

Bill Peterson  
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer  
State Historical Society of North Dakota  
ND Heritage Center and State Museum  
612 E Boulevard Ave  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0830  
701-328-2724  
[billpeterson@nd.gov](mailto:billpeterson@nd.gov)

Andrea Wike  
Assistant Director  
State Historical Society of North Dakota  
ND Heritage Center and State Museum  
612 E Boulevard Ave  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0830  
701-328-3562  
[abwike@nd.gov](mailto:abwike@nd.gov)

Internet at remote sites – Capital Improvements

- ✓ No new staff or FTEs,
- ✓ Little ongoing costs other than utilities
- ✓ Leverage private sector
- ✓ Lasting impact
- ✓ Does not increase size of government

Fifty-nine (59) historic sites and museums are owned by the State of North Dakota and are preserved, maintained, and interpreted by the State Historical Society of North Dakota. Some sites are well developed with interpreters, visitor centers with exhibits, furnished buildings, picnic areas, and other amenities. Others lie obscurely in pastures without a monument or fencepost to mark their existence. A few sites are currently closed to visitors because of lack of accessibility, concerns about preservation, or out of respect for American Indians who hold some of these places sacred.

Improving technology infrastructure at our sites ensures that the stories that these sites hold will continue to be preserved, studied, and shared. Improving technology infrastructure will allow us to:

- ✓ Enhance on site visitor experience through various educational mediums
- ✓ Allow for virtual visitor experience through our History Alive program
- ✓ Improve visitor safety
- ✓ Strengthen site preservation through improved security, intrusion, and fire protection systems.

Our developed, staffed sites all have some level of internet connectivity to at least the visitors center or main office. It is the desire to expand on internet connectivity by further distributing the internet connectivity across the sites as well as increasing the capacity at the site. This increased capacity at the sites will allow us to enhance the visitor experience, not only for those visitors who are able to travel to the site and experience the history firsthand but also for those visitors that can join us through our History Alive programs where an interpreter on site can host a live tour with groups and classrooms throughout North Dakota and the world.

Improvement requested at the sites include:

- ✓ Upgrading to fiber connectivity

- ✓ Providing more points of wired and wireless access across the site.
- ✓ Installing internet access at sites that currently do not have access.
- ✓ Installing or upgrading security and surveillance systems.

The pandemic and the necessity of moving to virtual and online platforms for work and program delivery laid bare critical shortcoming in internet connectivity at our historic site near Williston at the Missouri Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center. Due to the poor internet service at this location, staff can barely participate in remote meetings and calls, and the delivery of digital content is nearly impossible. The local internet service provider in that area, Nemont, estimates the most effective way to solve our connectivity issues would be to install fiber optic cables to the site, which is not currently in place. Funding for this would allow the agency to be able to effectively participate in the Microsoft Teams work environment and deliver digital content to school groups and other visitors as needed.

The Chateau de Mores in Medora needs to extend its internet connectivity from its Visitor Center to the actual Chateau as well as the Carriage House and Blacksmith Shop. Fort Abercrombie and the visitor experience would also benefit from improved internet capacity by being extended to the block houses. In addition to sites that are staffed, unstaffed sites, such as Double Ditch Indian Village near Bismarck, would benefit from technology installation by providing guest wireless access to reach additional resources telling the story of the site. The technology infrastructure upgrade would also allow for the installation of security cameras to help respond to or mitigate the effects of illegal vandalism and looting.

The State Historical Society also seeks funding to improve connectivity and productivity by installing WIFI capabilities in areas of the Heritage Center in Bismarck that do not currently have WIFI. The collection storage areas (archives, museums, archeology) need expanded wireless access to allow staff to manage the collections more efficiently. With improved wireless access staff can access the collections management software while working at the collection where it is stored instead of making trips between the collection area and where their computer may have an internet connection, reducing the number of times an object or collection may need to be handled.

In addition to improving connectivity, we wish to make our visitors and our sites more safe and secure by adding security measures to some of our remote locations.

The funding requested for technology infrastructure upgrade would allow the State Historical Society to look closely at each of its fifty-nine sites and make the improvements that otherwise would be left undone.

- ✓ Expected Outcome
  - This technology will allow staff to function more productively by allowing data input in collections areas.
  - We will be able to service the residents of North Dakota who participate in our programs, particularly our educational programs, at a higher level than before.
- ✓ Improved internet at our various locations does not require any additional FTEs or temporary employees.
- ✓ This program could be completed between now and 2025.

**Project Cost \$750,000**

**Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center facilities improvement**

Acquired in a transfer from the North Dakota State Parks and Recreation in the 2021 Legislative Session, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center is a destination in North Dakota and a key attraction. There are capital improvement and deferred maintenance projects at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center that did not get funded with the transfer. These projects include a new heat pump, the changing of two furnaces and one boiler from electric to gas heating, and the replacement of one air conditioning unit and one water softener unit.

**Project Cost    \$200,000**