NATIONAL HISTORY DAY IN NEVADA

Teacher Toolkit

Implementing NHD in Your Classroom

2026–27 School Year

Annual Theme: Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change

What's Inside This Toolkit

1A	NHD Program Overview & Nevada Category Guide
1B	Nevada Contest Calendar & Student Road Map
1C	Category Selection Guide (student-facing)
1D	Launching NHD: The Innovation Detective Lesson
1E	Generative AI and NHD Projects: 2026–27 Policy
2A	Primary vs. Secondary Source Sorting Exercise
2B	Annotated Bibliography Guide
2C	Innovation Research Notes Organizer (ES, MS, HS)
3A	Innovation vs. Invention Framework (2027 Theme Reference)
3B	Five W's → Working Thesis Worksheet
3C	Innovation Project Planner
4A	Stage-Specific Revision Coaching Form
4B	Student Revision Worksheet
4C	Judge-to-Coach Translation Guide
5A	Project Timeline Template
6A	Teacher Resource Directory

Nevada Center for Civic Engagement

nvcce.org/historyday · National History Day in Nevada

This toolkit may be reproduced for classroom use. Updated annually.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is organized in six sections that follow the arc of a student's NHD year. You can use it as a complete reference or pull individual sections as needed.

SECTION 1	**Getting Started** When to use: Use at the beginning of the year, or any time you're introducing NHD to new students or colleagues. Includes: Program overview, Nevada category guide, contest calendar, category selection guide, launch lesson, and generative AI policy.
SECTION 2	**Research & Sources** When to use: Use when students begin their research — ideally before they submit their first bibliography. Includes: Primary vs. secondary source sorting exercise, annotated bibliography guide, and innovation research notes organizer (ES, MS, HS).
SECTION 3	**Argument & Thesis** When to use: Use in October–November when students are ready to move from research to argument. Includes: Innovation vs. Invention Framework (2027), Five W's Thesis Worksheet, Innovation Project Planner.
SECTION 4	**Revision & Coaching** When to use: Use after each contest level — Regionals, State, and Nationals — and throughout the year as a coaching reference. Includes: Stage-Specific Coaching Form, Student Revision Worksheet, Judge-to-Coach Translation Guide.
SECTION 5	**Planning Tools** When to use: Use throughout the year, but especially during the November–January build period. Includes: Project Timeline Template (the fix judges asked for most often in our evaluation analysis).
SECTION 6	**Teacher Resources** When to use: Any time you need research archives, Nevada history sources, or ideas from other NHD affiliates. Includes: Teacher Resource Directory, with a live version at nvcce.org/historyday.

Note on standalone files: Each section of this toolkit is also available as a separate downloadable file for easy sharing with individual teachers, coordinators, or mentors. See the file names at nvcce.org/historyday.

About the 2027 Theme: Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change

The 2027 NHD theme asks students to go beyond identifying an invention. Innovation — as NHD defines it — is what happens when people continue changing, improving, and adapting a new idea, and the societal effects that result. Students must trace Impact (intended and unintended consequences), Influence (how the innovation was received and spread), and Change (what shifted in society, culture, politics, or economy).

The most common mistake: students find a great invention and describe it thoroughly — but never argue what it changed. Section 3A (Innovation vs. Invention Framework) and Section 3C (Innovation Project Planner) are specifically designed to close that gap.

New for 2026–27: Generative AI Policy. As of October 1, 2026, NHD prohibits students from using generative AI for any part of their project, including brainstorming topics and finding sources. Spelling and grammar checkers, bibliography generators, and basic Canva design tools are still allowed. Students who used AI before October 1 must cite it and explain how they used it. See Section 1E.

SECTION 1

Getting Started

NHD Program Overview · Nevada Categories · Contest Calendar · Category Selection · Launch Lesson · AI Policy

1A NHD Program Overview & Nevada Category Guide

National History Day is a yearlong academic program for students in grades 4–12. Students choose a historical topic related to the annual theme, conduct original research using primary and secondary sources, and present their findings in one of NHD's creative categories. NHD develops research, critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills that students carry for life.

Nevada coordinator: For the full program overview with all Nevada category rules, Nevada-specific contest structure, and complete category descriptions, see the standalone file: *1A_ProgramOverview_NevadaCategories.docx*

Nevada Category Quick Reference:

Category	Division	Advances to	Key constraints
Paper	Jr/Sr	State & Nationals	1,500–2,500 words. Individual only.
Exhibit	Jr/Sr	State & Nationals	≤500 student-composed words. 40"W×72"H×30"D.
Performance	All	State (all) & National (jr/sr)	≤10 min. Must be scripted. Live judging.
Documentary	Jr/Sr	State & Nationals	≤10 min. Student-operated. Source credits required.
Website	Jr/Sr	State & Nationals	≤1,200 words. ≤3 min multimedia. NHDWebCentral only.
Podcast ★	All grades	**State only**	Jr/Sr ≤10 min / Elem ≤6 min. No dramatization. Show Notes required.
Poster ★	Elem only	**State only**	≤350 words. Flat, ≤30"×40".

★ **Nevada-only:** Podcast and Poster are Nevada-only categories adapted from NHD-CA rules. Winners do not advance to the National Contest.

1B Nevada Contest Calendar (Summary)

Nevada Contest Calendar: See *1B_ContestCalendar_RoadMap.docx* for the full month-by-month calendar with teacher and student action steps. Section 04 offers three classroom timeline options from Nevada teachers: a fall start, a late fall start, and a five-week curriculum hold.

Key dates:

When	Contest milestone
September	Topic selection and research begins (launch lesson, 1D)
October 1	NHD generative AI policy takes effect (1E)
November–December	Thesis draft and project build
January	School-level competition (teacher-run)
February–March	Regional Contests (NHD-judged)
April	Nevada State Contest
June	National Contest, University of Maryland (Paper/Exhibit/Perf/Doc/Web only)

1C Category Selection Guide

- Help students choose the right category before they start building. The most important questions:
- Are you working alone or with a group? (Paper = individual only; all others allow groups of 2–5)
- What grade are you in? (Elementary = Poster, Podcast, or Performance; Paper, Exhibit, Documentary, and Website are Jr/Sr only)
- What does your innovation story look like — lots of images? Drama? Complex written argument? Audio sources?
- What are your strengths as a learner? Writer / builder / performer / filmmaker / tech-designer / speaker?

See standalone file: *1C_CategorySelectionGuide.docx* — a student-facing two-page guide with a category snapshot for each format including 'Best if' and 'Watch for' prompts.

1D Launch Lesson: The Innovation Detective

An 80-minute September kickoff, or two 45-minute periods. Students infer the problems behind four Nevada innovations, rotate through stations for five categories of innovation, sort invention from innovation, and use the Topic Ladder to move from a personal interest to an arguable question. The lesson also gives teachers an AI-free way to start topic selection.

See standalone file: *1D_LaunchLesson_InnovationDetective.docx* (teacher guide plus a one-page student handout).

1E Generative AI and NHD Projects: 2026–27 Policy

What NHD now allows and prohibits, how traditional AI differs from generative AI, what the policy means in each Nevada category, requirements for students who used AI before October 1, and guidance for teachers on accessibility requests and suspected use. NVCCE applies the policy to every Nevada category, including Poster and Podcast.

See standalone file: *1E_GenerativeAI_Policy.docx* (two-page policy summary; full policy at nhd.org/en/resources/ai).

SECTION 2

Research & Sources

Primary vs. Secondary · Annotated Bibliography Guide · Research Notes Organizer

2A Primary vs. Secondary Sources

The most common and most fixable research gap in Nevada projects: students mislabel sources, cite Wikipedia as scholarly, and leave images uncredited on exhibit boards. This pattern appears across every category, not just written formats.

PRIMARY SOURCE	SECONDARY SOURCE
Created during the time period being studied, or by someone with firsthand experience. *Letters · Diaries · Speeches · Photographs · Newspaper articles from the time · Oral history interviews · Laws and legal documents · Artifacts*	Created after the event by someone who did not experience it firsthand. Analyzes or interprets primary sources. *Textbooks · Biographies · Scholarly articles · Museum exhibit labels · Encyclopedias · Documentaries made decades later*

Key coaching point: A museum website is usually SECONDARY. Wikipedia is SECONDARY and not citable as scholarly. A newspaper article from 1943 about WWII is PRIMARY. A 2024 article about WWII is SECONDARY. Output from ChatGPT or another generative AI tool is secondary, and students may not use it after October 1, 2026.

See standalone file: *2A_SourceSortingExercise.docx* — a classroom-ready sorting activity with 12 practice sources, a tricky-sources reference table, and a full answer key with teaching notes.

2B Annotated Bibliography

Every NHD entry requires an annotated bibliography separated into Primary and Secondary sections. Each source has a 2–3 sentence annotation explaining how it was used and how it helped the student understand the topic.

Weak annotation: 'This book was helpful for understanding rural electrification.' (Describes the source, not the research process.)

Strong annotation: 'This source provided 1935 data showing that about 90% of American farms lacked electricity, which we used as evidence in our Background section to establish the need that drove the REA's innovative co-op model.'

NHD accepts the Chicago Manual of Style or MLA Handbook. Historians prefer Chicago. Students must use one format consistently throughout.

Students who used generative AI before October 1, 2026 must cite the tool in their annotated bibliography and explain their use in the process paper (1E).

See standalone file: *2B_AnnotatedBibliographyGuide.docx* — citation format examples for books, websites, newspaper articles, and oral history interviews; and an annotation checklist.

2C Innovation Research Notes Organizer

A one-source-per-sheet organizer for the research phase. Students name the source and circle whether it is primary or secondary, then take notes under the three theme lenses: Impact, Influence, and Change. Each lens includes a definition and guiding questions, plus columns for notes, evidence, and key takeaways. The three versions share the same structure with grade-appropriate language, so a mixed-grade class can work side by side.

Pairs with 2A (labeling sources), 2B (the Notes & Evidence column feeds each annotation), 3A (the three lenses), and 3C (notes carry into the Project Planner).

See standalone files: *2C Research Notes Organizer (HS, MS, ES)*

SECTION 3

Argument & Thesis

Innovation Framework · Five W's Worksheet · Project Planner

3A Innovation vs. Invention: The 2027 Framework

INVENTION — A starting point	INNOVATION — What happened next
A new device, method, or idea that did not exist before. The X-ray machine. The printing press. The assembly line. **An invention is the TOOL. History students must go further.**	How people continued to change, improve, and adapt that idea—and the societal effects that resulted. **Innovation has IMPACT, INFLUENCE, and CHANGE. That is the project.**

The three lenses every Innovation project must address:

- IMPACT — What were the intended and unintended consequences? Who benefited? Who did not? How did it change lives short-term AND long-term?
- INFLUENCE — How was the innovation received? Was it welcomed, resisted, or feared? How did it spread or change over time?
- CHANGE — What problem drove this innovation? What changed in society, culture, politics, or economy? What traces to today?

See standalone file: *3A_InnovationFramework.docx: two-page reference card with the Innovation vs. Invention distinction, all three lenses with research questions, Innovation category scope table, and NHD's SPARK Test for checking whether a topic fits the theme. Pairs with the 1D launch lesson in September.*

3B Five W's → Working Thesis Worksheet

The Thesis = Topic + Theme + Impact formula applied to Innovation:

- TOPIC: What innovation? Who, what, where, when? Narrow enough to argue ('rural electrification in Nevada, 1935–1945' — not 'electricity').
- THEME (Innovation): How was this an innovation — not just an invention? What Impact, Influence, or Change did it create? Argue it — don't just name it.
- IMPACT: Who benefited and who didn't? Short-term AND long-term. Intended AND unintended. What changed permanently?

A thesis that is missing any one of these three is incomplete — even if it's beautifully written.

See standalone file: *3B / WS1_FiveWs_Innovation_Thesis.docx* — Four-part worksheet: Innovation Quick Check, Five W's answer table, three-lens mapping (Impact/Influence/Change), thesis draft with four-move checklist, peer feedback round.

3C Innovation Project Planner

The Project Planner structures the student's research into the five sections that map directly onto the thesis formula. For Innovation projects, the critical section is 'Heart of the Story' — which must name the innovation itself, not just the invention.

Planner Section	What it covers	Thesis connection
Background	Historical context — what existed before the innovation?	Topic component: who, what, where, when
Build Up	Causal chain — what conditions made this innovation possible?	WHY — the causal argument
The Innovation (Heart)	The innovation itself — what was NEW about how it worked or changed society?	Theme component: Impact, Influence, or Change
Short Term Impact	Who benefited immediately? Who resisted? What changed quickly?	Significance — short-term
Long Term Change	What was permanently altered? What traces to today?	Significance — long-term + theme claim

See standalone file: *3C / WS2_Innovation_ProjectPlanner.docx* — Full planner with Claim/Evidence/Reasoning fields for each section; thesis draft at the top; thesis-connection annotations explaining how each section feeds the Innovation argument.

SECTION 4

Revision & Coaching

Stage-Specific Coaching Form · Student Revision Worksheet · Judge-to-Coach Guide

4A Stage-Specific Revision Coaching Form

Revision is explicitly built into the NHD contest structure. Between contest levels, students may continue their research, refine their analysis, and revise their project — including the title. The Stage-Specific Coaching Form structures this revision as a conversation between coach and student, organized by rubric category and contest stage.

REGIONALS → STATE Sharpen the Foundation	STATE → NATIONALS Elevate the Analysis	NATIONALS PREP Compete at the Highest Level
◦ Clarify the thesis/argument ◦ Add missing primary source types ◦ Strengthen theme connection ◦ Fix rule compliance gaps	◦ Deepen historical context ◦ Add/strengthen multiple perspectives ◦ Increase student voice balance ◦ Push significance: long-term impact	◦ Consider competing interpretations ◦ Ensure every source supports argument ◦ Polish category-specific presentation ◦ Practice the judge interview

Three-section form: Section A covers standard categories (3 columns to Nationals). Section B covers Podcast for all grades (2 columns, State only). Section C covers Poster for Elementary (2 columns, State only).

See standalone file: *4A / NHD_StageSpecific_CoachingForm_v2.docx* — Landscape format with escalating coaching prompts organized by rubric row for each stage.

4B Student Revision Worksheet

Students use this worksheet after receiving judge feedback to structure their revision before the next contest level. It walks them through mapping feedback to the rubric, identifying revision priorities, and writing a specific action plan.

The worksheet has four parts: (1) My Historical Argument + Theme Connection, (2) Judge Feedback → Rubric Grid with category flags for Innovation-specific rows, (3) Revision Plan (what/how/how I'll know it's better), (4) Self-coaching questions.

See standalone file: *4B / NHD_Student_RevisionWorksheet_v2.docx* — Rubric rows flagged by category: ★ standard categories, ♪ Podcast-specific, Poster-specific. Annual theme fill-in field at top for reuse across years.

4C Judge-to-Coach Translation Guide

Judges write about what they see in a project. Coaches translate that into questions students can act on. This guide maps each of the six recurring evaluation patterns to specific coaching questions — including Innovation-specific versions for the 2027 theme.

Judge says...	Coach asks...
'The theme connection is unclear'	Where in your project do you explicitly argue WHY this connects to the theme — not just that it does?
'More historical analysis vs. narrative'	For every event you describe: so what? What does this PROVE about your argument?
'Multiple perspectives are limited'	Who would argue against your thesis? Find me one primary source from that side.
'Primary sources don't support the argument'	For every claim you make, where is the evidence? Is it primary? Does it actually support your argument?

See standalone file: *4C_JudgeToCoach_TranslationGuide.docx* — All six patterns with judge language examples and coaching questions; Innovation-specific questions marked ★; five core coaching questions that work across any project, any year.

SECTION 5

Planning Tools

Project Timeline Template

5A Project Timeline Template

Three separate judges across two different Nevada projects independently asked for timelines. A timeline does two things: it forces students to check that their argument is chronologically consistent with their own evidence, and it helps judges follow an Innovation story that spans decades.

For Innovation topics: The timeline should span from BEFORE the innovation existed (what came before? what was the need?) through its long-term change. A timeline that ends at the moment of invention has described the invention, not the innovation.

The template has three parts:

- Part A: Historical Timeline — a chronological table of events with space for significance notes and primary source evidence
- Part B: Argument Consistency Check — five questions that help students verify their thesis holds up against their own evidence (Pattern 6 — internal consistency)
- Part C: Project Section Map — maps each planner section to a time period and thesis connection, ensuring structural alignment

See standalone file: *5A_ProjectTimelineTemplate.docx* — Twelve-row timeline table, argument consistency check, and project section map. Reusable across years and categories.

SECTION 6

Teacher Resources

Teacher Resource Directory

6A Teacher Resource Directory

Vetted outside resources: NHD national pages, other affiliates such as Minnesota's Master Teacher Network, Nevada archives (the Online Nevada Encyclopedia, UNR and UNLV Special Collections, the Nevada Historical Society, and the Nevada State Library and Archives), national primary source hubs, and classroom tools from other NHD affiliates, plus a checklist for adding new resources. Because links change during the year, the live version is kept at nvcce.org/historyday.

See standalone file: *6A_TeacherResourceDirectory.docx* (four-page directory with a "Link, don't copy" note and a vetting checklist).

Quick Reference: Toolkit Files

All files are available individually at nvcce.org/historyday. Print or share the sections most relevant to where your students are in their NHD year.

Sec	File	What it is	Best used when
1A	1A_ProgramOverview_NevadaCategories.docx	NHD overview + all 7 Nevada categories with rules, who it's best for, and Elementary notes	Year start, coordinator training, new teacher orientation
1B	1B_ContestCalendar_RoadMap.docx	Month-by-month calendar with teacher + student actions; required documents table; three classroom timeline options	Year start; share with students and parents
1C	1C_CategorySelectionGuide.docx	Student-facing category snapshot with 'Best if / Watch for' for all 7 Nevada categories	September, before students commit to a format
1D	1D_LaunchLesson_InnovationDetective.docx	Launch lesson with Nevada Before and After cards, innovation stations, Topic Ladder, and student handout	September kickoff
1E	1E_GenerativeAI_Policy.docx	Summary of NHD's generative AI policy with Nevada category notes and teacher guidance	Now; share with students and families at the start of the year
2A	2A_SourceSortingExercise.docx	Primary vs. secondary sorting with 12 practice items, tricky-source table, answer key	October, when bibliography work begins
2B	2B_AnnotatedBibliographyGuide.docx	Citation format examples (Chicago & MLA), strong vs. weak annotation models	October–November

2C	2C_Innovation_ResearchNotesOrganizer_HS.docx 2C_Innovation_ResearchNotesOrganizer_MS.docx 2C_Innovation_ResearchNotesOrganizer_ES.docx	Research notes organizer for Impact, Influence, and Change with guiding questions; three grade-level versions	October–December, research phase
3A	3A_InnovationFramework.docx	Innovation ≠ Invention one-pager; three lenses; scope table; NHD SPARK Test	September launch; share at coordinator training
3B	3B_FiveWs_Innovation_Thesis.docx	Five W's → Innovation thesis worksheet with Innovation Quick Check and four-move checklist	November, thesis coaching
3C	3C_Innovation_ProjectPlanner.docx	Full project planner with Innovation-specific thesis connections on every section	October–December, project build
4A	4A_StageSpecific_CoachingForm_v2.docx	Three-section coaching form: standard categories (3 cols) + Podcast + Poster (2 cols each)	After each contest level
4B	4B_Student_RevisionWorksheet_v2.docx	Student-facing revision worksheet with rubric self-assessment and action plan	After each contest level
4C	4C_JudgeToCoach_TranslationGuide.docx	Six patterns + coaching questions + five core coaching questions for any project/year	Year-round coaching reference
5A	5A_ProjectTimelineTemplate.docx	Three-part timeline: historical chronology, consistency check, project section map	November–January build period
6A	6A_TeacherResourceDirectory.docx	Curated outside resources, Nevada archives, and a vetting checklist	Any time; especially during the research phase

This toolkit may be reproduced for classroom and training use.
Updated annually.