**APPENDIX 3**

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICERS SURVEY**

A survey questionnaire was sent to all State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) in October 2021 through the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers. The survey was in a format similar to past National Cooperative Highway Research Program[[1]](#footnote-1) (NCHRP) surveys sent to SHPOs to examine historic preservation issues in transportation. The junior author of this paper served as the Principal Investigator for many of these previous NCHRP surveys and associated studies.

The purpose of this survey was to obtain the perspectives of SHPOs on what is happening within universities that offer degrees in architectural history, history, historic preservation, and related fields; and, how what is happening within these universities might be impacting SHPOs. Eleven (11) SHPOs responded to the survey. Below is a summary of the survey responses, focusing on common themes and observations. Some of the responses were slightly edited for consistency of presentation. Following the protocols of NCHRP studies, SHPO responses were kept anonymous so no specific response may be linked to an individual SHPO.

**Survey Questions**

*Are you seeing a decrease in the number of university graduates with degrees in architectural history, public history, historic preservation, and related fields?*

We have not observed fewer graduates; we have observed more graduates who apply to our positions without substantial experience.

Our experience varies depending on the discipline. In our data management area, there are multiple qualified candidates applying for positions and there are plenty of degree-holding graduates and fewer positions elsewhere offering similar work. We have seen no change in the number of degree-holding professionals in architectural history and history. This is in contrast to archaeology where we have seen a decline in the number of qualified and degreed candidates applying for full-time positions. In the height of the 2008-2009 recession, we had double the number of applications for the same archaeological review position that we filled recently. We have seen a decline in the number of universities offering graduate programs in the state and region and the numbers of students that they accept. This has resulted in a deficit in the number of graduates with essential training and experience available for employment.

There are not a lot of qualified professionals coming out of university programs and we could most definitely use more. As an aside, we don’t generally find well-qualified professionals coming out of Public History programs – there are exceptions, of course, but their focus is not typically on-point.  *Note:* *this SHPO conducted their own research on this issue and found that there are only around a dozen programs in the US that offer a full MA degree in Historic Preservation, and these programs only graduate a handful of students each year.*

[Our state’s] universities have lost historic preservation programs – either wholesale, or reduced in scope, staff and students.  In applications for positions, in years past (2015-2016), we received a much higher number of applications for architectural historian positions than more recent postings. The number of applications for archaeological positions is about the same.

*Are you having difficulty finding architectural historians, historians, historic preservation specialists, and others in related fields to fill positions within your office?*

We have experienced a shortage in experienced professionals for positions needing experience. Conversely, we also have had very experienced professionals apply for entry-level positions. Governmental salaries are not universally keeping pace with private sector salaries, particularly in high-cost urban areas (including some state capitals). We have had staff leave for higher salaries in the private sector.

We have found them, but our most recent hires had less work experience than previous ones and so we are having to provide more training. It’s a great opportunity for these more recent graduates but does require additional time from our more experienced staff and managers.  It seems particularly difficult to find architectural reviewers and archaeologists, a little less so for historians.

In the review and compliance program, despite the decrease in the number of applications, there always seems to be at least a few well qualified applicants from which to choose. The difficulty comes in trying to offer a competitive salary. In the archaeology program we have had significant difficulty finding qualified candidates to fill positions. This is occurring in the private sector in our region as well. There is a lack of qualified archaeologists available in the region and firms are competing with increased salary and benefits for employees. We know of more than 20 open archaeology positions in the immediate region where companies are having difficulty identifying qualified applicants. We are unable to increase our salaries to compete in such an environment and have recently lost staff because of this. From our Human Resources officer’s experience when recruiting program positions from 2016-2020, the average number of applicants received within this five-year span was 39, thus only supplying an average of 3 well qualified candidates to be interviewed. There are times when the agency must readvertise or even cancel a recruitment due to a myriad of reasons, mainly because we are competing with other states or the private sector for top talent. Other reasons that exist are low advertised salaries, low response of well qualified applicants or even relocation concerns.

*Given what you know about infrastructure legislation currently under consideration in Congress, do you think your office will have the capacity to address the increased Section 106 consultations that will most likely result from the passage of this legislation?*

NO, not at present staffing levels. We have requested authority to add staff.

Not without additional resources. We managed through ARRA a few years back, and I expect we would find ways to address this new one as well, but we would need to at least fill our open positions.

It depends on what type of projects – for instance, roads and bridges are pretty much covered by the professional staff at the state DOT under a programmatic agreement with FHWA. However, if the projects are the rehabilitation of historic buildings or new construction, then yes, we are concerned with the vacancies on our staff.

We are VERY concerned about our capacity given the current infrastructure discussions happening at the federal level and have serious doubts about our ability to respond within our mandated 30 days with that much additional funding flowing to the federal agencies. We are particularly concerned because we do not feel that this critical issue is being discussed at the highest levels of federal government and we don’t think that there is any awareness where there needs to be of the impending crisis that will occur when projects get bottle-necked at the SHPOs.  Ideally, the infrastructure package would include a significant increase in funding for the HPF [Historic Preservation Fund]/SHPOs so we could build human and technological capacity, but this won’t help too much if there aren’t qualified professionals to fill the positions.

We have a history of streamlining agreements with agencies that create efficiencies that allow us to manage short-term increases in the number of projects. Our digital project review system also provides efficiencies in the review of projects. Despite these efficiency measures, the pending legislation seems like it will heavily impact an already overburdened SHPO office, in project volume alone.

[We have] recently been successful in arguing for the need to backfill existing vacancies and create new positions to address this anticipated increase in workload (as well as other efforts currently in development). However, finding candidates with the skills necessary to do the work has been very challenging.

*Do you have any comments to add about the current and future workforce within your office and within CRM in general?*

We need to do what we can to mentor graduate students and to engage even younger students to consider careers in CRM/historic preservation/public history. Many students do not even know such a career path is possible. This effort is as much about succession planning as anything else.

There are fewer degrees being offered in historic preservation or closely related disciplines in our state, fewer undergrad and grad programs that offer relevant courses, and less faculty to teach them. This last round of hiring, we had approximately 10 applicants for an architectural historian vacancy and while some of the candidates had history degrees, their experience has been working with museums and/or they have archival backgrounds. Those who meet the SOI [Secretary of the Interior] professional qualifications are hard to find, especially those willing to accept positions at the salary our state offers. Our consultant list needs help, too. It would benefit from expansion.

We currently have 4 “veteran” staff with 15 more years of experience in the office. Because these staff have deep knowledge, they are able to handle a wide range of programs and projects and do so efficiently and well. Their depth of knowledge of the programs and resources is invaluable. The remainder of the staff have been in the office 5 years or less, with 3 less than a year. For the past decade we have not been able to retain staff in the office typically more than 3-5 years, so it is difficult to build up and retain “institutional memory”. While we have been able to hire capable individuals, our salary constraints (and perhaps the type of workload, particularly in the Section 106 area) mean that they can find better paying positions with additional opportunities. [We are] concerned about our ability to build up the next generation of leaders…the younger staff are capable of filling those roles but if they don’t stay, we are always starting over again.

One of the challenges always is to not only find staff with the academic and/or technical background, but also the temperament and experience to work well with a wide range of the public and other professionals. More broadly, students remain interested in history and culture, but perhaps they are less likely or interested in doing the type of work involved in SHPO offices and are more interested in the “public” history of writing blog posts, doing oral history interviews, creating exhibits, and doing research on properties. Attracting a more diverse work force is also a challenge, and needs intentional focus, starting with students in high school or even younger.

Our office is especially well-staffed compared to many other SHPOs coming out of the pandemic. Our state’s economy remained strong over the past two years, allowing the implementation of recommendations resulting from a salary study and subsequent adjustments that ensures staff are compensated fairly and competitively. The need for strong graduate level preservation programs remains, and the ability to transition those students directly into real world application of that knowledge is critical.  We are fortunate that we were able to add highly qualified professionals to our several divisions in the last year. There is an advantage to government positions, as they promote a work-life balance that is not widely available in the CRM consulting realm which often leads to burn out, further exacerbating the workforce challenges. Finally, we see a need for greater diversity and representation in the workforce. As we strive to increase representation in our programs and their implementation, it is important to ensure that our workforce reflects the communities that we serve.

Despite the NHPA passing 50 years ago, academia still views jobs within CRM as lesser and are continuing to train students for research and academic careers. Professors do not know how to advocate for themselves and their students, so programs are constantly being reduced because preservation and its related pursuits are considered nice, but not necessary. In our region, and specific to archaeology, there are almost no Anthropology departments left with even one [regional] archaeologist.

[We] have never pulled the kinds of candidates we wanted despite excellent salaries and benefits packages. Our office has been given permission to hire three individuals in preparation of the infrastructure bill. It will be the largest hiring in the office ever and people tend to stay here until retirement. Needless to say, our biggest worry is that we will not have the selection of candidates that we need – individuals with a combination of education and work experience. The work of our office relies on a competent staff that can help efficiently guide the [compliance review] process.

We are a victim of the economic system and philosophy that are afflicting our nation in every field. Liberal Arts and social sciences are not valued as they were in the 20th century. Technology is valued over everything. And again, salaries are not keeping up with actual cost of living. We undervalue ourselves in the field, CRM pays poorly and we fight amongst ourselves. We have a lot of work to do.

**The 11 states responding to the survey questionnaire:** Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington State

1. <https://www.trb.org/NCHRP/NCHRP.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)