

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATION

Each year, the Texas Historical Commission (THC) receives between 170 and 200 County Historical Commissions (CHC) reports that document activity of individual CHCs and provide a statewide perspective on local preservation efforts. To honor CHCs that demonstrate outstanding contributions, the THC administers the Distinguished Service Award (DSA) Program, that gives awards annually based on reporting results.

Reporting documentation is evaluated by THC staff and above-average programs of work are flagged for additional review in association with DSA statutory criteria, preservation standards, and organizational best practices. To be eligible to earn a DSA, a CHC must provide reporting data that substantiates a well-rounded program of quality preservation efforts that meets the four considerations below.

1. **Documents above-average performance.** Report should document fulfillment of statutory criteria outlined in table located on the back of this flyer. Criteria includes certain statutory minimums with respect to number of appointees and number of meetings that must be fulfilled. Criteria also identifies statute-enabled activities; CHC reports should document involvement in these activities to substantiate the level of CHC activity and breadth of history- and preservation-related accomplishments. High performing CHCs are eligible for a DSA.
2. **Documents substantial time investment.** Volunteer hour count is widely accepted as a performance measure to evaluate organizational capacity. Volunteer hour minimums associated with DSA criteria—50 hours/appointee—must be met to be eligible for a DSA. Because this minimum is actually much lower than statewide averages for CHC performance, DSA-winning CHCs—awarded for their above-average activity—typically report two and three times the minimum amount of volunteer hours required for DSA eligibility. When DSA criteria are updated in the future, eligibility multiplier will increase to require more hours per appointee.
3. **Provides quality project descriptions.** Report should provide three different project descriptions that address the reporting questions in their entirety. CHCs that perform at DSA-levels have no trouble documenting 3 different projects that comply with statutory and preservation standards. While report check box answers indicate a degree of activity, open-ended descriptions validate quality of work and amount of effort expended by each CHC. Additionally, project descriptions are the primary means by which CHC Outreach Program—and by extension, THC—promote the value of CHC contributions.
4. **Adhere to preservation and organizational standards.** To be eligible for DSA consideration, CHC work must adhere to standards upheld by THC, including but not limited to, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. CHC business must comply with county and state policies related to fiscal matters, open meetings, and public information. Additionally, CHC must demonstrate constructive dealings with county officials and the public.

Questions about the DSA process and CHC annual reporting should be directed to CHC Outreach Program staff. Contact staff by telephone at 512-463-5853 or by email at history@thc.texas.gov.

Table below itemizes DSA criteria related to statutory obligations and defining work in which CHCs may participate. These items help make a case for DSA eligibility but comprise only a part of DSA evaluation process. Entire process is outlined on first page of this flyer.

Statute Citation	Work related to Local Government Code (Chapter 318) that should be documented in CHC Annual Report in order to be eligible for a DSA.
318.002	THC programs, projects, and efforts suggested to CHCs--specific examples below.
	<i>Report total volunteer hours that average out to at least 50 hours per appointee</i>
	<i>County Certified Local Government</i>
	<i>Hosting a THC workshop</i>
	<i>Coordinating a regional preservation or tourism event (Texas Archeology Month event, history conference, junior historian program, etc.)</i>
	<i>Meeting regionally with other CHCs to share experiences and efforts</i>
	<i>Projects initiated to diversify membership and/or interpretation of historic and cultural resources</i>
	<i>Participation in Texas Historical Commission Initiatives</i>
318.003a	Have at least 7 county residents appointed to CHC
318.003d	Provide updated appointment list to the THC in odd-numbered years
318.005a	Report dates of at least 4 CHC meetings during the year of service
318.005b	State that at least one appointee has taken Open Meetings training
318.006a	Continuing survey of county historic resources
318.006b	Develop and maintain inventories for surveyed properties
318.006c	Establish a system for periodic review and assessment of the condition of designated properties
318.007	Provide or partner in some sort of project/effort to educate community
318.008a	Turn in an CHC Annual Report
318.008a	Make annual report of activities to county commissioners court
318.008a/b	Submit CHC meeting minutes AND/OR submit proposed CHC budget for recommendations from commissioners court AND/OR meet with the county commissioners court [judges and county commissioners]
318.009	Secure money AND/OR in-kind services from county
318.010a	Review marker applications
318.010b	Establish a system for periodic review, assessment, and maintenance of markers
318.010c	Promote historic and cultural sites to develop and sustain heritage tourism
318.010e	In operating museums, the CHC shall adhere to professional standards in the care, collection, management, and interpretation of artifacts
318.0101	Provide CHC plan for work or customize statewide plan for individual CHC needs
318.0101	Partner with at least 3 different organizations in your county or region
318.0102b	CHC representative attends at least 2 [different] preservation education opportunities [will include THC or local speakers/events]
318.0102c	Utilize THC web presentations to educate your CHC or provide your own training
318.012	Review and make recommendations for historic site tax exemption requests filed with the county