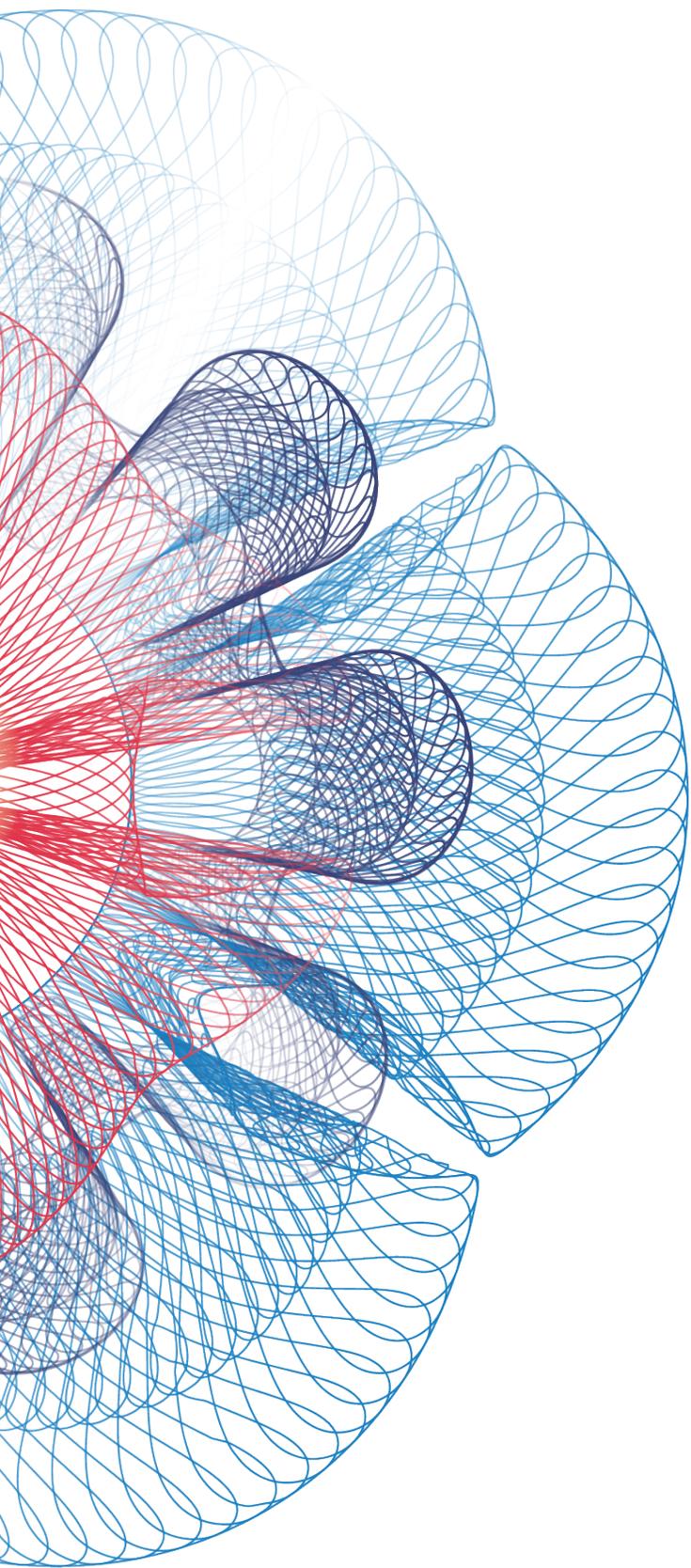


**INSPIRING THE  
AMERICAN SPIRIT**

**AMERICA**

**REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT**

Submitted by  
The U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission  
December 31, 2019



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# **PREAMBLE OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

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**In Congress, July 4, 1776**

**We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.**





UNITED STATES SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL  
COMMISSION

December 31, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

This letter transmits, as provided for in section 5(c) of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016, a report presenting the Commission's overall program for observances marking the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.

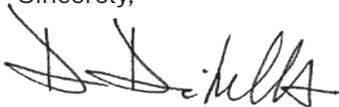
The Commission envisions America 250 (the brand name and commonly accepted alternative to the formal Semiquincentennial) as a monumental initiative—engaging all Americans in the largest and most inclusive celebration and commemoration in our nation's history—with the potential to:

- Inspire the American spirit to deepen understanding of our history and the democratic process through *education*; increase *engagement* in our communities and governing affairs; and foster *unity* that includes the “many” Americans in our “one” nation;
- Engage nearly 350,000,000 Americans and millions of friends worldwide by 2026;
- Produce more than 100,000 programs engaging participants at the local, territorial, state, tribal, regional, national, and international levels;
- Attract billions of dollars in resources that will ripple through our national, state, and local economies to positive effect, and
- Extend over a multiyear crescendo reaching its peak on the Fourth of July 2026.

The nation is just beginning to explore the possibilities and tackle the challenges presented by America 250 on our journey to form “a more perfect union.” The Commission submits this report for your review and transmission to Congress as an important first step in the ongoing collaboration necessary to advance the overall program for America 250.

Along with my fellow commissioners, I stand ready to provide any clarification or support required to assist you and your staff as you review this plan. We look forward to working with the Administration and Congress to coordinate America 250.

Sincerely,



**Daniel M. DiLella, Chairman**  
U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission

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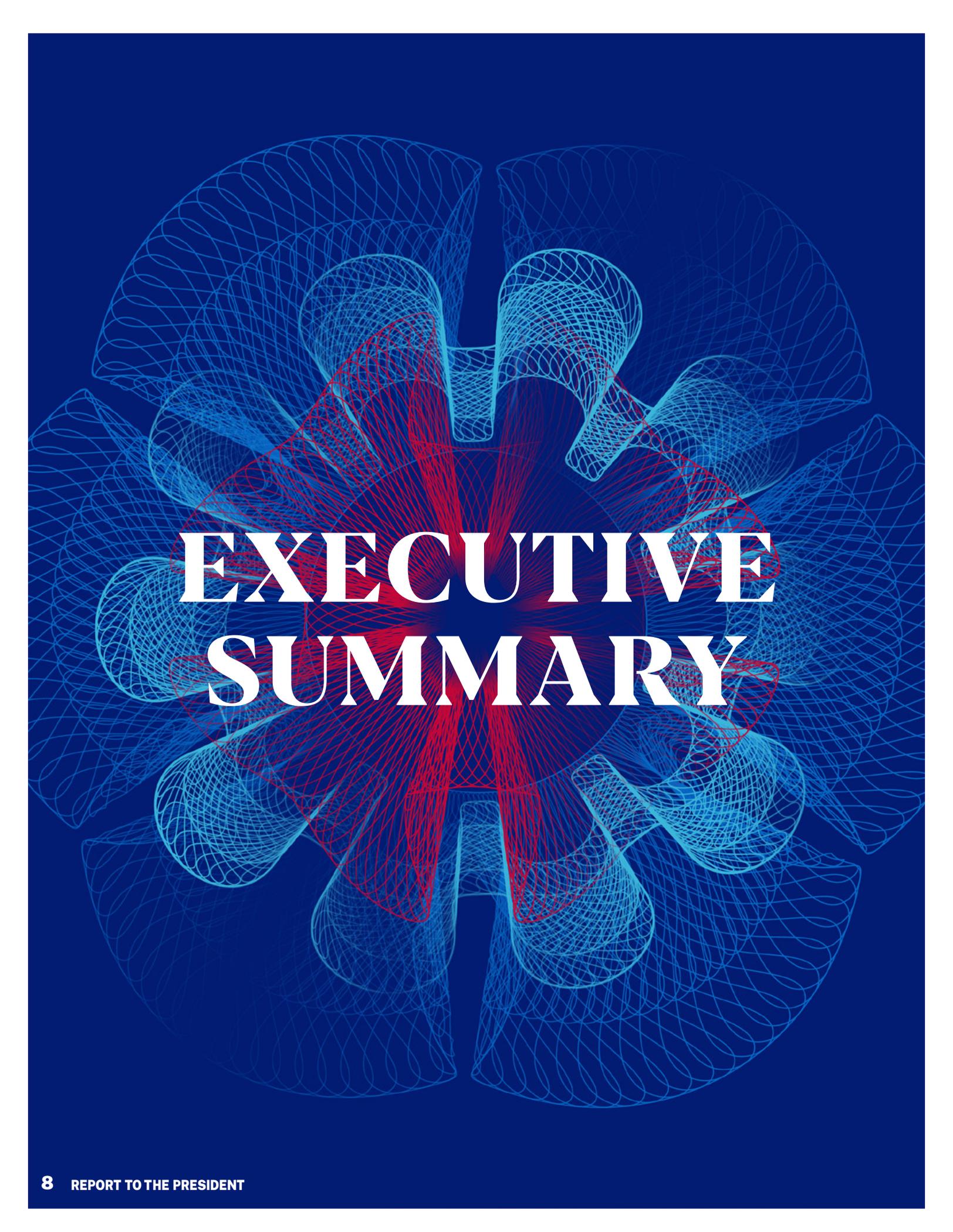
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# **PREAMBLE OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION**

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**September 17, 1787**

**We the People of the United States,  
in Order to form a more perfect Union,  
establish Justice, insure domestic  
Tranquility, provide for the common defence,  
promote the general Welfare, and secure  
the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and  
our Posterity, do ordain and establish  
this Constitution for the  
United States of America.**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**T**HE PREAMBLES to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States convey the ideas that shape our American identity and inspire our Semiquincentennial. Our founding principles and shared inheritance of equality, liberty, and government by consent of the governed are the cornerstone of our rights and responsibilities as Americans and the touchstone for America 250.<sup>1</sup> The United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 (the Act) established the Commission and required it to submit this report presenting the overall program and related recommendations to guide the nation in marking the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Since first convening in November 2018, the Commission has developed a bold vision for an anniversary that inspires a renewed dedication to the idea of America and promotes a spirit of unity among its people. Major anniversaries mark milestones to prompt remembrance and fuel hope. As the United States approaches the milestone of a quarter of a millennium, it now stands as the best system yet devised for a diverse people to live together in freedom. America 250 is an occasion for all Americans to strengthen our common bonds and rededicate ourselves to the ongoing pursuit of our founding promise.

The Commission envisions America 250 as a monumental initiative—engaging all Americans in what is expected to be the largest and most inclusive celebration and commemoration in our nation’s history—with the potential to: (See Section V, pp. 60-66)

- **Inspire** the American spirit to deepen understanding of our history and the democratic process through *education*; *engagement* in our communities and governing affairs; and *unity* that includes the “many” Americans in our “one” nation;
- **Engage** nearly 350,000,000 Americans and millions of friends worldwide by 2026;
- **Spark** the imagination and promise of our youth;
- **Honor and thank** active duty military and veterans for their service and sacrifice in defense of liberty and our country;

---

<sup>1</sup>The Commission selected America 250 as the brand name and commonly accepted alternative to the formal Semiquincentennial.

<sup>2</sup>Public Law 114-196, 130 Statutes at Large 685-692, July 22, 2016. (For the complete statute, see Appendix A). For the report requirement, see P.L. 114-196, 130 Stat. 687, Sec. 5(c). For a brief description of the Commission and its activities to date, see Section II, pp. 24-28.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONT.

- **Produce** more than 100,000 programs engaging participants at the local, territorial, state, tribal, regional, national, and international levels;
- **Attract** billions of dollars in resources that will ripple through our local, state, and national economies to positive effect, and
- **Extend** over a multiyear crescendo reaching its peak on the Fourth of July 2026.

The nation is just beginning to explore the possibilities and tackle the challenges presented by America 250 for our continuing journey to form “a more perfect union.” The Commission offers this report as a starting point providing initial direction and inviting further collaboration.

The Commission and its nonprofit affiliate, the America 250 Foundation (the Foundation), have used limited public and private start-up resources to prepare this overall program. Attaining this vision for America 250 requires substantial public and private investment. Based largely on extrapolations from the Bicentennial experience—the best available analog for the Semiquincentennial—America 250 may involve: (See Section V, pp. 64-66 for further explanation of these projections.)

- A total economic investment over the period of commemoration from all public and private sources (with infrastructure being a significant variable) of 3 to 5 billion dollars.

The portion of that total investment flowing to and through the Commission may include:

- Commission/Foundation operating expenses of ~100 million dollars,
- Private funds flowing to and through the America 250 Foundation of more than 250 million dollars, and
- Federal appropriations flowing to and through the Commission of as much as 225 million dollars primarily for:
  - › the Commission’s government functions,
  - › grants to states, territories, and Native American tribes,
  - › ongoing planning,
  - › government to government operational coordination, and
  - › appropriate program expenses.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONT.

The Commission will validate and likely adjust these projections by working from the bottom up with its staff, consultants, affiliates, and partners to develop detailed operational plans to implement this overall program. The recent passage of a \$3.3 million FY2020 federal appropriation will fund much of the Commission's ongoing planning efforts throughout FY2020, freeing up expected private contributions to fuel the Foundation's expanding fundraising activities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS** (See Section VIII, pp. 90-94)

In the bi-partisan spirit of the Act and in line with the Commission's thematic call for all Americans and each American to unite, the Commission respectfully encourages the public and all three branches of government to participate in and support America 250 on a non-partisan basis.

Among the Commission's recommendations are immediate opportunities for our leaders in Congress and the Executive Branch to participate in and support Semiquincentennial planning by:

- Participating in a compelling and exciting national launch of America 250 activities in 2020.
- Promoting the vision of America 250 focusing on the call to Educate, Engage, and Unite.
- Endorsing the formation of the America 250 Congressional Caucus.
- Exhorting active participation of all federal agencies in Semiquincentennial programs aligned with their respective missions.
- Encouraging all states and territories to establish and actively engage their own commissions in America 250.
- Contributing to the development and execution of a series of National Signature Programs.
- Providing the necessary federal funding, which combined with private funding, will deliver the significant resources necessary to execute a fitting and inspirational America 250 celebration.

The Commission offers the following initial proposals for congressional and presidential actions needed to carry out the America 250 program.

### **Legislative Proposals**

*Prompt consideration of technical amendments to the Act to improve the Commission's efficiency and effectiveness.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONT.

*Favorable consideration of the Commission's subsequent appropriation requests through FY2027.*

*Favorable consideration of ex officio and other federal agency appropriation requests and infrastructure recommendations related to America 250 and supported by the Commission.*

*Additional amendments to the Act.* The Commission proposes the following described amendments to the Act as necessary to support recommended approaches presented in this report:

- Authorize the Treasury Department to strike commemorative national medals in collaboration with the Commission and provided to the Commission at cost.
- Authorize the Commission to carry out a grants-in-aid program for each state, territory, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to apply for funds to establish or implement an America 250 commission.
- Provide for the mutually agreeable transfer of Semiquincentennial commemoration funds available by and between any federal department or agency including the Commission.
- Facilitate coordination with the America 250 state commissions, by providing for the Commission to authorize and fund travel for the representatives and staff of these crucial entities.
- Authorize the Commission to make matching grants for a percentage of total program costs to nonprofit entities (including state and local governments) from non-appropriated and appropriated funds.

### **Proposals for Presidential Actions**

*Expedient review, comment, and transmittal of this complete report to Congress in accordance with the Act.*

*Designate a point of contact in the White House to appropriately engage the Commission in evaluating and supporting America 250-related appropriation requests and infrastructure recommendations submitted by federal agencies.*

*Regularly assign a small cadre of White House Fellows to assume significant roles in the design and execution of America 250 initiatives over the next seven years.*

### **Infrastructure Improvement Recommendations**

The Act requires the Commission to evaluate existing infrastructure, recommend infrastructure improvements necessary for a successful America 250, and coordinate with state and local

bodies to make these necessary infrastructure improvements. As explained in Section VII, pp. 82-84, the nation's limited awareness of America 250 planning at this moment makes it generally premature for the Commission to recommend infrastructure initiatives in this report. Nevertheless, the Commission recognizes that its affiliates, partners, and stakeholders must launch infrastructure projects (a sampling of which are described in Section VII, pp 84-89) early in the planning cycle to ensure timely implementation of America 250 programming. The Commission will address the Act's infrastructure requirements within the context of its participatory frameworks and prepare subsequent recommendations for the President and Congress as appropriate.

## **THE VISION FOR AMERICA 250** (See Section III, pp. 30-35)

The Commission—through an intensive strategic planning process including significant stakeholder engagement and public input—developed this visionary framework to invite creative programming to shape America 250 and the future of the United States.

### **Purpose**

The Commission's vision communicates a clear purpose for America 250.

***Inspiring the American spirit among all Americans and each American, grounded in our nation's founding principles, for our continuing journey to form a more perfect union.***

### **Themes**

The themes prompt participation focused on strengthening the vitality of the American experiment.

- **Educate**

*Sparking deeper awareness of our founding principles, our history, and our democratic process builds broader appreciation of one another—our unique stories and our common humanity. Together, these contribute to a better understanding of who we are, where we came from, and where we are headed. **How will Americans learn about our nation, our institutions, and each other?***

- **Engage**

*Government of, by, and for the people enables Americans to invigorate the civil dialogue that perpetually reshapes our nation. We have the right—and responsibility—to take part in the ongoing American experiment. Civic engagement takes many forms. **How will Americans get involved in their communities and continue to shape our nation?***

- **Unite**

*Coming together as a nation recognizes the power of our diverse stories while never losing sight of our common bonds as Americans. This unity is reflected in our democratic institutions, voluntary associations, and collaborative enterprises. Ideally, we act in concert to promote the common good even as we exercise our individual rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness while honoring the freedom of others to do the same. **How will Americans join in expressions of unity that respect individual liberty?***

## **Guidelines**

The guidelines define the scope of America 250 in time and space to provide direction to those planning and participating in Semiquincentennial observances.

- **All American History**

*To encourage the broadest possible participation, America 250 must consider our entire history.* Because the Semiquincentennial marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States it will draw inspiration from and attention to the history of the Revolutionary Era. But America's story did not begin or end with the Revolution. It is a rich tapestry, woven with unifying threads first expressed by our nation's founders—including the ideas of individual liberty, representative government, and the attainment of equal and unalienable rights. Refined through expanding self-government and passed on to us by great sacrifice, these remain the shared inheritance entrusted to us and future generations.

- **Nationwide and Worldwide**

*The geographical scope of America 250 encompasses the entire United States, its territories, the Native American nations within its borders, and nations around the globe.* Given the Revolutionary events that forged our nation took place in the thirteen original states, there will naturally be unique opportunities for participation and activities within those states. However, the Commission's vision of engaging each American is an invitation for all states, territories, and tribes to be actively involved. The idea of America binds us together across space as well as time.

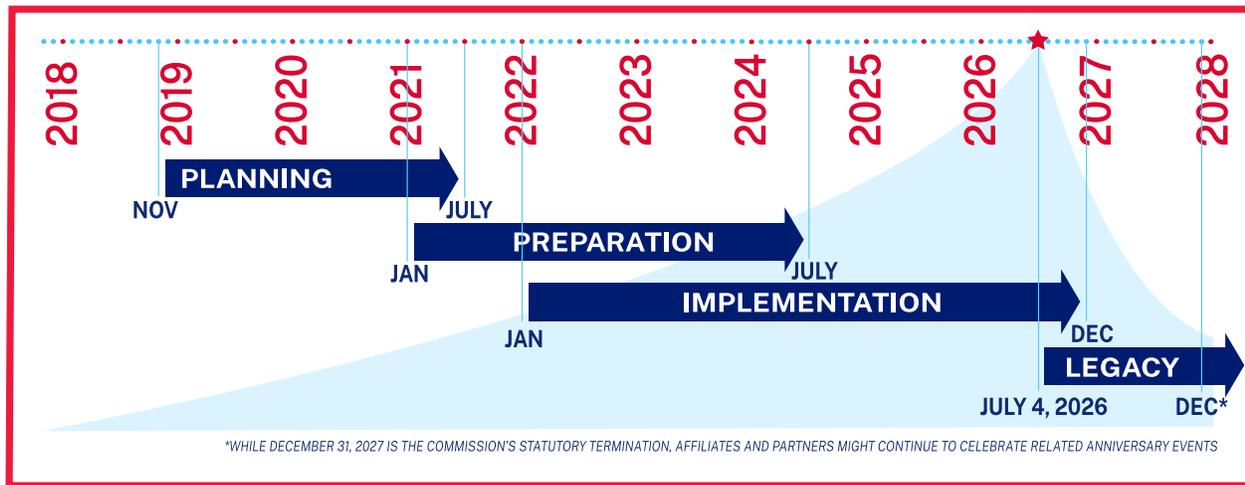
- **Commemorative Period**

*The Commission's official commemorative period will run from 2020 to 2027.* It will begin with a multiyear crescendo of America 250 activity that will peak in 2026—especially on the Fourth of July—followed by a natural decline in activity, although some programming will continue through and beyond 2027. (See Figure ES-1 and pp. 66-69 for more on the America 250 schedule.)

- **Many Ways to Observe America 250**

The Semiquincentennial invites reflection on the past, present, and future of the United States. People will mark America 250 in many ways, some of which are reflected in words like commemorate, celebrate, and aspire.

## Figure ES-1 AMERICA 250 SCHEDULE



### HOW AMERICA WILL PARTICIPATE (See Section IV, p. 36-58)

To realize this vision, the Commission intends to facilitate a largely decentralized America 250 that is of, by, and for the people. The Commission cannot directly manage the execution of what it expects will be more than 100,000 unique programs<sup>3</sup> of varying scope and scale across the country and around the world. Instead, our goal is to create an architecture of participatory frameworks through which interested parties can shape their programs, ensuring that America 250 reverberates with many voices speaking with one another about the meaning and promise of the United States. Through these frameworks the Commission will connect directly with key affiliates<sup>4</sup> and together they will provide clear guidelines for community, organizational, and individual stakeholders<sup>5</sup> who wish to produce official programs<sup>6</sup> to engage their neighbors and the nation. Key to America 250's success will be the Commission's partners<sup>7</sup>, who will provide a range of resources. This broadly inclusive approach aims to create a climate of trust encouraging creativity and innovation. The Commission extends this open invitation and will pursue the outreach necessary to bring America 250 to life.

<sup>3</sup>The Commission uses the term programs broadly to encompass such terms as *observances, activities, events, ceremonies, celebrations, exhibits, works, expressions, collections, and publications* as included in P.L. 114-196, 130 Stat. 685-692, passim.

<sup>4</sup>*Affiliates* are those entities or individuals having a direct, mutually supportive relationship with the Commission/America 250 Foundation in developing, implementing, and administering the participatory frameworks. The Commission uses this term in the context of the participatory frameworks to describe this relationship as a formal connection between independent entities and its use does not assume that affiliates necessarily have a subordinate relationship to the Commission.

<sup>5</sup>*Stakeholders* are those entities or individuals participating in or otherwise contributing to America 250 that have an indirect relationship with the Commission/America 250 Foundation typically through affiliates or partners in the context of the participatory frameworks.

<sup>6</sup>*Official programs* are explicitly recognized by the Commission in the context of the participatory frameworks and collectively embody the cohesive expression of America 250.

<sup>7</sup>*Partners* (often identified in the private for-profit sector by the tiered designations of partner, sponsor, supporter, and supplier) are those who contribute resources in the form of funds, talent, or tools directly through formal arrangements with the Commission or the America 250 Foundation to attain the America 250 vision.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONT.

To carry out this intent, the Commission introduces six participatory frameworks. Four frameworks engage key affiliates in developing, implementing, and administering the frameworks. These constructs are organized to facilitate programming along jurisdictional lines. Two frameworks require a higher degree of direct Commission involvement and focus on programs of a national or regional scale characterized by significant private (for-profit and/or not-for-profit) engagement, as well as possible public/private partnership. Table ES-1 below identifies the frameworks, the corresponding affiliates and partners, and the estimated number of programs associated with each framework.

**Table ES-1**

**FRAMEWORK SUMMARY WITH PROJECTED NUMBER OF PROGRAMS<sup>8</sup>**

FRAMEWORKS	AFFILIATES AND PARTNERS	PROJECTED NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
<b>JURISDICTIONAL</b>		
State, Territory, Local programs	56 State and Territory Commissions	~78,000 to 121,500
Federal Agency programs	~200+ Federal Agencies	~1000
Native American programs	Designated Native American affiliate	~400 to 1,750
International programs	State Department (lead)/ foreign nation America 250 entities	~5,000 to 10,000
<b>COMMISSION</b>		
Commission National Signature programs	-production affiliates -funding partners -contractors	~<10 owned and controlled with possible production/ operation ~50 to 100 just owned and controlled
Commission National/Regional Partnership programs	-program leads -funding partners	~250 to 500

<sup>8</sup>These estimates are projections extrapolated largely from Bicentennial experience. The Commission will validate and as necessary adjust these estimates as it refines its operational plans. See Section V, p.63 for a more detailed explanation of these projections.

For a detailed description of each framework and a sampling of 20 exemplar program ideas already put forward by various stakeholders see Section IV, pp 41-58.

## **LEADING AMERICA 250—OPERATIONAL APPROACH** (See Section VI, pp. 70-80)

Unlike most congressional commissions, the Semiquincentennial Commission's charge includes not only reporting, but also doing. In that respect, this report represents the beginning—not the end—of the Commission's work. Among the Commission's next steps will be developing detailed operational plans addressing organization and staffing, development, marketing and communications, and information clearinghouse functions.

### **ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING**

In May 2018, the American Battlefield Trust (the Trust) was selected as the nonprofit Administrative Secretariat for the Commission. With the support of the Commission and the National Park Service, and based on research into the best practices of federal commemorative commissions, the Trust created the America 250 Foundation (the Foundation) to serve as the nonprofit affiliate of the Commission. Although created by the Trust, the Commission will have ultimate control over the responsibilities delegated to the Foundation. The Foundation brings multiple benefits to the Commission's work; but its principle advantage is a simplified fundraising and public outreach approach based on a brand identity and mission that is completely aligned with the Commission.

Going forward, the Commission will continue to provide vision and direction for and to promote America 250 while setting policy and providing oversight for its unique public/private partnership with the Foundation. This partnership will carry out the operations necessary to accomplish the Commission's mission in line with its vision. The current Commission/Foundation organization is functionally aligned to support externally focused fundraising and operations (see Figure 4, p. 72). As the partnership's organizational structure evolves, several considerations will guide the Commission and the America 250 Foundation including:

- To lead an inclusive America 250 the partnership shall be inclusive.
- Take advantage of both the public and private aspects of the partnership.
- Nurture a culture inspired by the America 250 vision, marked by trust and transparency, and sown with dedication.

### **DEVELOPMENT**

Although the Commission has received and requested federal appropriations, it believes that private funding will support considerable Commission and America 250 Foundation activities and likely sustain the greatest proportion of all Semiquincentennial programming. To date commissioners have provided and solicited contributions to support the planning efforts culminating in this report (See Appendix H). The Foundation is poised to pursue a variety of private funding

channels including nonprofit and corporate philanthropy, corporate sponsorship, brand and other licensing, grassroots fundraising, and commercial sales (i.e., medals, coins, etc.).

But it takes money to raise money. So far, with most of the early private contributions going to support critical start-up planning efforts, not enough has been available to launch fundraising efforts on the scale necessary to stabilize and grow the partnership. The Commission anticipates that release of this report, the launch of the Commission's website, and other public engagement planned for 2020 will support the messaging and outreach necessary to enable the Foundation to advance its fundraising goals.

Contributors will include a range of large and small businesses and philanthropies funding programs from the global to the local through the Foundation, other affiliates, and stakeholders. Beyond businesses and philanthropies, private donations may also come from individual Americans offering grassroots support that may have substantial impact on the scale and reach of America 250. By practicing ethical stewardship and demonstrating the vital link between private funding and public programming, the Commission and the Foundation expect to earn the public's trust for this public/private approach to America 250.

### MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Commission's ability to communicate its vision, engage various audiences, and encourage inclusive and cohesive participation is key to a successful America 250. The visionary framework—especially the themes *educate*, *engage* and *unite*—contains the essential messaging to bring the Semiquincentennial to life.

The Commission's initial communications priorities will focus on the following three audiences and corresponding objectives:

- **Affiliates** to establish working relationships and build out the participatory frameworks.
- **Resource Partners** to convey the value proposition(s) associated with various partnership arrangements.
- **All Americans** to raise awareness of the opportunity to participate in America 250 and invite their input and feedback to shape America 250 programming.

The Commission sees education, the arts, entertainment, and the media as likely providing the most powerful channels to involve people in the Semiquincentennial.

Earlier this year, the Commission enthusiastically accepted the creative design for the America 250 brand identity produced by Landor, a global leader in brand consulting and design. Some of the brand identity elements are found in the look, feel, and tone of this report. The brand consultant and the Commission's pro bono legal counsel are establishing legal protections for this

valuable intellectual property, as well as developing the brand guidelines and related licensing arrangements. The Commission's brand identity will produce revenue through licensing arrangements, but perhaps its greatest value will be as a cohesive imprimatur linking the vast array of decentralized official programs in a unified expression of America 250.

### INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

The Act repeatedly emphasizes the Commission's role in coordinating the Semiquincentennial. The essential element supporting this coordination role is information. Throughout the strategic planning process the concept of a "portal" or "clearinghouse" emerged as an interactive system needed to both convey information to and receive information from America 250 participants, as well as to support Commission and Foundation operations. Various elements of the Commission's strategic plan and this report point to functions that may be integrated into the information clearinghouse.

Development of the information clearinghouse will likely involve some variation of a robust system development process. The Commission believes that the America 250 information clearinghouse is vital infrastructure necessary for the success of America 250, and intends to make it an organizational priority in 2020.

The Commission submits this report to the President, Congress, and the American people as an important step in the ongoing collaboration necessary to advance the overall program for America 250.★



