SHPO leadership). The link to the survey was sent to SHPO leadership via email and generally through the NCSHPO Forum on February 14, 2024. SHPO leadership were asked to share the survey with staff they consider their "SHPO staff" (staff performing state and federal historic preservation related duties, but excluding staff in museum or historic site operations, for example). The instructions further noted that the survey was intended for the staff members SHPO leadership included in the Workforce Census. Responses were accepted through April 6, 2024; 453 responses were received.⁸

⁸ The Workforce Census had identified 881 positions.

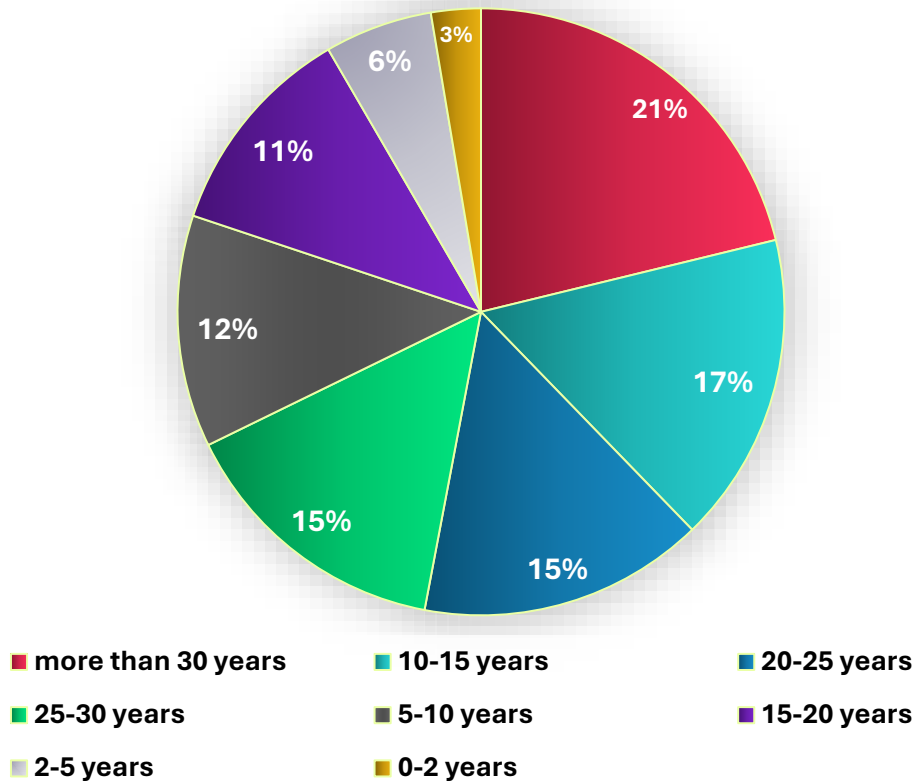
3.2 SHPO Workforce Characteristics

Respondents were asked which program area they work in; however, the question seems to have led a large number of respondents (87) to select "SHPO/DSHPO" (which was intended to mean that your job title is SHPO or DSHPO). Aside from this selection, the most commonly selected programs were Section 106 Review/Review & Compliance, National Register/State Register, and Preservation Tax Incentives (Historic/Rehabilitation Tax Credits).

About half of respondents have been in the professional workforce for 20 years or more. About 8% have been in the workforce for under five years, while over 21% have been in the workforce for over 30 years (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: Years in professional workforce

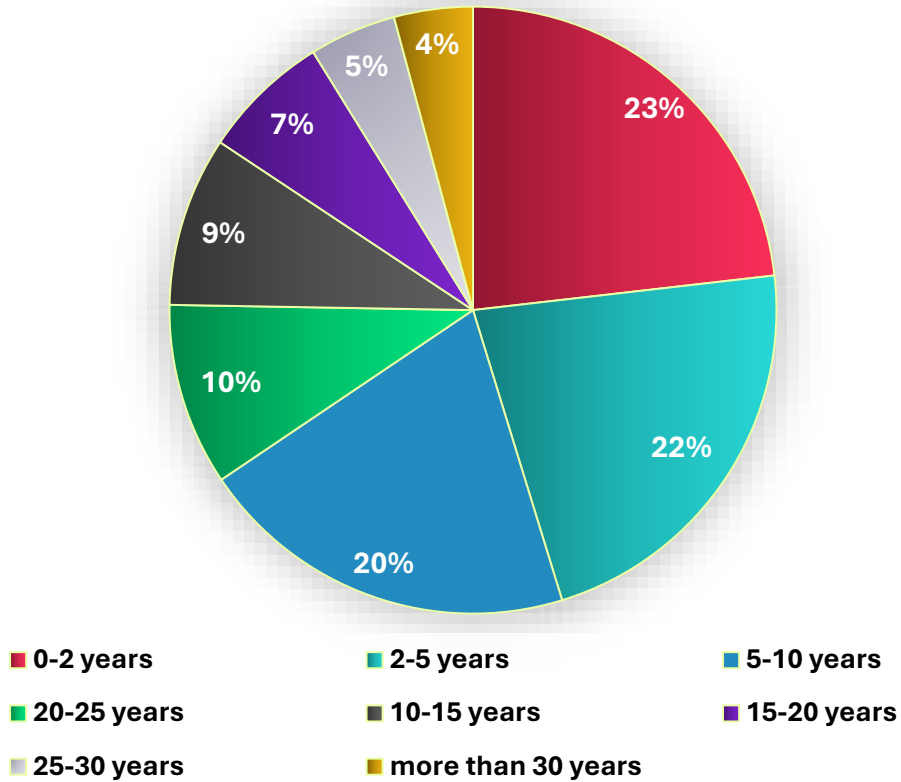
SHPO Staff Survey



In contrast to years in the professional workforce, the responses about number of years in the SHPO skewed much lower. About 18.5% have been in their SHPO for 20 years or more. About 45% have been in their SHPO for under five years, while only around 4% have been in their SHPO for 30 or more years (See Figure 9).

Figure 9: Years employed at current SHPO

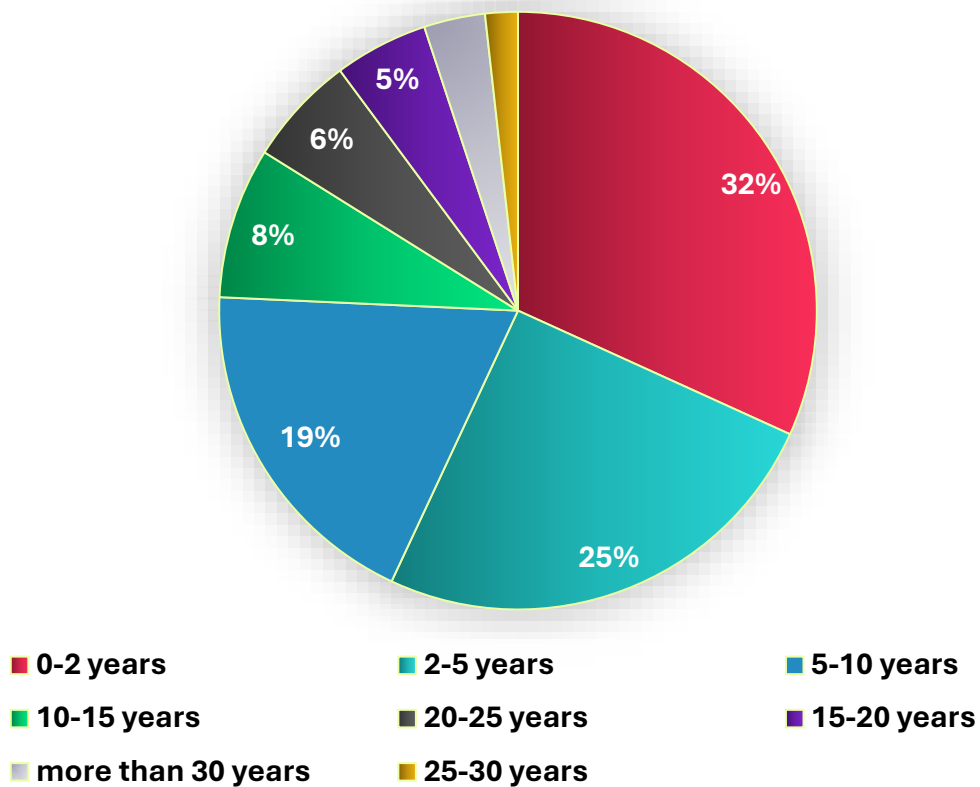
SHPO Staff Survey



In addition to asking about years working in their current SHPO, survey takers were asked how long they have been in their current position at the SHPO. About 57% of respondents position for 5 years or less, while over 16% have stayed in the same position for 15 years or more. A little over 3% have lasted 30 years or more in the same position (See Figure 10).

Figure 10: Years employed in current position

SHPO Staff Survey



Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents are permanent; the remainder are contractual/term limited (only a tiny minority chose "I don't know"). About 1/3 of respondents are supervisors.

3.3 SHPO Workforce Pipeline

Respondents were asked to select the types of positions they previously held outside of the SHPO where they work now. Forty-two percent (42%) of survey respondents previously worked in a consulting/CRM firm, with an additional 10% having worked in an architecture/engineering firm and 8% in construction/preservation trades. Twenty-five percent (25%) have worked in nonprofits, 24% in museums, and 4% in advocacy organizations. Eleven percent (11%) have previously worked at another SHPO, and 2% at a THPO. Fourteen percent (14%) have worked in the federal government, 19% in local government, and 27% in higher education. This response may reflect these staff members' transition to the SHPO from college or graduate school where they held an assistantship or had similar employment rather than holding an academic position.

Approximately 40% of survey participants selected three types of positions, while 20% selected four. Seven percent (7%) of survey participants report having held no previous position (See Figure 11).

About 2/3 of respondents received an undergraduate or graduate education in historic preservation or a related field in the state where they currently work.

Figure 11: Previously held positions

SHPO Staff Survey

Have you previously held positions in any of the following? <i>Select all that apply</i>	Number of times selected	Percentage of 453 survey respondents
Consulting/CRM firm	192	42%
State government	127	28%
Higher education	124	27%
Nonprofit	111	25%
Museum	110	24%
Local government	85	19%
Other	80	18%
Federal government	64	14%
A SHPO other than where I work now	49	11%
Architecture/Engineering	47	10%
Construction/preservation trades	36	8%
None	30	7%
Advocacy organization	20	4%
THPO	9	2%
TOTAL	1084	<i>will not total 100%</i>

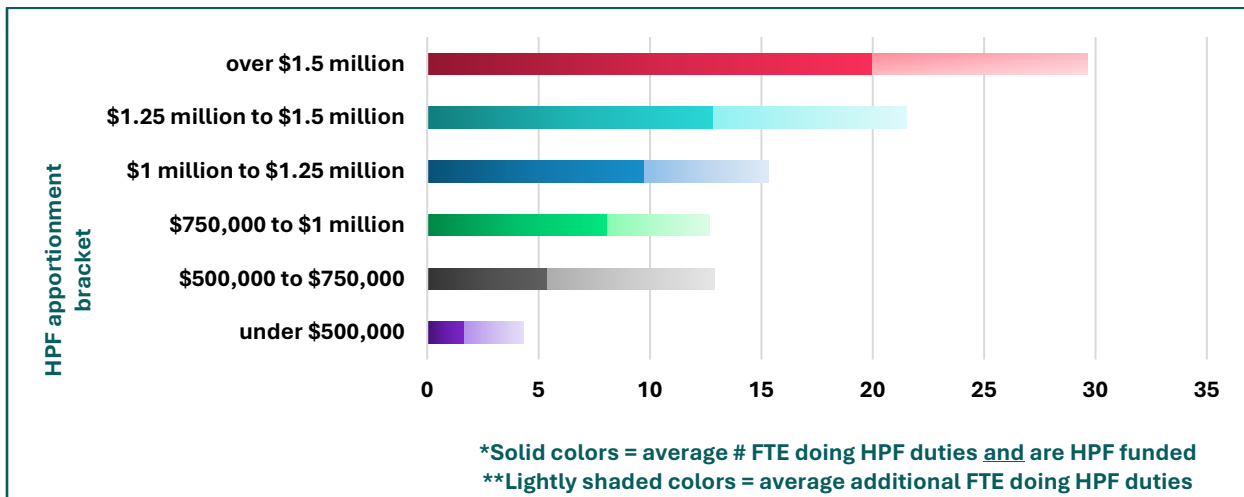
Part 4. Analysis and Recommendations from the SHPO Workforce Survey, Workforce Census, and SHPO Staff Survey

4.1 Staffing Levels and Budget

Analysis:

In Part 2, we saw that among SHPOs sampled, the number of FTEs performing mandated federal responsibilities (regardless of how they are funded) ranged from 3 to 40, with an average of 16 (median of 13) (See Figure 7). However, on average, only 10 of those positions were HPF funded, meaning that SHPOs relied on other funding sources to employ the necessary number of staff needed to perform federally mandated duties. The number of additional non-HPF funded staff ranges from 0 to 24, with an average of 6 (median of 3). The results indicate that if on average only 10 of 16 employees performing mandated duties are funded by HPF then the appropriation is insufficient to fully cover staff costs; a state match is needed to reach necessary staffing levels and cover other costs of running a SHPO office (See Figure 12).

Figure 12: Average number of staff performing federally mandated duties, by HPF apportionment bracket **SHPO Workforce Survey**



Nationally, approximately 63% of HPF funding is expended on payroll. A few SHPOs spend their entire HPF funding on payroll. Nationally, approximately 48% of SHPO payroll is funded by the HPF.⁹

Analysis:

Almost all SHPOs rely to some extent on contractual/term limited employees (who tend to be lower paid and do not always have the same access to benefits) to perform mandated federal duties. SHPOs with the smallest HPF apportionment are the most likely to use their HPF funding to hire contractual staff to perform mandated duties, indicating that there is too much work and often insufficient funding in the SHPO office to fulfill their responsibilities with only fully funded permanent staff. A lack of state support for additional permanent positions contributes to some positions remaining in limited term employee (LTE) status for decades.

Analysis:

As shown in **Figure 4**, aside from the HPF, the vast majority of SHPOs (78%) cite their primary source of payroll funding to be “state operating funding”. An increase in HPF funding – while desirable for many reasons - would require an increase in match; the required fund split is 60% federal funds to 40% non-federal match. While some states could provide that match, other SHPOs would continue to struggle with meeting the match requirement because of a lack of direct state support or difficulty securing funding increases. Also worth noting is that according to a provision of the NHPA, once overall SHPO funding reaches a funding level of \$65 million (it is currently \$62 million for FY 2025), 50% of the funding over \$65 million is required to go directly to CLGs (rather than the 10% pass through otherwise required)– therefore, SHPO HPF funding above \$65 million provides less operational support to SHPOs.

Analysis:

As SHPOs and some state governments work to raise salaries for employees, the outcome is a reduction in the amount of the SHPO’s HPF apportionment available for other critical uses. Because most HPF funding is allocated to salaries, this compensation trend presents challenges in balancing staffing costs with other expenditures. A lack of increases for the SHPO portion of the HPF appropriation contributes to these challenges, and as a result SHPOs may need to reduce staff to meet their budgets. As noted above, there is already a need to hire additional staff, often lower paid LTEs, to fulfill SHPO responsibilities.

⁹ See also footnote 6 on page 20.

Analysis:

In evaluating the data on SHPO funding from HPF and the expected administrative and program related duties, the committee identified other areas where the HPF does not provide sufficient funding to cover SHPO costs, including those associated with grants awarded by NPS. Overall, SHPOs need more financial support from the NPS State, Tribal, Local, Plans & Grants (STLPG) programs. The workload required to manage NPS grants can be a barrier to applications by SHPOs, and the amount allowed for indirect/administrative costs does not begin to cover the actual costs to SHPOs. In addition, SHPOs do not receive any additional administrative compensation to review grants awarded to others, or to prepare, hold, or enforce the easements required of Save America's Treasures grants recipients.

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should work with NPS to explore increasing the allowable indirect/administrative costs for SHPOs under competitive HPF grants.

Analysis:

As discussed in the section on Payroll Costs, and as shown in **Figure 4**, 11 SHPOs indicated that they have dedicated revenue streams. Twelve percent (12%) of SHPOs indicate that state dedicated revenue streams are their most significant non-HPF source of payroll funding.

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should assist SHPOs who wish to explore additional revenue streams, either through connecting them directly with other SHPOs who have already established additional revenue streams, through a topical meeting/convening, or through creation of a brief research summary.

Analysis:

SHPO staff who were surveyed reported that their offices have insufficient staff to do necessary work (75.7%), insufficient staff to support new initiatives (61.6%), insufficient staff to serve all areas of their states (54.7%), and long periods of vacancy for positions (51%).

Recommendation:

SHPOs should consider tracking total staff hours devoted to the federal preservation program. This data could be used to support "gap" funding for states that demonstrably

have a demand for federal programs that outstrips the resources of the HPF apportionment.

4.2 Salaries

Analysis:

The national average salary for all positions in SHPO offices is \$67,375. Excluding SHPO and DSHPO positions, the national average salary is \$64,340. The national median salary for all positions is \$62,500. A review of the relative levels of compensation for the various program areas is most meaningful when using the primary program area data (i.e., positions sharing a primary program area are averaged together). Nationally, the highest average salaries belong to SHPO leadership (SHPOs and DSHPOs), although their salaries are generally comparable (\$102,000 for SHPOs vs \$100,000 for DSHPOs). Average salaries in other program areas range from \$72,000 for Local Government & CLG Grants to \$55,000 for Grants Management.

Analysis:

About 25% of reported positions across SHPOs are supervisory.

Analysis:

About 10% of SHPO positions are contractual or limited term. Archaeology positions are most likely to be contractual or limited term (25% of positions contractual, based on primary program area); Historic Preservation Planning (18%), Survey & Inventory (16%), and Easements & Covenants (15%) also have higher percentages of contractual employees. Contractual employee pay nationally averages \$50,606 annually, and contractual employees are offered reduced benefits compared to permanent employees, or no benefits at all, which has implications for staff retention.

Analysis:

The Workforce Census gathered data about the current salary for each position as well as its anticipated salary; that is, the salary at which the position would be advertised if recruited for today. In 19 of the 40 states responding to the Workforce Census, anticipated salaries (averaged over all positions in that SHPO) are projected to be substantially lower than current salaries. (“Substantially” means over 4% lower; the range is 4.37% to 30.85% lower.) Fourteen SHPOs expect salaries to remain about the same, while five expect that salaries for future hires will be higher (3.59% to 16.35% higher). Several factors may contribute to this trend: base salaries may be set by the state, and it may not be possible to hire at a higher salary, even if the previous incumbent was paid more; or perhaps states

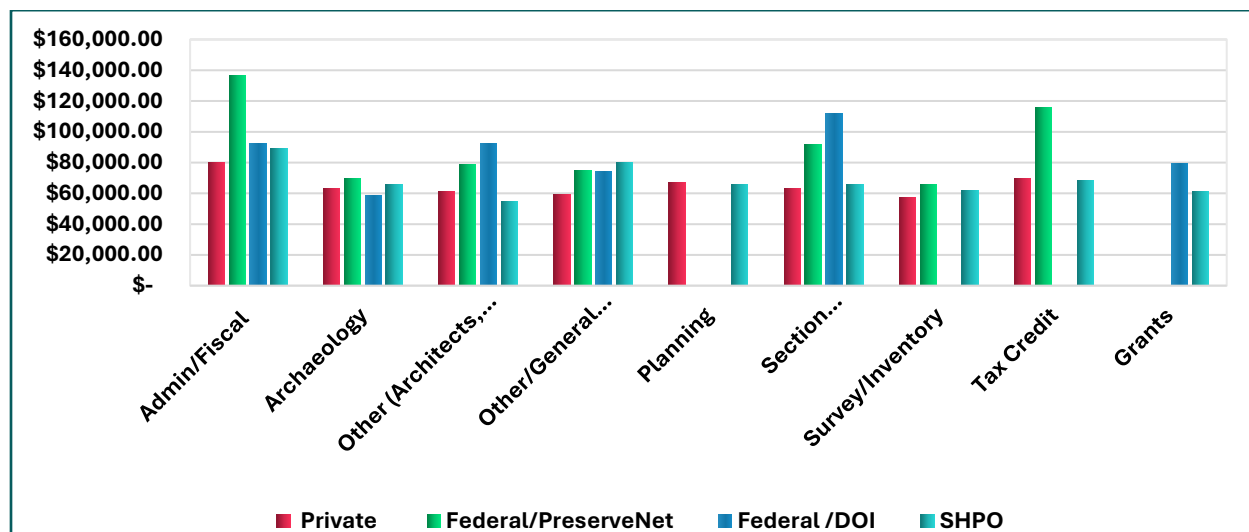
only give salary increases for years of service. When examining the years of service, we see that many SHPO staff have longevity in their current SHPO which may reflect seniority in salary levels vs. incumbents with lower levels of experience.

Analysis:

The SHPO staff survey reveals a perception that compensation is higher at federal agencies, consulting/CRM firms, or architecture/engineering firms. Even other state agencies were seen as paying more than SHPOs. Pay in local governments was judged to be about the same as in SHPOs. Only nonprofits/museums were perceived as having a lower compensation than SHPO staff.

This perception of salaries is only partially confirmed through analysis. A sample of jobs advertised on PreserveNet (1,021), and on the USA Jobs website (Department of Interior only) were assigned categories generally analogous to the program categories used in the Workforce Census. The Preserve Net jobs were then filtered into categories based on the status of the employer: for private employers, the number was 362 and for Federal employers the number was 31. **Figure 13** contains four data sets: Private jobs from PreserveNet; Federal jobs from PreserveNet; Federal Jobs from USA Jobs (DOI), and SHPO jobs from the Workforce Census (current salaries).

Figure 13: Comparison of average salaries: SHPO, federal jobs, and private sector jobs **Committee Research**



Federal jobs, regardless of where advertised, paid better than their private or SHPO counterparts in the program areas of Administration/Fiscal (including SHPO/DSHPO), Other programs (Architect, Program Lead, Easements, Outreach), Section 106/Review & Compliance, Tax Credits, and Grants Management. Across the board archaeologists were paid at about the same level, as were those jobs doing Survey and Inventory, and Planning.

If the Federal jobs are removed from the matrix, it is apparent that the salary differential between private sector jobs and SHPO jobs is not substantial. However, the salary for the private sector jobs are more likely starting wages for the position, while the salaries for the SHPOs reflect incumbent positions, some with over 30 years of service. When this is considered, the perception that private sector jobs have higher salaries may have more merit than the graphs depict (See Figure 14).

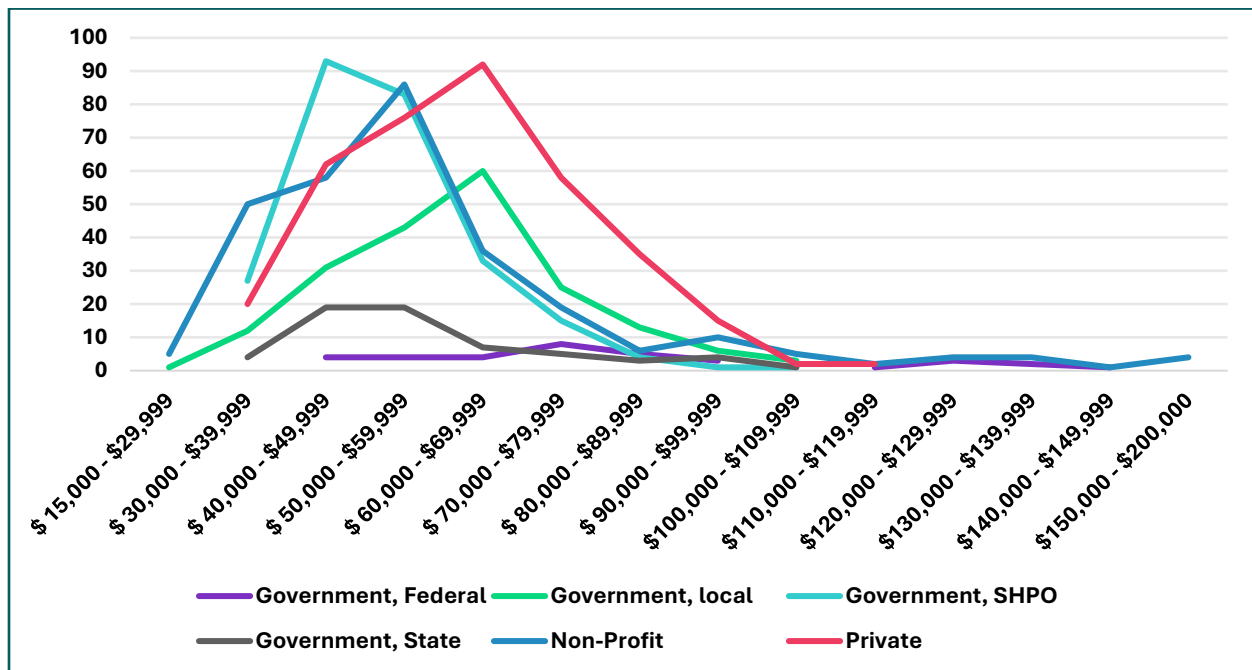
Figure 14: Comparison of average salaries: SHPO and private sector jobs
Committee Research



Figure 15 captures the salary spread for 1,200 positions posted on PreserveNet. While there is a broad distribution, the graph demonstrates the market rate for hires among a variety of governmental and non-governmental employers. It clearly shows that the highest concentration for SHPOs is at lower salary levels than for local government and the private sector. The data was felt to be insufficient to make observations about federal government positions.

Figure 15: Salary spread by employer type

Committee Research



Analysis:

Staff performing mandated federal duties are required to meet the PQS in their field. They do equivalent work to federal positions. In addition, they often work across program areas (Section 106 and Tax Credits, or National Register and Survey/Inventory, for example). However, there appears to be a salary discrepancy between federal and SHPO positions doing equivalent work. Federal staff are also more likely to get annual cost of living adjustment pay raises (COLAs). While this would need further study, SHPO staff should be compensated at a level equal with federal counterparts.

Analysis:

SHPO staff report that they are paid less at SHPO than they would be doing comparable work at other state agencies. While verifying this hunch in each state was beyond the scope of this report, our research into non-SHPO state positions nationwide yielded limited data points but seemed to bear out this observation.

Recommendation:

Upon request, NCSHPO should assist SHPOs with requests for additional analysis of the data collected through this report.

Recommendation:

This study primarily examined the question of pay as it related to perception, using a 1,200 data point graph based on postings in PreserveNet to address perception vs. reality. Because it is difficult to draw national conclusions, individual SHPOs should research pay discrepancy data within their own state systems amongst staff at different agencies doing similar work related to the NHPA (or, potentially, NEPA) as well as federal pay bands used in their region and use this to advocate within their state systems for classification and pay adjustments.

Analysis:

To better understand the value of salaries within the context of the location of employment, cost of living data¹⁰ was obtained from the Economic Research Institute (ERI), which according to its website “was founded over 30 years ago to provide compensation applications for private and public organizations”. ERI compiles the most robust salary, cost of living, and executive compensation survey data available, with updated market data for more than 1,100 industry sectors. ERI collects salary survey data from internal surveys, third-party salary surveys, and public sources to calculate geographic salary differentials and assist with compensation planning.” Since the data did not include an absolute “value” for the cost of living of each metropolitan area, only a comparison to the national average, it is only possible to rank SHPO salaries vs the cost of living and find dissonances (for example, the cost of living is high and the SHPO salary is comparatively low, or vice versa). The top average salary belongs to Washington DC, which also had the highest cost of living. At the ends of the spectrum in terms of the differential are Boise, Idaho; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Santa Fe, New Mexico, where the cost of living far outstrips average

¹⁰ See [ERI Cost of Living Calculator](#).

salaries, and Springfield, Illinois; Lansing, Michigan; Hartford, Connecticut; and Cohoes/Waterford, New York, where the cost of living is low compared to salaries.

The ERI data also makes it possible to directly compare the SHPO average salary to the average salary in the metropolitan area. Thirty-one (31) SHPOs have an average salary that is at least 96% of the average salary for their metropolitan areas; 22 of the 31 pay 110% of the average salary. These numbers could be investigated in more detail; for example, to see what percentage of a SHPO's salaries are below the average for the metropolitan area. Average house price data was also available; 33 SHPOs meet the guideline that a house should cost three to five times one's annual salary.¹¹



Documenting an outbuilding at Morgan Hill Farm.
Courtesy of Maryland SHPO



NPS and Louisiana SHPO staff on a lift at Charity Hospital.
Courtesy of Louisiana SHPO

¹¹ Fidelity, [“How to save for a house downpayment”](#).

4.3 Recruitment

Analysis:

SHPOs do not seem to consistently post their open positions to the same source or sources. Aside from “state job board” and “SHPO or agency website,” the most popular responses to “Where do you advertise your open positions?” were “PreserveNet,” “word of mouth,” and “NCSHPO Forum.” Only 42% of SHPOs responding post jobs on Indeed, 46% use university listservs, while only 54% report using social media.

Analysis:

Many of the places where SHPOs might want to post jobs charge a fee to post (American Alliance of Museums (AAM), Global Museum, American Association for State & Local History (AASLH) or charge a fee to boost posts (Indeed); most SHPOs do not have a recruitment budget for those charges.

Recommendation:

SHPOs and NCSHPO should explore potential options to highlight SHPO job postings - whether through maintaining an updated list of websites and job boards where SHPOs can post positions; or leveraging or expanding NCSHPO communications to benefit recruitment efforts.

Recommendation:

Since the SHPO staff survey showed that a high number of staff come to SHPOs directly from degree programs, SHPOs should explore how best to reach university students in their area with job postings. Many schools have listservs or job boards. Departmental alumni organizations or listservs may also be helpful.

Recommendation:

Since the SHPO staff survey showed that a high number of staff come to SHPOs from private sector positions (CRM, A/E firms), SHPOs should consider posting positions to social media (their own platforms as well as allied groups locally) as well as to popular job posting sites such as LinkedIn and Indeed.

Recommendation:

Whenever possible, SHPOs should include in their job postings information about salary or salary ranges, availability of benefits, pensions, schedule flexibility, etc. The staff survey indicated that benefits influence people to take SHPO jobs and to stay in them. Additionally, wherever possible, SHPOs should include a descriptive job title rather than, or

in addition to, a standard state job classification (i.e., use “Historic Preservation Grant Specialist” rather than “Administrative Specialist II”).

“The big 3 recruitment issues we have faced (not necessarily in order) are: (1) the state's byzantine approval of recruitment process; (2) shrinking pool of potential candidates, compounded by too many jobs—state, federal, private sector, too few people; and (3) wages that have historically been significantly below private sector. We've mostly eliminated the wage gap, but now are critically hampered (crippled) by the state's approval process to initiate recruitment. We have spent the past 10 months trying to get 14 newly established positions posted, so far 4 have been. Ten are still stuck in the process.” (SHPO Workforce Survey respondent)

Read more in *Route Fifty*

“Gen Z thinks government should solve societal issues. Is it ready to hire them?”

“Survey: More college grads want to work in government”

4.4 Incumbency, Retention, and Vacancy

Analysis:

SHPOs have experienced a great deal of turnover in the past five years. Using primary program area data from the Workforce Census, the average incumbency rate across program areas ranges from about three years of service (Easements & Covenants) to about nine years of service (Administrative/Fiscal). Of the 881 positions reported, the incumbent has been in place for less than two years in 232 cases, and 397 incumbents have been in place for three years or less. However, the survey also shows that the SHPO workforce has substantial work experience.

“My impression is that SHPO employees are leaving at a rapid rate, many within two years or less, with only a few staying long enough (perhaps five or so years) to become vested and eligible for at least some state pension. We are losing our institutional knowledge at an alarming rate...” (SHPO Staff Survey respondent)

Analysis:

People come to SHPOs to stay, and they very often retire from SHPOs rather than take other jobs. While about 8% have been in the general workforce for under five years, over a third (36%) have been in the workforce for more than 25 years and over 21% have been in the workforce for over 30 years. Looking at the numbers reported, it can be anticipated that between 21% and 36% of SHPO staff may be retiring very soon.

Analysis:

In contrast to years in the professional workforce, the responses about number of years in the SHPO skewed much lower. About 18.5% have been in their SHPO for 20 years or more; 45% have been in their SHPO for under five years, while only around 4% have been in their SHPO for 30 or more years.

Analysis:

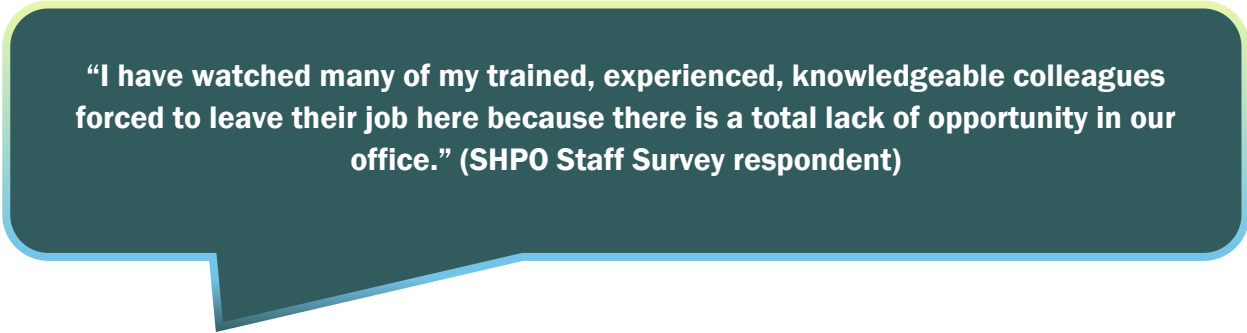
Fifty-seven percent (57%) of respondents have been in their current position in their SHPO office for 5 years or less, while over 16% have stayed in the same position for 15 years or more. A little over 3% have lasted 30 years or more in the same position.

Recommendation:

SHPOs should track staff turnover to identify if those with shorter tenures are the most likely to leave. SHPOs should also make an effort to identify causes, including reviewing quantitative factors such as salary and workload parity as well as qualitative factors, which could be identified through exit interviews with HR or leadership.

Analysis:

In the SHPO staff survey, 204 respondents felt “opportunities for promotion or advancement” are generally better or definitely better outside of SHPOs; 98 felt advancement is generally better or definitely better at SHPO; 151 were neutral. Because of the highly specialized nature of the work and the positions, many SHPO structures are flat. In addition, many SHPOs have relatively few employees and, therefore, have limited supervisory positions for those who seek that type of advancement.



“I have watched many of my trained, experienced, knowledgeable colleagues forced to leave their job here because there is a total lack of opportunity in our office.” (SHPO Staff Survey respondent)

Analysis:

Nationally, 9% of jobs in SHPO offices were vacant at the time data was collected. The vacancy rate ranges from approximately 8% in Section 106 Review, Grants Management, and DSHPO positions, to over 21% for Archaeology¹² and Local Government/CLG Grants. Fifteen percent (15%) of State Historic Preservation Officer positions are vacant.

Analysis:

Anecdotally, SHPOs note high turnover and extended periods of vacancy for their positions. As gleaned from the Workforce Census, 13 SHPOs have no vacancies. An additional eight SHPOs have a vacancy rate under 10%. On the other end of the spectrum, seven SHPOs have a vacancy rate of 20% or more (maximum 33%).

¹² Many SHPOs included seasonal archaeology staff in the Workforce Census; these positions are technically vacant most of the year, which may be driving up the vacancy numbers in this category.

Analysis:

Nationally, positions in SHPOs which are currently vacant have been vacant an average of 20 months, but this data does not capture how long positions remain open until they are finally filled, only how long they had already been open as of the survey date. Of the 81 vacant positions reported, 29 have been vacant for 12 months or longer. Ten (10) positions have been vacant for 3 years or longer. Data was not collected about longer-term trends such as positions that may have been abolished over time. As noted earlier, state hiring rules or agency priorities dictate many hiring practices. Further research is needed to determine if SHPO staffs are shrinking over time, or if the data represents typical fluctuations or delays.

Recommendation:

Based on the data on the longevity of staff, SHPOs need to prepare for anticipated high turnover from the retirement of long-term employees in the next five years. In addition, national employment trends indicate that younger employees may be less likely to stay in a position for an entire career. Looking at both trends, transition planning and flexibility will be critical.

Recommendation:

SHPOs should examine strategies that can assist in mitigating the effects of staff turnover and retirements. The committee recommends forming a “community of practice” or a peer support group amongst SHPO leadership (and other managers) to share best practices for addressing staff retention, particularly in the absence of salary increases.

Several suggestions offered include working within state government practices to institute changes. These include:

- Establish a “career path” structure rather than flat structure within the SHPO office.
- Particularly given how much of their jobs SHPO staff say they learn on the job, establish lower level or transitional positions specifically to train for positions where a long-term incumbent will soon retire.
- Create overlap in job knowledge or job duties across staff to help mitigate the effects of turnover.
- Create more opportunities for advancement that may lead to higher retention and a workforce more willing to stay despite other downsides to the position.
- For situations in which promotion to a supervisory position is the only path to a pay raise, explore other ways to recognize longevity and expertise.

- Provide consistent opportunities for learning and growth for all staff, which can assist with morale and performance.

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should facilitate SHPOs sharing good models and opportunities for staff retention and satisfaction in the specific environment of SHPOs, in which staff have a great deal of contact with the general public and are also subject to political pressures.

**"The daily demands of the job from so many different constituents, elected officials, and decision makers make for a dynamic and interesting work environment. However, we as a SHPO staff are often maxed out in terms of bandwidth. I am very drawn to public service by personality and temperament, but I sometimes feel as if I am on a carousel that I cannot hop off of. I stay because I believe in the mission and am relatively well compensated with great health insurance and a well-funded state pension plan."
(SHPO Staff Survey respondent)**

"Political headwinds -- with history being more 'weaponized' and less of a uniting factor in our nation -- make the day-to-day work less appealing some days. On the other hand, an increase in interest from communities which did not participate in public history -- for a wide variety of reasons -- is likewise welcome." (SHPO Staff Survey respondent)

**"Public service is not for the fainthearted or thin-skinned."
(SHPO Staff Survey respondent)**

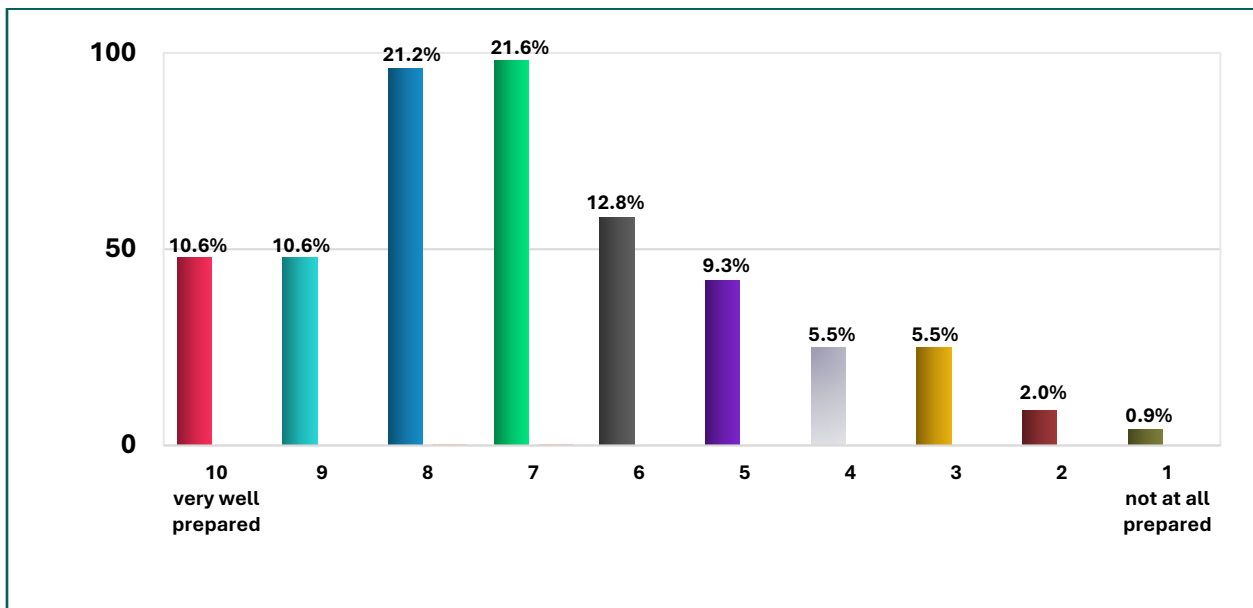
4.5 Staff Skills, Mentorship, and Training on the Job

Analysis:

SHPO staff felt fairly well prepared to do the jobs for which they were hired, with 43% falling into the 7 or 8 out of 10 range (a response of 10 means “very well prepared”). Twenty-one percent (21%) of SHPO staff felt even better prepared, rating themselves as 9 or 10 out of 10. Three percent (3%) felt completely unprepared, giving themselves 1 or 2 out of 10 when they started their current position (See Figure 16). These ratings aligned with the responses of SHPO leadership; in the Workforce Census they judged between 63% and 79% of job applicants across all program areas to be somewhat prepared or well prepared.

Figure 16: SHPO staff perceptions of preparedness

SHPO Staff Survey

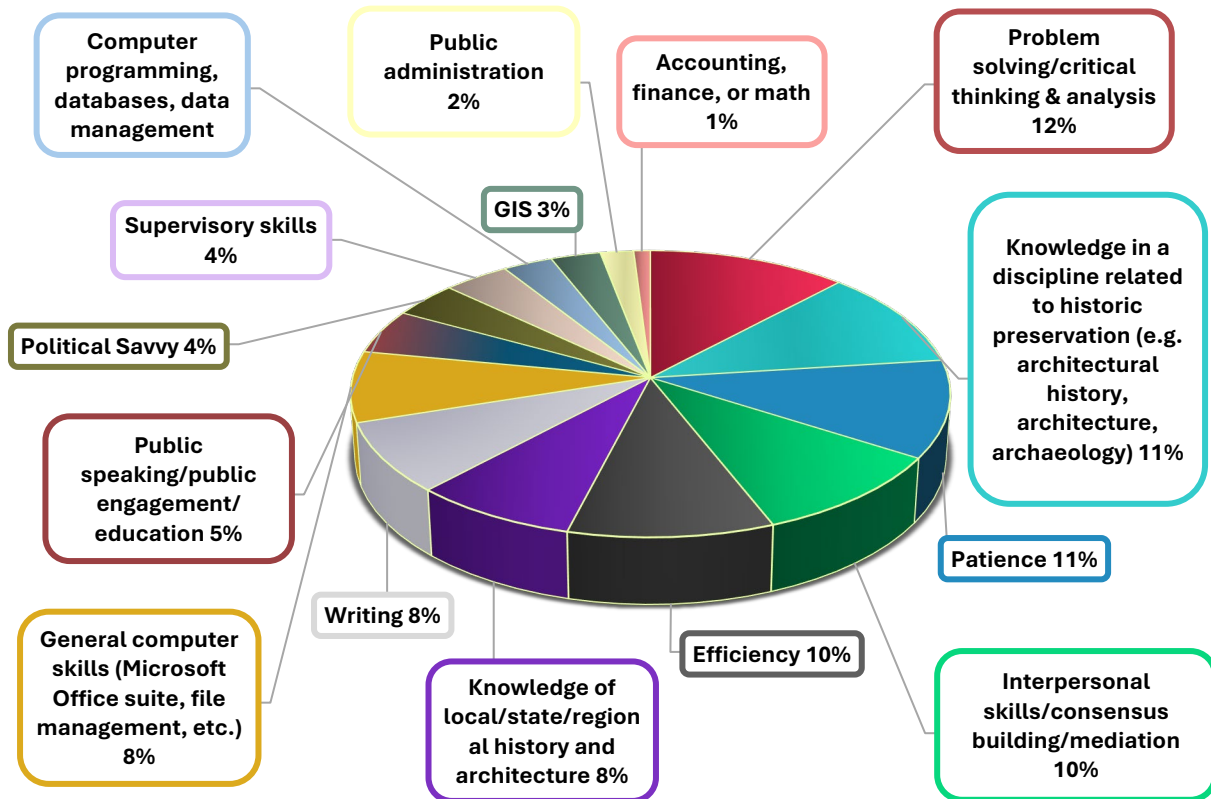


Analysis:

Importance of various skills to SHPO staff: The pie chart in Figure 17 is based on a weighted average of responses; it can be understood as "how important the average SHPO employee finds each skill to be in doing their current job" (for example, you cannot conclude that 10% of SHPO staff find it important to be efficient, but you can conclude that efficiency and interpersonal skills are of equal importance to the average SHPO employee in doing their job, because they both average 10%). The average SHPO employee finds

problem solving/critical thinking and analysis to be the most important skill in their job, followed closely by specific in-discipline knowledge, patience, efficiency, and interpersonal skills/consensus building/mediation (these were all remarkably close together, ranging from 10% to 12% weighted average). This question demonstrates that "soft skills," the non-technical skills which help people work well together and manage their own work, and for which most SHPO staff do not receive any specific training, are essential.

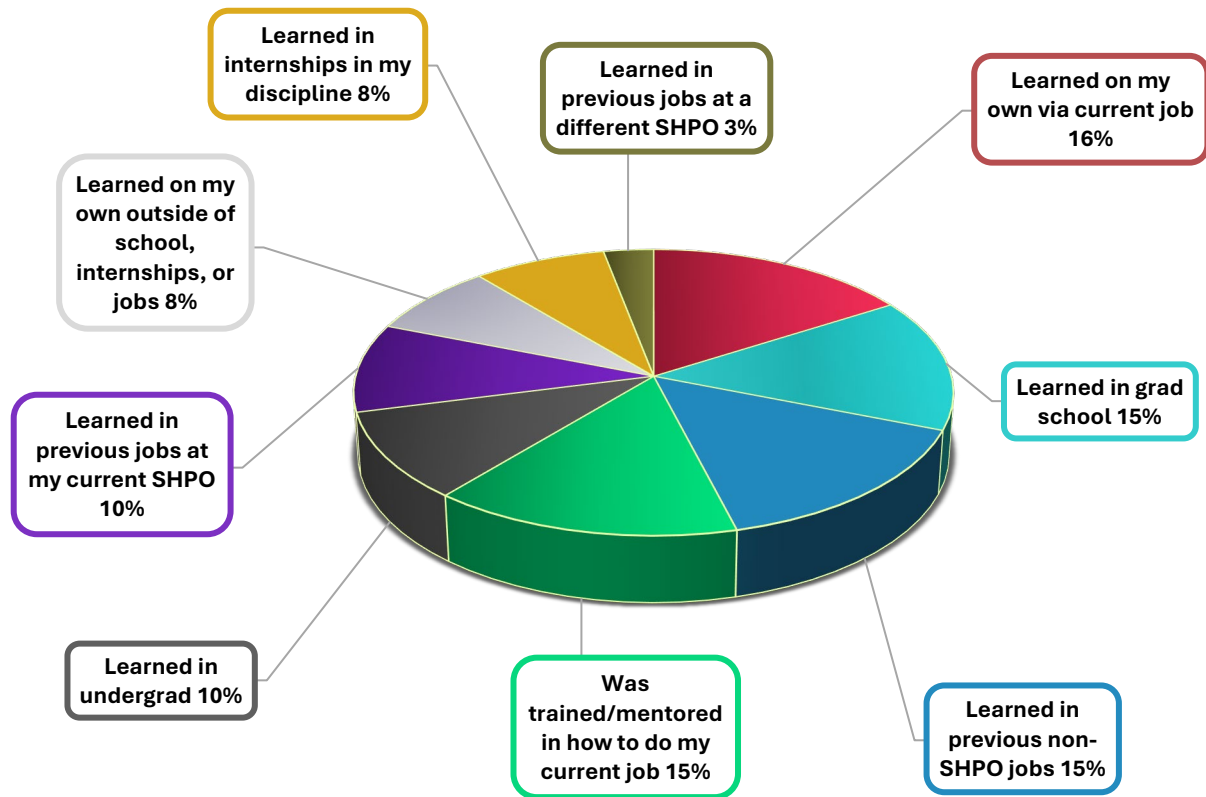
Figure 17: SHPO staff rating of what skills are most important to them in their current jobs SHPO Staff Survey



Analysis:

Where were skills learned: Survey respondents were asked to "give an overall impression of where you learned what you need to do your current job." The pie chart below is based on a weighted average of responses; it can be understood as "where the average SHPO employee learned what they need to do their current job" (for example, you cannot conclude that 15% of SHPO staff were trained/mentored in how to do their current job, but you can conclude that the average SHPO staff member learned about 15% of their job skills through training/mentoring, and learned the same percentage of their job skills in graduate school). The average SHPO employee has learned about 44% of what they need to know to do their job by working in a SHPO. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of what the average SHPO employee needs to know they learned in graduate school, undergraduate, or internships. Fifteen percent (15%) of their knowledge came from previous non-SHPO jobs, while 8% comes from "learning on their own" outside of the structure of school or employment (See Figure 18).

Figure 18: SHPO staff impression of where they learned what they need to do their current jobs SHPO Staff Survey



In subsequent questions, survey participants were asked to "be more precise" and "indicate where you learned each skill needed to do your current job." Based on a weighted average of responses:

- The skills most likely to be learned in undergraduate courses are writing, general computer skills, accounting/finance/math, problem solving, and public speaking.
- The skills most likely to be learned in graduate school are in-discipline knowledge related to historic preservation, writing, local/state/regional history and architecture, public speaking, and problem solving.
- Previous non-SHPO jobs were likely to help employees gain supervisory skills, efficiency, interpersonal skills, public administration, general computer skills, and computer programming/database/data management.
- Categories of interpersonal skills, patience, and efficiency showed the greatest emphasis on "learned on my own outside of school, internships, or jobs."
- Categories of supervisory skills, political savvy, and public administration rated highly in "learned in previous non-SHPO jobs" and "learned on my own by doing the job I have now."
- Previous jobs at current SHPO and previous jobs at other SHPO were rated fairly consistently in helping develop job skills.
- Writing is more often learned in school than on the job.
- The skills which staff most often feel they need an opportunity to learn or improve are accounting/finance/math, public administration, political savvy, GIS, computer programming/databases/data management, and supervisory skills.
- The skills which staff feel they least need in their jobs are accounting/finance/math, public administration, supervisory skills, political savvy, GIS, and computer programming/databases/data management.

Analysis:

Staff recognize that they need more than subject matter expertise for their positions; they identify a need for training or mentorship in other aspects of the jobs. Comments from the SHPO staff survey also reflected an awareness of the political side of their work and the desire to learn how to manage these pressures.

Analysis:

A strong majority of SHPO staff (84% of those who answered the question) feel that it is necessary for the person in their position to meet the PQS. Typically, SHPO staff meet the PQS with a master's degree, but in some cases need additional experience.

"Positions in this SHPO require such a high level of education and experience that there are no true 'entry level' positions for someone right out of grad school. Requirements for all professional positions require Bachelors in HP and 4 years of work in the field, or a master's and three years. There is no route for entry level folks leading to promotions - in responsibilities or salary." (SHPO Staff Survey respondent)

Recommendation:

NCSHPO and SHPOs should explore avenues for training opportunities for SHPO staff on a range of topics. Pursue avenues for specific training or networking for those in more managerial or administrative roles including SHPO leadership, especially those new to their job. Conflict management and mediation would be particularly welcome – but is beyond the ability of most SHPOs to afford individually. SHPOs could also explore opportunities to hold training jointly and share the cost.

"Perhaps there is an opportunity to develop training/orientation/professional development materials specific to SHPO knowledge and skills and applicability across states. There are preservation materials etc. available but less on the soft skills of negotiation, supervision etc. within the context of SHPOs. There could also be mentor opportunities across SHPOs." (SHPO Staff Survey respondent)

Recommendation:

SHPOs should engage with state partners, universities, and non-profits to obtain non-preservation-specific training (in HR, supervision, or conflict resolution, for example) for their staff at low cost.

Recommendation:

NCSHPO and NPS should pursue convenings of SHPO staff in various program areas to share best practices and updates, as well as to provide the opportunity to connect with colleagues across the country who are doing the same specialized work. Currently only tax credit staff have yearly tax credit reviewer training.

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should explore with NPS how they might offer more training for SHPO staff on a range of topics, with an array of training opportunities each year. The training should be available for free and should be either offered online or, if in person, more convenient (i.e., regional) for SHPO staff to travel to.

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should explore with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) how they might offer more training for SHPO staff, particularly on legal issues. The training should be available for free and should either be offered online or, if in person, more convenient (i.e., regional) for SHPO staff to travel to.

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should convene SHPOs and partners for a broad discussion about the utility of the PQS. Questions to explore included: Are there other ways to arrive at the level of qualification/professional knowledge that is needed to perform the required duties? Should the PQS give specific credence to on-the-job training and experience, specific training courses completed, etc.? Should a certification process be implemented?

" I believe there may be a bias in the data when it comes to learning skills in undergrad vs. graduate school. Many may answer graduate school, but that may be because they came into this career field later than undergrad. I do not think we should discount people who do not seek graduate school. Especially since graduate school costs do not always equal pay or opportunity outcomes." (SHPO Staff Survey respondent)

4.6 Benefits

In the SHPO Staff Survey, respondents were asked to rate the value of certain benefits that may be available to them through their SHPO job. Because most SHPOs are within state units of government, benefits of state employment play a significant role in job retention and satisfaction.

Analysis:

The most important benefits reported (each receiving over 150 rankings of extremely important) were salary, pension or other retirement savings account, health insurance, drug prescription insurance, paid time off, the availability of a flexible or telework schedule, and availability of comp time; health insurance and paid time off were, somewhat surprisingly, deemed even more important than salary. Salary, health insurance and paid time off were identified by over 300 respondents as extremely important. Conversely and not surprisingly, practically none of the respondents ranked health insurance, paid time off, and salary as unimportant or neutral. Some respondents indicated that health insurance

and paid time off are not available to them (15-20 people). These may be staff who are in limited term or contract appointments.

Analysis:

The benefits identified as least likely to be available to SHPO staff are tuition support/reimbursement, student loan forgiveness, comp time, and other retirement plans that the employer contributes to.

Analysis:

The benefits judged more likely to be better outside of SHPO were the availability of salary increases/pay raises/bonuses, and opportunities for promotion or advancement.

Analysis:

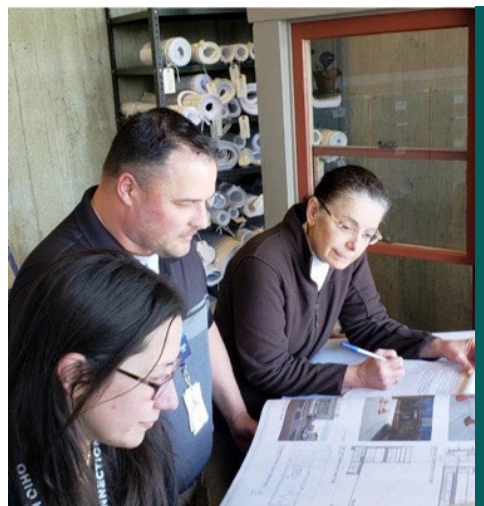
Workload, opportunity to travel, and opportunity to do fieldwork were seen to be nearly the same between SHPO/non-SHPO positions, with all leaning slightly in favor of SHPO.

Analysis:

When asked how the quality and types of benefits (not including base pay) affect their willingness to stay in their current position, two thirds of SHPO staff indicated that they thought the benefits were good, that they used them, and that this motivated them to stay. Only about five percent (5%) thought their benefits were not very good, consequently motivating them to find a job elsewhere. An additional 23% use the benefits but they are not a determining factor whether they stay in their current jobs.



Arizona SHPO staff retreat.
Courtesy of Arizona SHPO



Reviewing rehabilitation plans.
Courtesy of Ohio SHPO

4.7 Staff Satisfaction and Staff Sentiment

Analysis:

While opportunities for advancement or pay increases were identified as being favorable elsewhere, staff were most motivated to work at the SHPO because of paid time off, quality of benefits, availability of pensions, great colleagues, and the opportunity for public service. Over 200 respondents identified the opportunity to work in their chosen field as extremely important.

Analysis:

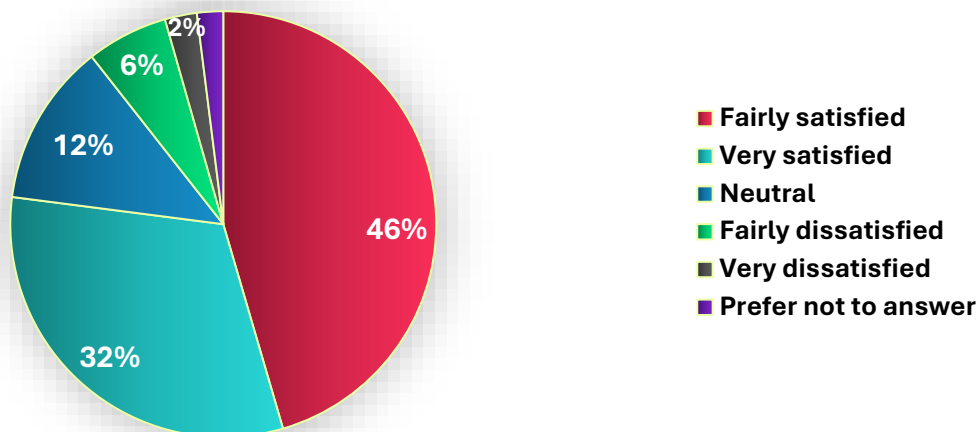
Also weighing in favor of SHPOs were the reputation of the employer, job location, opportunity to telework, flexible work schedules, and availability of comp time.

Analysis:

Some 31.6% of respondents reported that they were very satisfied with their current job, and 45.5% were fairly satisfied. Only 8.6% reported being fairly or very dissatisfied with their current job (**See Figure 19**). Possible forces contributing to dissatisfaction include having insufficient staff to do necessary work (75.7%), insufficient staff to support new initiatives (61.6%), insufficient staff to serve all areas of their states (54.7%), and long vacancies for positions (51%).

Figure 19: Satisfaction with current job

SHPO Staff Survey



Analysis:

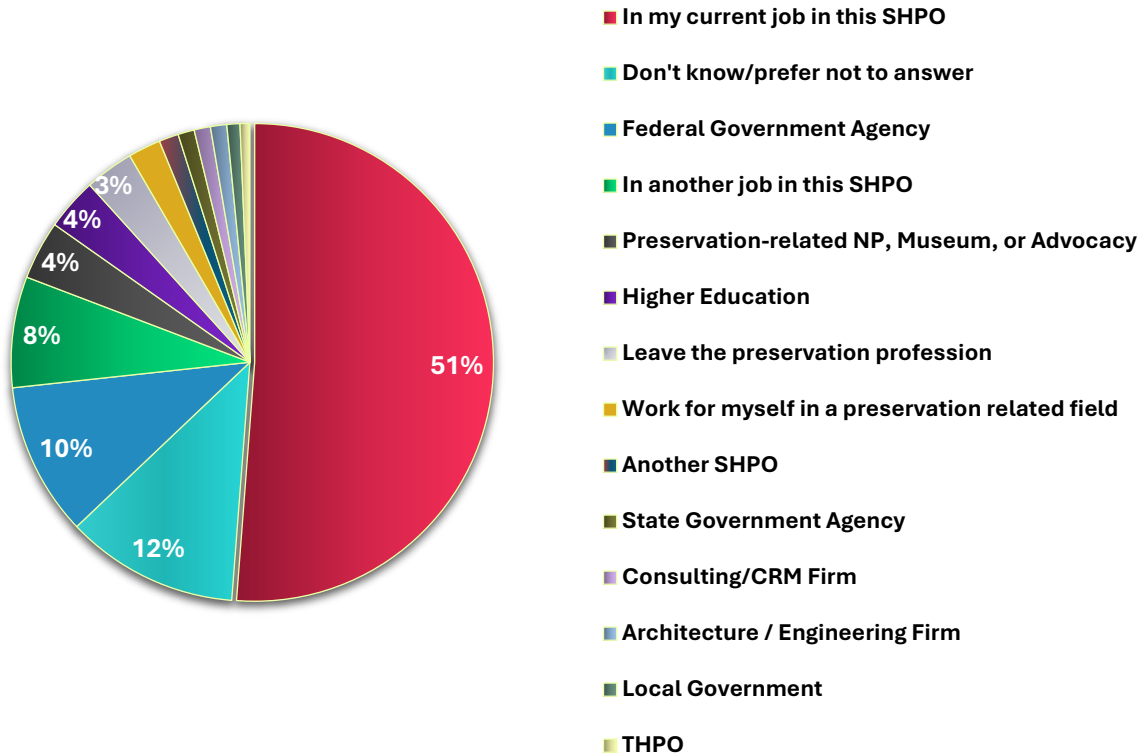
Weighing the benefits and the challenges, over half of respondents still prefer their current job in their SHPO. Factoring in those who would like another job within their SHPO, the preference among staff to remain at their current SHPO offices rises to 58.7%. Despite the draw of a higher salary at a federal agency, only 10.4% would prefer that option to their current employment.¹³ Only about 1% are drawn to either a consulting/CRM firm or an architecture or engineering firm (See Figure 20).

Recommendation:

SHPO leadership and supervisors should be attuned to workforce morale and shifts in workforce makeup; they should continually evaluate ways to ensure staff are involved and informed and that they feel appreciated and valued.

Figure 20: Where would you most prefer to work?

SHPO Staff Survey



¹³ Survey data was collected in 2024.

**"Pay and feeling appreciated are extremely important! I worked at a consulting firm for a number of years, and felt very unappreciated, overworked, and underpaid. Many people are willing to make less money in order to feel that their work is important, and they are appreciated, but they also need to be able to survive. Historic Preservation is a passion, but should not feel like martyrdom."
(SHPO Staff Survey respondent)**

**"After 20 years here, I can say that it is the PEOPLE who make a job worth sticking to. The work is great, too, but I have AMAZING colleagues."
(SHPO Staff Survey respondent)**

**"I enjoy my job and the people I work with tremendously. I am learning every day!"
(SHPO Staff Survey respondent)**

" I have had the benefit of working in multiple SHPO offices and the one I am currently in is far and away the best. I have the ability to do my work while also being reasonably compensated for the amount and quality of work I am expected to do. The current team is very cohesive and there is solid leadership. I have found the unicorn of SHPOs." (SHPO Staff Survey respondent)

SHPO Staff Comments

The open-ended Question 21 on the SHPO Staff Survey allowed respondents to emphasize a critical area of concern that they could not fully address within the confines of the survey format. Respondents took this opportunity to provide more personal or anecdotal information to qualify their answers. Critical observations included pay inequities between public and private sector and even among those fulfilling the same role at different state agencies; the relatively “flat” organizational structure of SHPOs as prohibitive of career advancement; and state governments’ challenge to create new positions or reclassify positions to provide industry-standard pay adjustments.

Across the board, staff expressed that those who perform core duties at SHPOs are highly educated but severely undercompensated. Several respondents noted that those performing equivalent work and possessing equivalent experience make almost double the pay at private cultural resource management firms. Several respondents indicated that they were only able to work at their SHPO because of the support of a higher paid partner or spouse. Several respondents indicated that the federal student loan forgiveness program is a significant enough benefit to offset the low pay at this point in their career, while multiple respondents cited health benefits as the reason they stay employed in state government.

While some respondents reported issues with workplace morale, almost all respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with the work that they do, citing work-life balance, general collegiality of SHPO staff, values-oriented missions, and a commitment to public service.

Direct, anonymous quotes from survey respondents are incorporated through this report in speech bubbles.

Part 5. Data Gathering from Educational Institutions

5.1 Methodology for Educational Institution Survey

Parallel to the data gathering from SHPOs by the Internal Subcommittee, the External Subcommittee worked to collect data on preservation education from academic programs that train students in history, preservation, archaeology, architecture, and architectural history. In preparation for releasing a survey, members of the External Subcommittee gathered general observations from the NCSHPO community and others on the Workforce Committee. Some of the anecdotal concerns or conventional wisdom identified for examination through data collection included:

- Are there a sufficient number of active and healthy academic preservation programs, like the members of National Council on Preservation Education (NCPE), available to train students for the field? Are the programs robust or in decline?
- How many students are being served by these programs and how many are earning historic preservation credentials?
- Are the curricula of these programs sufficient to train students to meet PQS?
- Are core skills in research, writing, consultation, negotiation, and cultural competency being taught?

In informal meetings with contacts at NCPE, External Subcommittee members discussed the Workforce Committee's charter and gathered views on the current state of education and training for the field. These factors included the forces that may be affecting the training, hiring, professional development, and retention of workers in the preservation or CRM fields. The External Subcommittee then designed the survey of educational institutions to produce a snapshot of the current state of preservation education. The survey questions generally addressed four key areas:

- Basic information about the institution, including estimated enrollment and graduation data.
- Structured questions with defined answer options about coursework, training, and credentials collected in a quantifiable format that could be compared across programs.
- Information about available financial assistance and work experience.
- Services available to help students find jobs and career tracking of alumni.

To develop the educational survey population, the External Subcommittee gathered publicly available contact information for colleges and universities who are members of NCPE and the National Council on Public History (NCPH). SHPOs provided additional contacts for programs in disciplines related to the preservation field as part of the SHPO Workforce Survey.

The NCPE public website currently lists 62 institutional members¹⁴. The membership standards require programs to maintain a defined set of basic educational standards, quoted here:

- Instruction equivalent to at least two courses in the history of the designed environment (including, for example, the history of architecture, urban development, landscape architecture, archeology, or material culture).
- Instruction equivalent to at least one course devoted to the history and theory of preservation.
- Instruction equivalent to at least one course devoted to documentation and recording techniques used in preservation and archeology.
- Since preservation requires the field application of knowledge, including communication skills, the program should encourage a significant period of practical experience, equivalent to an internship, practicum, or apprenticeship.
- Instruction in at least one Specialized Component (design, technology, economics, law, planning, and curation).

NCPE members can also self-identify their programs as offering one or more specialties defined as archaeology, building craft, conservation, design, documentation, museums, planning, preservation law, and preservation policy.

NCPH is a membership organization for academic programs in the discipline of public history. Their public website lists 359 member institutions, of which 109 list historic preservation as a specialty of their program. The contacts for those 109 institutions were added to the survey population.

With the list of programs gathered from SHPOs, the compilation of contacts from the three sources resulted in 193 unique educational programs. The disciplines that may be underrepresented in this survey population are archaeology and architectural history programs. A future educational survey should look for ways to specifically target programs in these disciplines that are training students for the CRM field.

NCSHPO staff sent the survey with the Subcommittee's introductory letter to the contact list on April 18, 2024, and posted it to the NCSHPO Forum for individual SHPOs to share

¹⁴ NCPE [explanation of their membership requirements](#).

with any additional contacts. The survey was also sent to NCPE leadership for distribution so that they could encourage members to respond. The letter introduced NCSHPO as an organization, the purpose of the Workforce Committee, a working definition of historic preservation and CRM, and the scope of disciplines and professional qualifications being studied. The letter acknowledged the critical role of the building trades in preservation but explained that those disciplines were beyond the scope of this survey and the Workforce Committee charter. The survey closed on June 4, 2024.

5.2 Response Rate for Educational Institution Survey

The institutional survey was completed by 59 unique academic programs out of at least 193 possible respondents who were invited, resulting in a 31% response rate for those who received the survey by invitation. Additional respondents received the survey through other contact methods. The respondents represent programs located in 32 states distributed fairly evenly throughout the United States and one response from British Columbia. It is important to note that only 18 of the 59 member institutions of the NCPE participated, indicating that most respondents were more likely to be members of the NCPH or were contacts provided by SHPOs.

5.3 Respondents to Educational Institution Survey

Type of Program, Institution, and Credentials

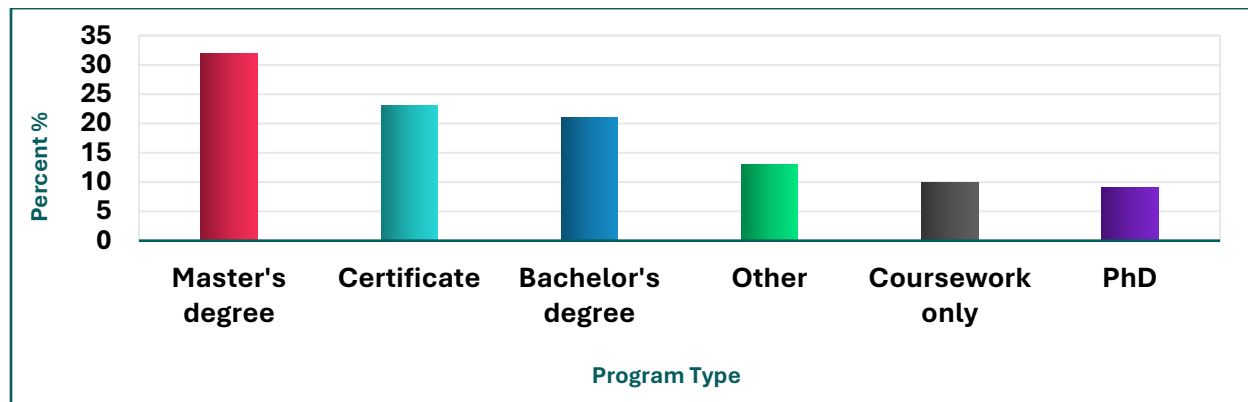
The first question asked, after collecting basic information, was “Do you consider your program a historic preservation related program?” 83% of the respondents self-identified as a program that offers coursework and training in some aspect of the preservation or CRM fields.

The types of educational institutions represented in the survey population included small and large state universities, private colleges, and community colleges. The programs offered ranged from small certificate programs to large undergraduate programs at major universities.

The programs reported a range of credentials for students from coursework and certificates through Ph.Ds. The highest percentage (54%) offer a master’s degree program followed closely by 36% of programs with a bachelor’s degree program (**See Figure 21**).

Figure 21: Credentials offered by educational institutions

Educational Institution Survey



Enrollment

After establishing the types of credentials offered, respondents reported the estimated number of students who enroll and the number of students who complete their credential program each year. Of program respondents, 23 offer a certificate, 21 have an undergraduate program, 32 have a graduate program, and 9 have a PhD program. This data is limited by the response rate of 31% of 191 invited institutions, but it does provide a conservative estimated total of students entering or completing programs each year. Another factor affecting the number of students represented in the survey is that many of the more established and larger historic preservation programs that are NCPE members did not take the survey.

The class size for each program across all education levels ranged from small programs with two students to large programs with 60 to 80 students enrolling per year. **Figure 22** calculates an estimated completion rate for each credential using data on the total annual enrollment rate and the total annual completion rate.

Figure 22. Enrollment and graduation estimates for each type of educational credential program **Educational Institution Survey**

Program Type & Number	Annual Enrollment (total)	Annual Completion (total)	Average Completion Rate Across All Programs
Certificate programs (23)	291	131	67%
Undergraduate programs (21)	3018	997	51%
Graduate programs (32)	569	331	71%
PhD programs (9)	226	45	46%

Coursework

Institutions were asked to respond to a list of 24 courses that a professional would need to begin a career in one of the historic preservation disciplines or that would be beneficial for SHPO work environments. The courses highlighted in **Figure 23** are the top responses regarding specific coursework offered by more than 50% of the respondents. **Figure 24** shows all the options an institution could choose from.

Figure 23. “Select all subject areas covered in your coursework” with top answers highlighted **Educational Institution Survey**

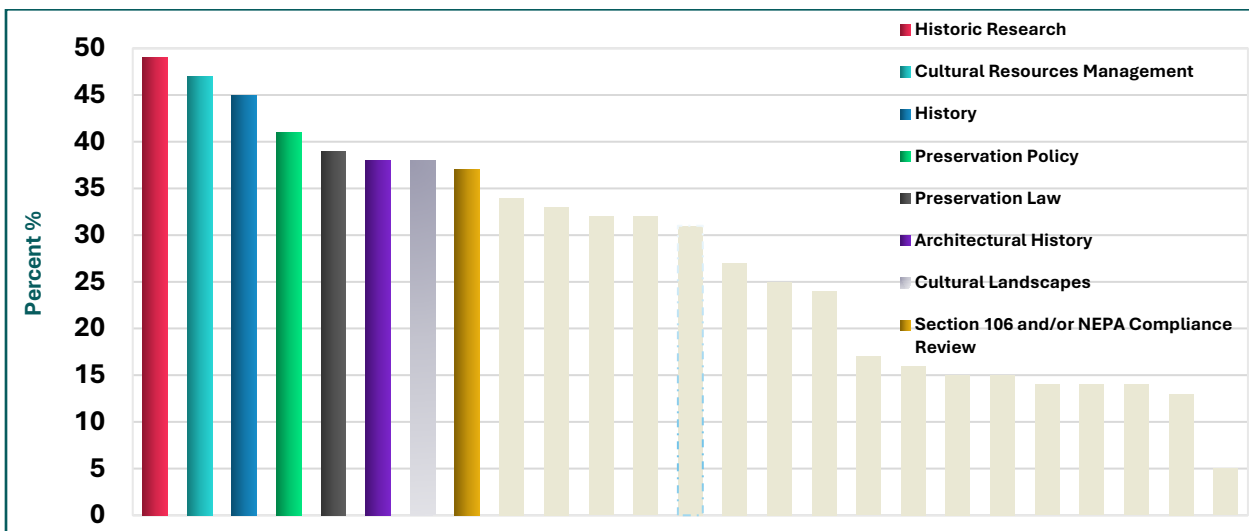


Figure 24. All subject areas from Figure 23 and the number of programs offering coursework in each

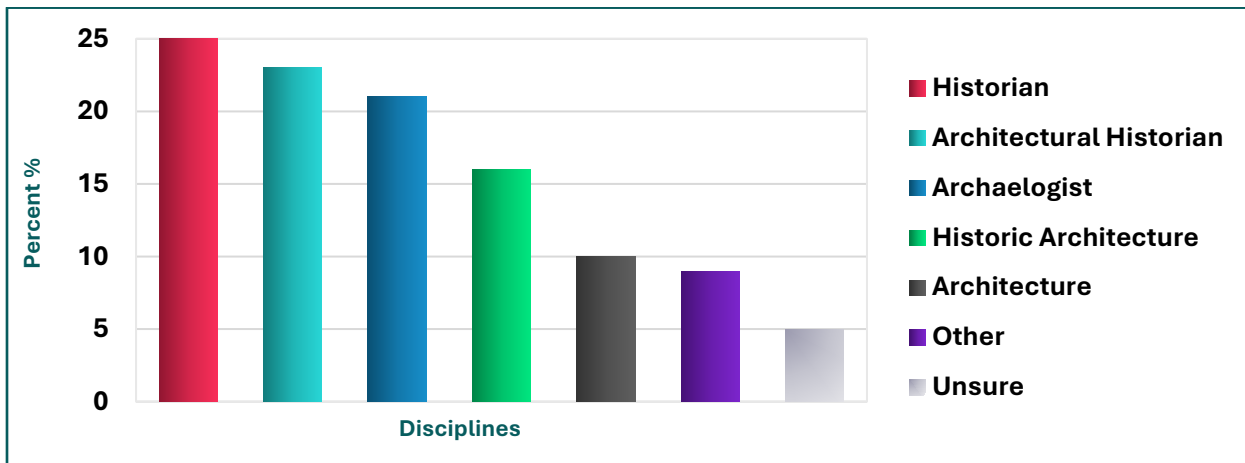
Educational Institution Survey

Subject Area	Number of Programs Offering Coursework <i>59 respondents</i>
Historic Research	49
Cultural Resources Management	47
History	45
Preservation Policy	41
Preservation Law	39
Architectural History	38
Cultural Landscapes	38
Section 106 and/or NEPA Compliance Review	37
Museum Studies	34
Traditional Cultural Places	33
Archaeology-field work, methodology	32
Preservation Planning	32
Building Documentation	31
Anthropology	27
GIS	25
Technical Writing	24
Tribal Sovereignty and Consultation	17
Public Policy and Administration	16
Building Craft	15
Other	15
Architectural Drafting	14
Economics	14
Preservation Design Studio	14
Construction Practices	13
Mediation and Negotiation	5

Education Meeting Professional Qualifications Standards (PQS)

The survey asked respondents to evaluate whether they believe their program is geared toward training students to meet any of the disciplines defined in the PQS; a link to the PQS was included for reference. Respondents could select all the disciplines that their programs cover. The top three training programs represented were for historians (43%), architectural historians (39%), and archaeologists (36%), with programs for historic architecture (27%) and architecture (17%) less represented. Respondents who answered “other” and offered clarifying explanation mentioned disciplines such as cultural resource management, museum studies, urban planning, local government, public history, preservation and conservation, and ethnography (See Figure 25).

Figure 25. SOI discipline(s) fulfilled by institutions' program requirements and curriculum Educational Institution Survey



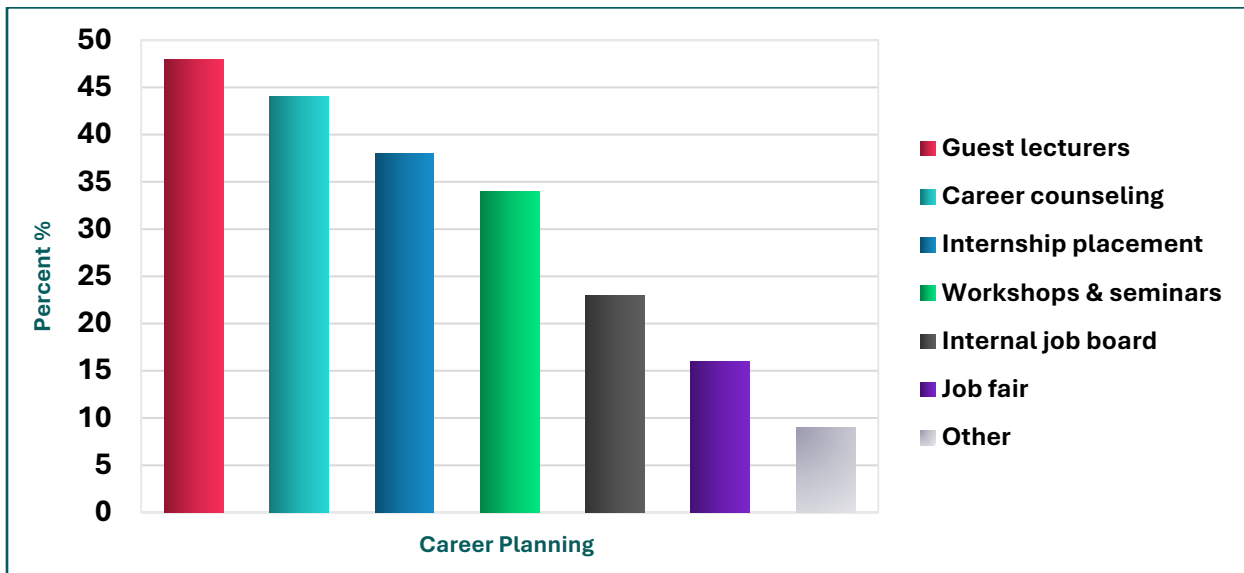
Workforce Readiness

Institutions were asked what services were offered to enhance students' readiness for the workforce. These questions were in response to a perception among current SHPO staff that graduates may not receive enough practical or technical training outside of theoretical or academic coursework. The respondents reported that 39% programs require an internship to complete the program, while 68% reported that they offer research or teaching assistantships, with an average of 7.5 positions per program available. Ideally, internships and assistantships are designed to prepare students for professional work

environments and future job duties like specialized research or fieldwork. However, a follow-up study may be required to ascertain the type of work being performed in internships and assistantships and whether it is filling the skills gap that students are not receiving in coursework.

While the Educational Institutions survey did not ask about the location of the internships, we know from the SHPO Workforce Survey that many are available in SHPOs. 68% of SHPOs offer paid internships, 38% offer unpaid internships, and some participate in college work study or AmeriCorps or similar programs. Ideally, SHPOs could create more internship and training opportunities for emerging professionals; however, staff time to train and mentor an intern as well as the budget to provide a reasonable salary are major constraints. Other factors that prepare students for the workforce are mentorship and career planning services. These services can take many forms and are therefore hard to define, quantify, and compare between programs. Responses related to these programs indicated that “mentorship” was not well defined in the survey or in practice; however, 39% of the respondents indicated that they offer some type of mentorship program. The most common career planning services offered were guest lectures (81%), career counseling (75%), internship placement (64%), workshops and seminars (58%), and job boards or fairs (See Figure 26).

Figure 26. Career planning services offered by educational programs
Educational Institution Survey



The next set of survey questions attempted to understand what data may be collected to track graduates after they leave the program – data which may be accessible for future study. Most programs (69%) track alumni careers or specialties after graduation. When respondents were asked to provide their best estimate of how many students take a job in the historic preservation field, the responses were that an average of 49% of graduates enter the preservation workforce. The vague wording of this question or the interpretation by respondents could be affecting the answers that resulted in this average. Alumni tracking is an area for further study that could use clarification and perhaps multiple questions for better data collection in the future.

Future of Academic Programs

Additional questions were designed to address the conventional wisdom that enrollment in programs may be decreasing, thereby leading to a shortage of new professionals entering the field. When asked whether program enrollment over the last seven years had increased, decreased, or was stable, 37% of programs said their enrollment had increased, 41% had stable enrollment, and only 15% observed a decrease in enrollment. Seven (7) percent were unsure about their program's trend. Institutions were further asked why they indicated that their enrollment was increasing, decreasing, or stable. For those programs with increased enrollment, respondents cited general university enrollment increase, more awareness of job options among students, the quality of the instructors and the program, and effective marketing. Programs that reported stable enrollment credited funding opportunities for students, interdisciplinary programs or dual degree opportunities, program reputation, and job placement programs. The programs that have experienced decreased enrollment are facing an overall decline in enrollment at their institution or department, a lack of administration support, retired program staff not being replaced, an improved job market that requires less advanced education, and discouragement among students due to a perceived lack of jobs or low pay. When asked about the percentage of students who receive financial aid or scholarships, the average response was that 58% of students receive some form of financial aid or scholarship.

Part 6. Data Gathering from CRM Firms

6.1 Methodology for CRM Firm Survey

Alongside the survey of educational institutions outlined in Part 5, the External Subcommittee sought to gather information from private CRM firms about training, hiring, professional development, and retention of workers in the field. Members of the External Subcommittee met with contacts at the American Cultural Resources Association (ACRA), a membership organization for CRM businesses that currently lists 178 member companies. These CRM firms perform survey, research, and consultation work necessary to fulfill the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act and many other federal, Tribal, state, and local preservation laws. ACRA’s mission states that the trade organization “improves the quality and effectiveness of cultural resource management firms, advocates for conditions that allow the cultural resource management industry to thrive and supports responsible cultural resource management solutions.”¹⁵ For individuals, they offer professional development through continuing education classes as well as a job board and internship listings. They also maintain a membership group for academic institutions, the University Partnership Program, which has established requirements and fosters a relationship between employers and the programs that train future employees. NCSHPO and individual SHPOs have a close working relationship with ACRA as an organization and with its member firms.

ACRA, like NCSHPO, also conducts surveys and research among members to understand the issues facing historic preservation professionals. To assist the External Subcommittee in our study of factors that may be affecting SHPO recruitment, ACRA generously agreed to survey CRM firm leadership to gauge whether employers in the private sector experience the same hiring, training, and retention issues as SHPOs. ACRA invited their members to provide data and feedback on issues regarding recruitment, training, and workforce readiness including:

- What challenges are you facing regarding recruitment?
- Over the past 6 months, has it been harder or easier to recruit new staff?
- Which level positions are the most difficult to fill?
- Which disciplines are the most difficult to recruit new staff for?
- What geographic area are your applicants and new employees coming from?

¹⁵ American Cultural Resources Association, [“Strategic Plan”](#), accessed 2025.

- Are your entry-level applicants coming straight from academic programs or from prior employers?
- Do candidates and new hires have the necessary skills to do the jobs?
- Are they well prepared for the workplace?
- What steps have you taken or are currently taking to attract job candidates?
- What steps have you taken or are currently taking to improve the quality of candidates?
- What do you see as the most significant obstacles to finding and hiring good candidates?



Staff at the Valentine Museum's Wickham House, Richmond, VA. Photo by Ivy Tan/Courtesy of Virginia SHPO



NY SHPO staff explore Buffalo Central Terminal. Courtesy of New York SHPO

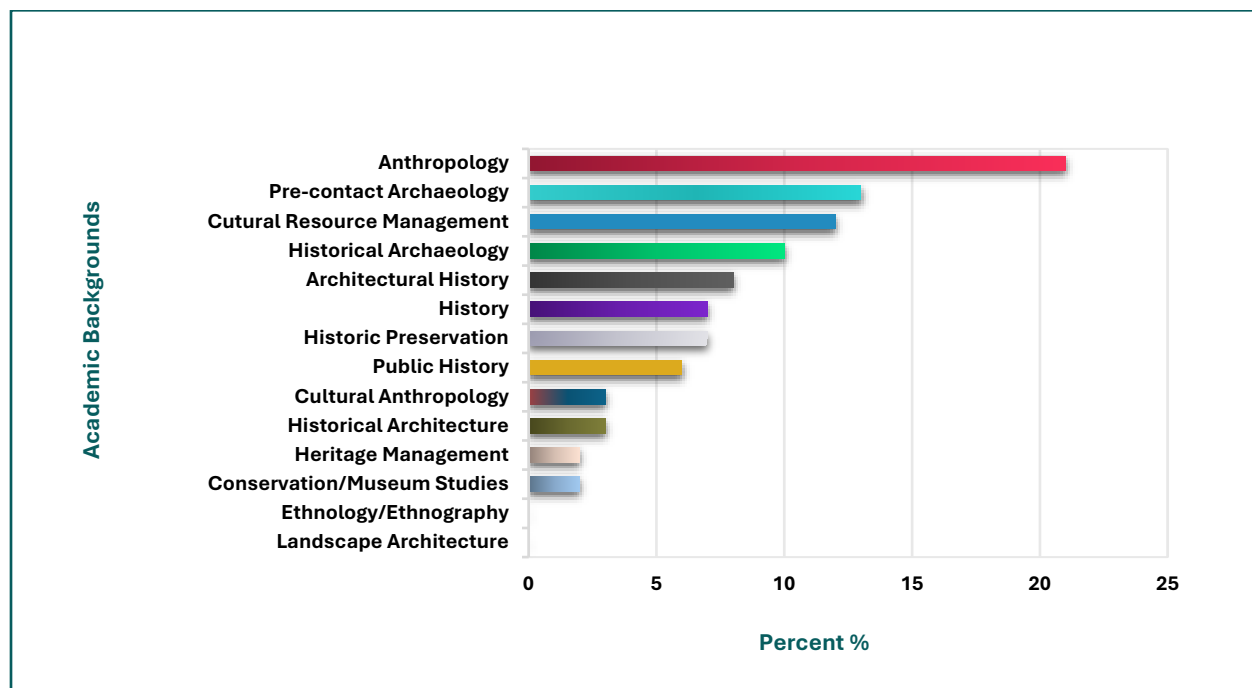
6.2 Respondents to CRM Firm Survey

Of the 178 member organizations, 28 respondents completed the survey. Approximately 25 of the 28 respondents identified themselves as upper-level CRM professionals (senior managers, c-suite executives, or company owners) with the remaining respondents as mid-level professionals or HR/administrative positions.

Eighty-nine (89) percent of respondents indicated that, over the past six months, recruiting new staff has been more difficult, and 75% indicated that new hires do not have the necessary skills to perform their jobs. The respondents reported that they are filling entry level positions with 59% new graduates and 41% employees with some prior work experience.

To understand the educational backgrounds of new CRM employees, respondents were given a choice to indicate as many educational backgrounds as they have observed for new hires. The results show that employees are entering the field from a wide variety of academic fields (**See Figure 27**).

Figure 27. Academic backgrounds of recent hires as reported by CRM manager CRM Survey

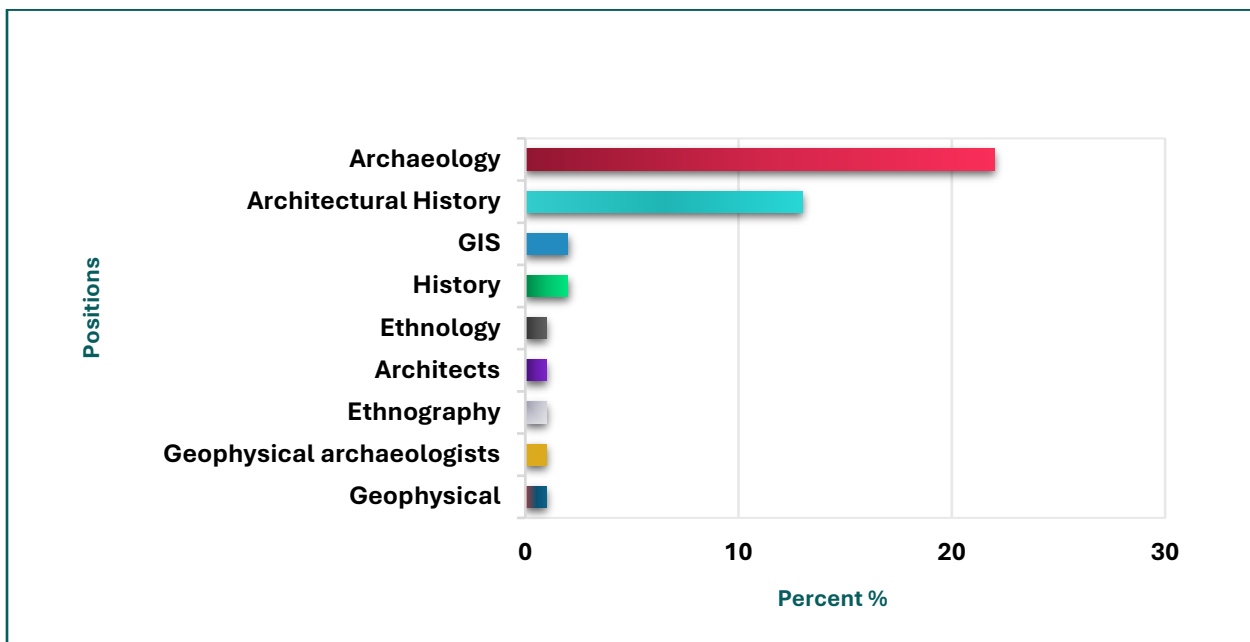


Respondents were given an open-ended response option to the question, “What challenges are you facing regarding recruitment?” Eighty-two (82) percent of the responses strongly emphasized the difficulty in finding qualified candidates. In another open-ended question, respondents were given the chance to elaborate on the specific skills and training new employees are lacking. Throughout the survey, the written comments reflect that the majority of survey participants believe that emerging professionals lack the following:

- knowledge of and experience in field survey techniques;
- historical research skills;
- knowledge of preservation law and policy;
- analytical and critical thinking skills;
- competency in technical writing; and
- project management and personnel management.

Respondents were also asked to rate which positions were the most difficult to fill; archaeologists and architectural historians were cited as the most challenging positions to hire (See Figure 28).

Figure 28. Respondent observations of positions that they find the most difficult to fill CRM Survey



The final section of the survey collected data on the proactive steps businesses are taking to address recruiting issues. When given the opportunity to provide a written explanation of how supervisors attract job candidates, they listed an insightful variety of approaches beyond traditional advertising and networks including:

- Increased pay and benefits.
- Hybrid work and flexible scheduling.
- Developing strong relationships with universities through volunteering with field schools and committees.
- Employee ownership.
- Workplace culture.
- Offering education credits and training.
- Recruiting at community colleges and seeking non-traditional candidates.

The last survey question asked supervisors to discuss any steps they have taken to improve the quality of job candidates. The following ideas were offered:

- Raising the issue with academic institutions and offering CRM training.
- Hiring students with research and writing skills and providing CRM training in-house.
- Internship programs.
- Mentorship programs.
- Building in extra time and budget for training new hires.



Surveyors in Kansas are truly outstanding in their field.
Courtesy of Kansas SHPO



Archaeologists examine a shell midden. *Courtesy of Minnesota SHPO*

Part 7. Analysis and Recommendations from Educational Institutions & CRM Firm Surveys

Analysis:

Most academic programs in the survey (78%) reported stable or increasing enrollment, which is a reassuring result and would seem to contradict the conventional wisdom that programs teaching preservation disciplines may be declining. However, only 18 of the 59 NCPE member programs participated in the survey, indicating that the results may not offer an accurate picture of the current educational environment among programs that most strongly identify as historic preservation programs. Only 15% of programs said their enrollment was decreasing, and 7% were unsure of the enrollment status. It should also be considered whether the data represents a “survivor bias” in that the survey population may have been skewed toward healthy and successful programs. Programs that are experiencing declining enrollment or are struggling may not have received the survey or felt compelled to respond and therefore may be underrepresented in the survey results by only 15% of the respondents.

Analysis:

The completion rate for graduate students, the credential most needed to meet the PQS, is relatively high at 71% across all programs. Although many factors can affect the trend of graduate school completion, a July 2024 study from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that 72% of graduate students at flagship public universities finished a graduate program, which would seem to validate these survey results.¹⁶

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should develop a closer partnership with NCPE leadership and members to help SHPOs gain a better understanding of the educational environment among the institutions that most identify as historic preservation programs. Survey respondents should be involved in this follow up.

Analysis:

¹⁶ Jeffrey T. Denning and Lesley J. Turner, “[The Graduation Part II: Graduate School Graduation Rates](#)”. National Bureau of Economic Research (2024).

Based on responses, most programs offer a curriculum that *should* cover the fundamental skills a graduate would need to begin working in a preservation discipline: archaeology fieldwork, architectural history, building documentation, cultural resources management, history, research, law and policy, and Section 106 and NEPA regulations. There are many subject areas that are important for graduates to know to succeed in the preservation field; however, the list of subject areas exceeds the amount of coursework necessary to get the degree. With most MA programs requiring 36 credits of coursework, with each course being 3 credits, that only amounts to 12 classes for the entire program, which may leave students with a knowledge gap in certain areas.

Analysis:

A range of academic programs across the US offer coursework and training in preservation and related fields. However, CRM firms report that they are experiencing difficulty in recruiting candidates who meet the PQS and that new hires lack the specific skills needed to conduct CRM work, including training in field techniques and survey methodology and the knowledge of cultural resources law and policy that they ideally would have learned in an academic program. SHPO supervisors report anecdotally that new graduates are generally not prepared for the preservation workforce. In the SHPO staff survey, employees themselves estimated that they learned a much greater share of their job skills through on-the-job training (both current jobs and prior jobs) than through undergraduate or graduate school. While these observations may not be unusual compared to other professional fields, they may point to a disconnect between what academic programs offer and what employers require, which could benefit from further study.

"Another big issue is the programs putting out the graduates are not training people for compliance work, which is one of the biggest aspects of all jobs." (SHPO Staff Survey respondent)

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should consider discussing with the NCPE the possibility of encouraging university preservation programs to permit coursework in public administration, geography/mapping, and data science (to give a few examples) - to count for degree credit, or otherwise develop coursework that focuses on preservation administration (to

supplement the more technical courses on rehab, materials conservation, documentation, built environment). SHPO staff identified many of these skills as necessary for their jobs.

**"The consultants who do most of the projects reviewed in our office do poor quality work, which makes everyone's job more difficult and time consuming. We don't seem to be getting new preservation professionals working in our state to replace those who are poor quality or retired. Graduate preservation programs need to do a better job working with SHPO and other employers to produce graduates who meet their employment needs...and to direct graduates to states where there are severe shortages of qualified professionals."
(SHPO Staff Survey respondent)**

Recommendation:

Internships, work study programs, field study or fieldwork, and mentorships, including those in SHPOs, should be considered critical in filling the knowledge gap and preparing graduates for the preservation workforce, and should be further explored by NCSHPO, NCPE, and ACRA.

Recommendation:

NCSHPO should consider developing a further study or survey about past and current internship, mentorship, and field study or fieldwork opportunities at SHPOs.

Recommendation:

SHPOs should develop relationships with educational institutions in their state or region and collaborate on shared goals, including internship opportunities and workforce readiness.

Recommendation:

The historic preservation field needs additional training formats or opportunities that are provided outside of the traditional academic framework and the high costs of a master's or PhD program.

Analysis:

CRM supervisors believe that students in all disciplines need more opportunities for skills development in a field setting at a time when those programs may be disappearing due to the complexity and expense of coordinating them. This underscores the difficulty in hiring qualified archaeologists, in particular.

Analysis:

CRM firms are having to build increased time and money into training new hires to help new hires meet PQS or to train in related skills necessary to perform research and survey, to analyze data and draft reports, and to manage clients and participate in consultation.

“Universities are not training students for the real world of CRM and we in CRM need to work harder at providing outreach and training.” (CRM Firm Survey respondent)

“We basically look for people who are amiable and can take direction and we go from there. We assume they know nothing: regulations, process, survey methods, excavation methods, regional context, office machines, Microsoft, GIS, mapping, orienteering; and have no equipment.” (CRM Firm Survey respondent)

**“A key issue is that university programs, for the most part, do not prepare students for work in CRM. For staff and associate levels, a significant portion of senior level job efforts are focused on training on fundamental components of the job. Thus, new hires brought on to alleviate workloads often cause more.”
(CRM Firm Survey respondent)**

Recommendation:

The perspective of students, recent graduates, and alumni is missing from the conversation about preservation education and job preparedness. NCSHPO should consider working with NCPE, ACRA, and university partners to obtain feedback from these audiences about the challenges they face in the job market and as employees (such as salary, qualifications, preparedness, and student loan debt).

Recommendation:

NCSHPO, ACRA, and NCPE should work together to address skills development through a model or pilot program aimed at those emerging into the preservation workforce.



Ground penetrating radar is conducted at a site visit.
Courtesy of the Connecticut SHPO



Wisconsin SHPO Daina Penkiunas speaks at Hope Lutheran Church in Mineral Point.
Courtesy of Wisconsin SHPO

Part 8. Key Findings

Key findings that shape our recommendations for next steps include the following:

1. While federally mandated work is the same across SHPOs, they operate in **a variety of different environments with varying constraints**. Most SHPOs are spread across larger agencies in state government, while a few are independent state agencies or even nonprofits. Some SHPOs are small and focus on narrowly defined responsibilities; others are large and encompass management of historic sites or large state-funded grant programs.
2. State offices are bound by differing department or agency human resources rules regarding hiring and recruitment, as well as by differing state policies and procedures related to wages and potential salary increases. **SHPOs have limited or no autonomy in setting job classifications, pay scales, starting salaries, or incremental pay increases**.
3. The vast majority of SHPOs are embedded within a state government agency which may have a broader focus on housing, economic development, natural resources, or other concerns; they rely on their annual HPF appropriation as well as state operating funding for the majority of their budgets. **Relatively few SHPOs have other dedicated revenue streams**, and HPF competitive grant programs do not cover costs and, in fact, may incur additional staffing burdens and costs.
4. Staffing levels and funding are major concerns for most SHPOs. Nationally, approximately 63% of HPF funding is expended on payroll, and yet **the funding available is not sufficient to staff the mandated federal duties of a SHPO**, and it is fixed over a period of years by an apportionment formula. SHPOs that are lucky enough to see annual raises find that they are able to hire fewer employees to do an increasing amount of work, and many SHPOs rely on less costly contractual or term limited employees to perform core duties in statutory federal program areas.
5. Concerns about **insufficient staffing levels were expressed at the staff level**, with SHPO staff who were surveyed reporting that their offices have insufficient staff to do necessary work (75.7%), insufficient staff to support new initiatives (61.6%), insufficient staff to serve all areas of their states (54.7%), and long periods of vacancy for positions (51%).
6. While staff members do leave to work in the private sector and the federal government (both of which tend to pay more), **the SHPO workforce tends to stay with their SHPOs for the long term, often until retirement**, works hard, and tends

to enjoy the work. At survey time, a quarter had been in their position for over 15 years, and 36% had been in the workforce for more than 25 years.

7. Because of the long tenure of many staff in the preservation field and at their current SHPO, they embody decades of experience, and **retirements often mean a substantial loss of institutional knowledge**. There is often little overlap between duties or temporal overlap between old and new staff to mitigate for that loss, which is compounded by turnover amongst newer employees and a relatively flat organizational structure in many SHPOs.
8. Salary is a key factor influencing the SHPO workforce and job satisfaction, but it is one over which SHPO leadership have little control. **SHPO staff salaries are highly dependent on state government budgets and HR requirements and are not guaranteed to increase over time**. Often new employees are hired at less than the salary the previous incumbent earned, which can be compounded by local and national changes in the cost of living, primarily housing.
9. Adding to the complexity of hiring issues, **SHPOs have high position vacancy rates**, especially for positions with responsibilities in archaeology and Certified Local Government programs, which had current vacancy rates nationwide at 20%.¹⁷ SHPOs reported that it was hardest to fill maritime archeology, preservation tax incentive, and easement management positions.
10. **SHPO staff salaries are not in line with the educational requirements of their positions, nor are they comparable to those of others**, especially federal employees, who do the same type of work. An examination of 1,200 job postings confirmed that SHPO hiring salary ranges were lower than for positions in non-profits, with private firms, or in local or federal government.
11. Jobs in other sectors are often more attractive to professionals than those in SHPOs due to sometimes higher salaries and more opportunities for advancement; however, **many of those who make their careers in SHPOs find job satisfaction and stability**, citing work-life balance, general collegiality of SHPO staff, values-oriented missions, and a commitment to public service.
12. Educational institutions surveyed presented a positive picture of the future workforce with **stable or increasing enrollment in their programs** and broad course offerings, from research and history to classes in construction practices and mediation. Over half (32 total) reported offering a master's degree, which would allow graduates to meet the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards. These institutions graduate approximately 314 master's students annually, with about half estimated to take jobs in the preservation field.

¹⁷ Some SHPOs hire archaeologists seasonally, which may have skewed the position vacancy numbers. However, with 12 of 44 possible positions open at the time of the survey, the data indicates a need for trained archaeologists.

13. Educational institutions, overall, felt that their programs and coursework prepared students to take jobs in the field. In contrast to this encouraging outlook, **CRM employers surveyed felt that 75% of candidates and new hires did not enter the job market with the necessary skills to do the job** and that the employer had to make a substantial investment to provide training. In particular, employers noted a lack of writing and client relations skills.
14. The **educational pipeline delivers candidates who require additional on-the-job training** in any preservation sector. The need for SHPOs and other employers in the sector to provide that training, in order to have employees who meet the PQS, comes up against the need for (even and especially) entry-level staff to make a **salary to cover their costs of living as well as their education.**
15. **The need to recruit, train, and retain the next generation of preservation professionals and leaders is acute and ongoing.** Meeting the challenge starts with getting pre-college students interested in the field, continues through the provision of paid internships for those in undergraduate or graduate programs, and persists in the need for training, growth, and meaningful mentorship throughout a career.
16. The surveys confirmed that in addition to specialized education and training, **SHPO employees need a variety of workplace skills to be successful.** Professional skills like negotiation, mediation, conflict management, and customer service may not be offered in traditional academic programs for history, archaeology, architecture, and preservation. These skills, as well as problem solving and patience were identified as necessary to fulfill their preservation mandates and were often learned in the workplace.
17. Overwhelmingly, **SHPO staff responded that it was necessary to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards if working in a preservation related position.**
18. While benefits, including paid time off, state pensions, and insurance benefits contributed to job satisfaction and tenure of current SHPO staff, the largest number responded that that the **highest motivating factor was the opportunity to work in their chosen field.** They also valued their colleagues and the opportunity for public service.

Part 9. Recommendations

A synthesis of recommendations from throughout this report, including both internally focused and outside-looking recommendations, is provided here, with a focus on recommendations that most clearly pointed to necessary next steps.

1. Using the data gathered for this report, NCSHPO and federal preservation partners, along with SHPOs themselves, should continue **advocating for federal funding** for SHPOs to support the administration of mandated federal responsibilities. This effort should help identify other research needs, including data collection or development of case studies.
2. Where possible, advocacy efforts by state and federal advocacy organizations should **promote increases of state support** to SHPOs. Increased state funding is one means to raise salaries and hire additional staff that are necessary to fulfill not only federally mandated responsibilities, but also those that may be in state statutes, as well as to meet the required match for the federal funds.
3. NCSHPO should assist SHPOs who wish to explore **additional revenue streams**, either through connecting them directly with other SHPOs who currently have revenue streams, through a topical meeting/convening, or through creation of a brief research summary.
4. NCSHPO should continue its advocacy for **eliminating barriers for participating in NPS competitive grant programs**, as well as the need to consider the impact of NPS grant awards on SHPO workloads, including when the SHPO is not the grantee. SHPOs need adequate reimbursement to administer grants and to provide project reviews for STPLG grant programs.
5. NCSHPO should **include questions from the SHPO Workforce Survey and/or the Workforce Census in the NCSHPO annual member survey** to allow comparisons over time and tracking of national trends in the SHPO workforce. Suggested data points include retirements and other departures over the previous year, the number of vacancies, the number of vacant positions filled, new positions created, and the ease or difficulty of filling certain positions.
6. NCSHPO should consider conducting a **SHPO staff survey every 3-5 years** to track trends in a rapidly changing workforce.
7. NCSHPO, in partnership with SHPOs, should form **working committees or host regular round tables for collaboration on best practices** on important topics identified in the report. These may include:
 - i. Identifying additional revenue streams for SHPOs, based on successful examples.
 - ii. Recruitment and job postings, including best practices for job postings and successful examples of mentoring or training new staff.
 - iii. Encouraging staff retention.
 - iv. Identifying ongoing needs for training or professional development.

- v. Best practices for teleworking and how SHPO offices can retain what staff identified as what they most valued about their jobs, which included working with their colleagues.
 - vi. Planning for retirements and the transfer of knowledge.
 - vii. Best practices for digital work.
 - viii. Engaging with university preservation programs and their students.
8. NCSHPO should consider developing a **further study or survey to collect information about internships**, including questions such as which SHPOs have hired or hosted interns in the past, whether and how the internships are funded, what partnership opportunities exist either for funding or for placing interns, what SHPO program areas received support, and what projects or tasks were completed. Best practices, case studies, or recommendations should be developed regarding how internships, as well as mentorships, can contribute to workforce readiness.
 9. NCSHPO should establish a standing **Academic Collaboration Committee** tasked with continuing to monitor the status and cost of preservation education, to conduct future studies, and to create a **formal partnership with organizations** involved in the education and training of the historic preservation disciplines.
 10. NCSHPO should **convene a summit among NCSHPO, ACRA, NCPE, NPS, and ACHP to discuss the disconnect between academic training and skills needed in the workplace**. Academic curricula, work study, internships, field study/fieldwork, and mentorship opportunities should be discussed.
 11. NCSHPO should meet with ACRA to learn more about the guidelines and goals for their [University Partnership Program](#). This program may serve as a useful model for SHPOs.
 12. NCSHPO should work with National Preservation Institute (NPI), ACHP, NPS, and others to assess **what training is currently available** and in what formats, and to assess the need for, and audiences for, additional training.
 13. NCSHPO should follow up with NPS regarding the **status of updates to the PQS** and to share the results of this report.
 14. NCSHPO should form a **work group to examine the PQS** to better understand their history, development, current use in setting job qualifications, investment of time and money required to meet them, and how they work with other credentials, and to make recommendations about whether or how they might be updated.

Part 10. Conclusion

As stated in the Workforce Committee charter, the hiring and retention of a qualified workforce is essential to maintain the efficacy and legal obligations of SHPOs. Therefore, the NCSHPO Workforce Committee examined both the internal conditions and the external forces impacting employment and staffing within SHPOs throughout the nation. We hope this report delivered:

1. A basis for understanding the characteristics of SHPO staff on a national scale, primarily those performing mandated federal duties, through data gathering and analysis.
2. Insights into vacancy rates and recruitment and retention issues, as well as the employment pipeline both to and from SHPOs.
3. A comparative view of salaries across SHPOs and, to a lesser extent, other jobs in the preservation field.
4. Multiple tables, graphs and other data sets in support of the goals of the committee.
5. An examination and listing of preservation education and degree programs nationally.
6. Observations about critical SHPO staff job skills and how and where those skills are attained.

It should be noted that it was beyond the scope of this report to describe or account for the vast differences among SHPOs in terms of recruitment requirements and individual state policies regarding salaries. It was also outside the scope of the report to provide absolute comparisons of salaries across the industry or to capture information from all educational institutions that confer degrees in preservation-related fields. Furthermore, the report represents a static snapshot in time based on participant responses.

It is our hope that SHPOs will not only use the general findings from this report, but will also find ways to make use of the raw data the committee collected. For example:

- SHPOs can use the general findings from this report to better understand their own recruitment and retention challenges within the broader national picture. They can use the information gathered to build the case for increased pay or reclassifications for staff within their own specific agency, budgetary or human resources environment, or so their advocates can work toward these changes.
- SHPOs can use the state data to identify solutions which may be a good fit for individual SHPO staffing or budget challenges. Examples include dedicated funding

streams, SHPO earned income or fees, embedded staff paid by other agencies, and external grant funding identified within the survey. NCSHPO can draw from the data to identify states that use selected funding streams for consultation.

- Working with NCSHPO, SHPOs can request limited data sets (for example, salaries or staff sizes of regional or comparable size SHPOs) to evaluate the relative status of an individual SHPO office.
- Additionally, if possible, individual SHPOs should research pay discrepancy data within their own state systems amongst staff at different agencies doing similar work related to the NHPA (or, potentially, NEPA), as well as federal pay bands used in their region, and use this to advocate within their state systems for classification and pay adjustments.

This report offers insight into the many internal and external factors affecting the historic preservation workforce. It is clear that similar workforce issues are present across historic preservation employment sectors – not just SHPOs. It is also clear that each sector is developing its own ways of addressing these issues. While this report represents an initial examination capturing a moment in time, it is also clear that there are opportunities for all historic preservation sectors to learn from one another and collaborate on efforts to address gaps in the workforce so that the field of historic preservation can be better equipped to manage and preserve the physical reminders of our collective past.

Appendices

- A. [SHPO Workforce Survey 1](#)
- B. [SHPO Workforce Survey 2](#)
- C. [Workforce Census](#)
- D. [SHPO Staff Survey](#)
- E. [Educational Institution Survey](#)
- F. [CRM Survey](#)

Cover Images:

Top: *Minnesota SHPO and Minnesota Historical Society site visit. Courtesy of Minnesota SHPO*

Bottom Left: *Georgia Historic Preservation Division and Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation visit the mill ruins at Sweetwater Creek State Park. Courtesy of Georgia SHPO*

Bottom Right: *DHR Archaeologist for the Eastern Region Michael Clem inspects the collapsed front porch of the Blick Plantation's main house in Brunswick County, Virginia. Photo by Joanna McKnight. Courtesy of Virginia SHPO*