

MARCH 2025

LATINOS IN HERITAGE CONSERVATION



EQUITY STUDY PHASE 1 REPORT

Prepared by: Allison Soto Morales
Equity Fellow

Approved by: Sehila Mota Casper

02

ABOUT THE EQUITY STUDY

Since the start of the preservation movement in the United States, communities of color have largely been marginalized. This exclusion and erasure from the nation's narrative underscores the need for the present research, to examine the progress made toward greater inclusion since the launch of the National Park Service's *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study* in 2011. This involves identifying best practices and addressing ongoing gaps in the representation of Latinx communities on the National Register of Historic Places, the “official list of the nation's historic sites deemed worthy of preservation”.

The relevance of this research persists today, as efforts to reduce funding and further marginalize these narratives have gained renewed momentum at the federal level.



03

METHODOLOGY

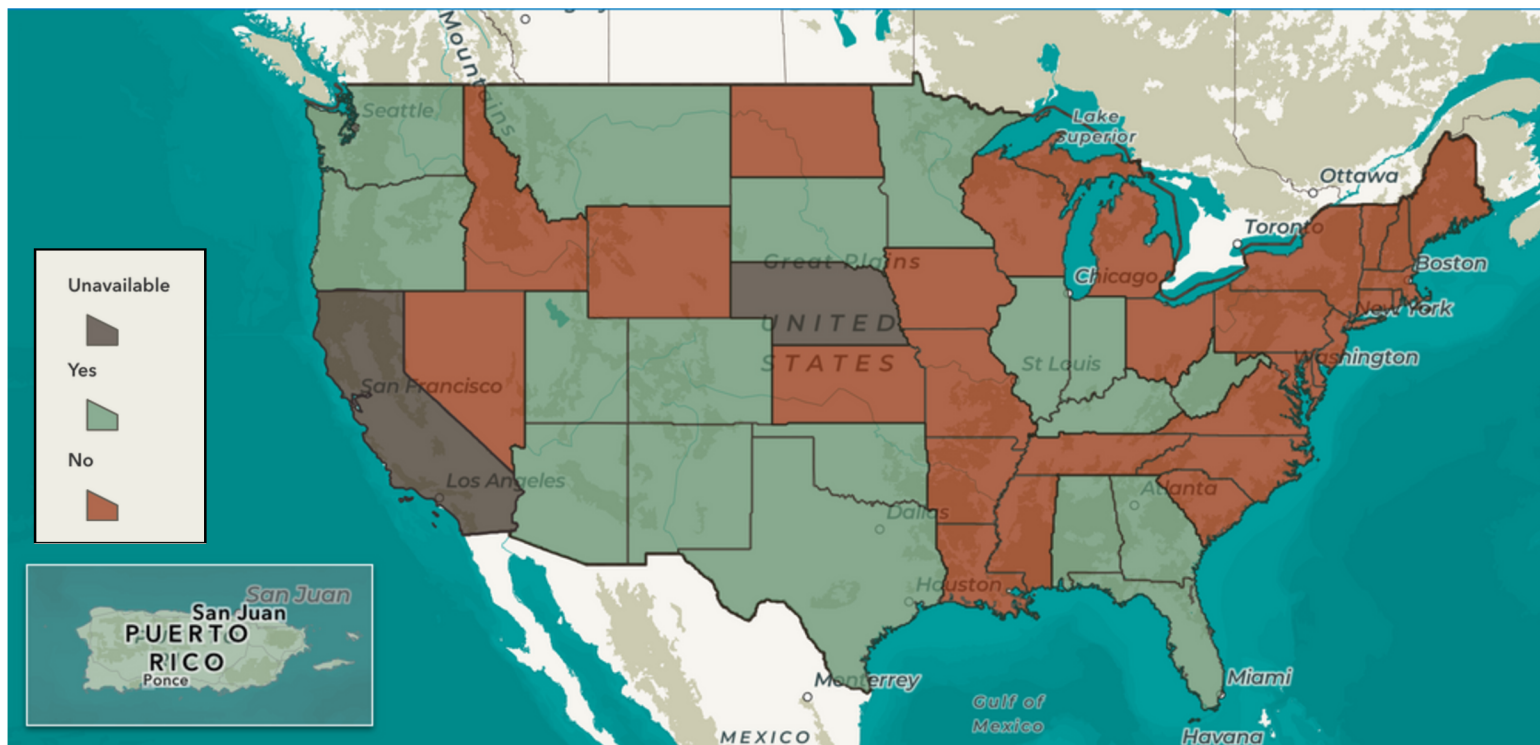
To gain a comprehensive understanding of Latinx sites listed on the National Register and the challenges associated with their inclusion, a survey was distributed to State Historic Preservation Offices, based on the survey by Sehila Mota Casper in 2014. This survey employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative and qualitative questions to provide a more holistic perspective.

The survey aimed to identify whether each state has federally designated sites that honor Latinx heritage, including National Parks, National Monuments, National Memorials, National Historic Parks, National Register of Historic Places listings, and National Historic Landmarks.

Additionally, the survey explored resources available for broader diversity initiatives, including programming and outreach efforts, as well as those specifically targeting the Latinx community. The survey examined available funding, focusing on budgets allocated to Latinx programming and any Underrepresented Communities Grants received through the National Park Service.

04

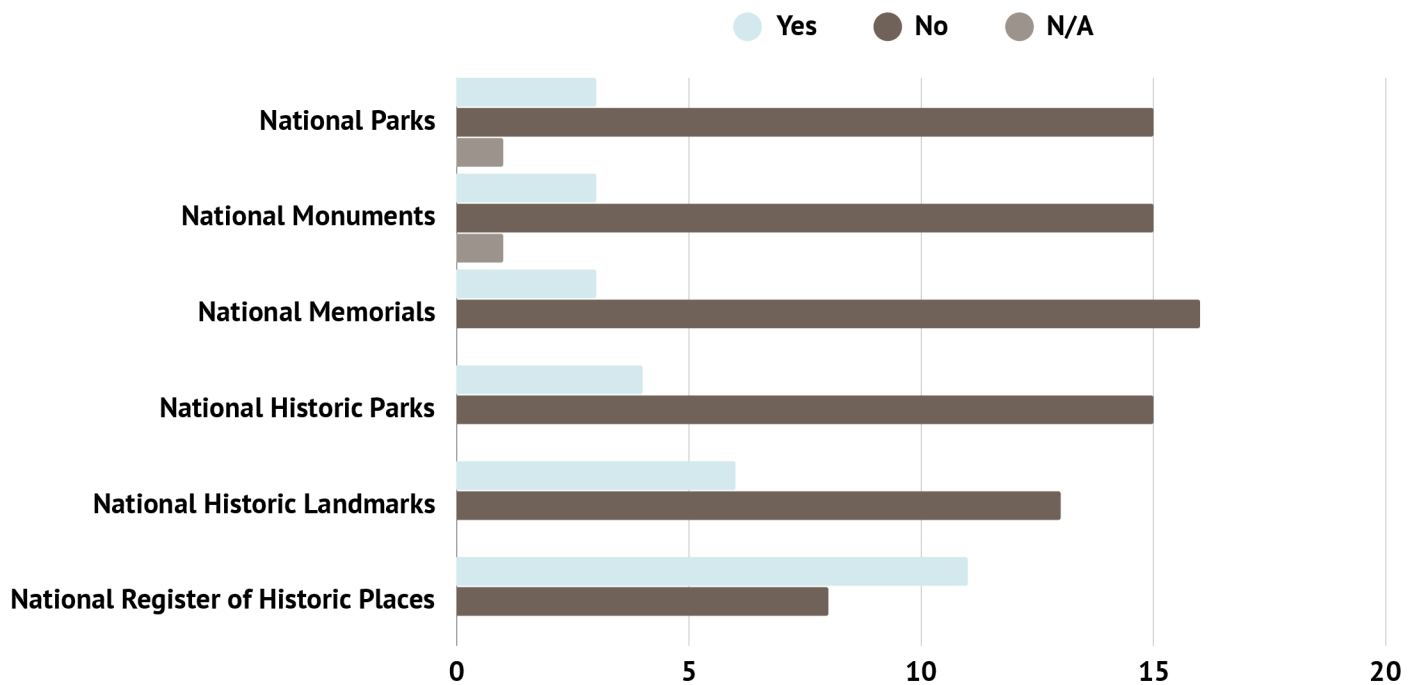
OUTREACH



Outreach was conducted among the 48 continuous states and Puerto Rico. The map shows which states responded, which states did not, and which states were unable to complete the survey due to capacity and ongoing projects (Unavailable).

05

FEDERALLY DESIGNATED LATINX SITES

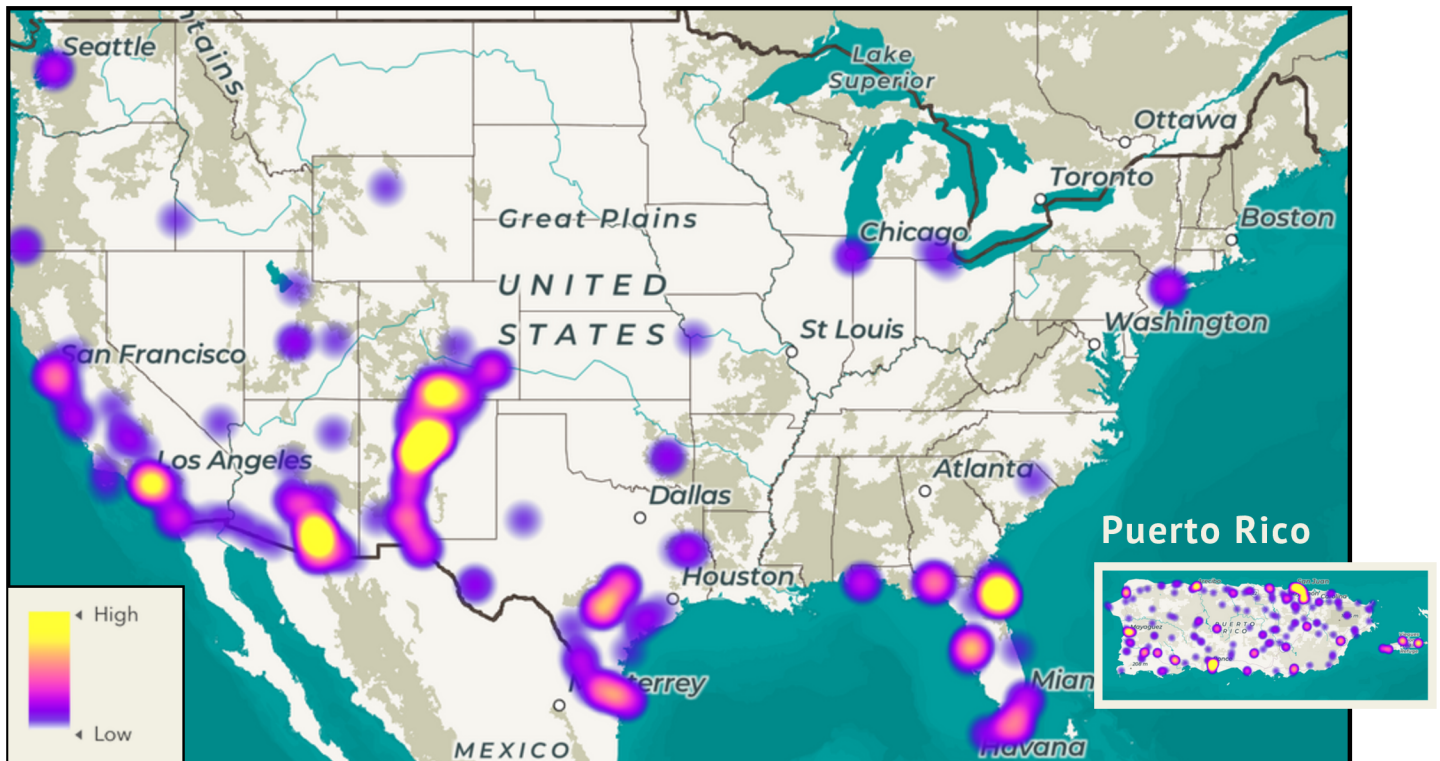


- 16% have National Parks, National Monuments, and National Memorials.
- 21% have National Historic Parks
- 32% have National Historic Landmarks,
- 58% have sites included on the National Register

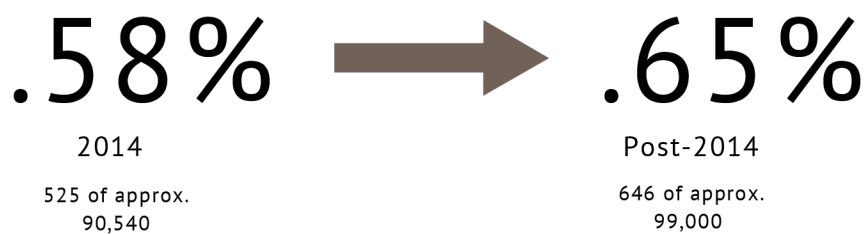
06

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Latinx Sites on the National Register of Historic Places



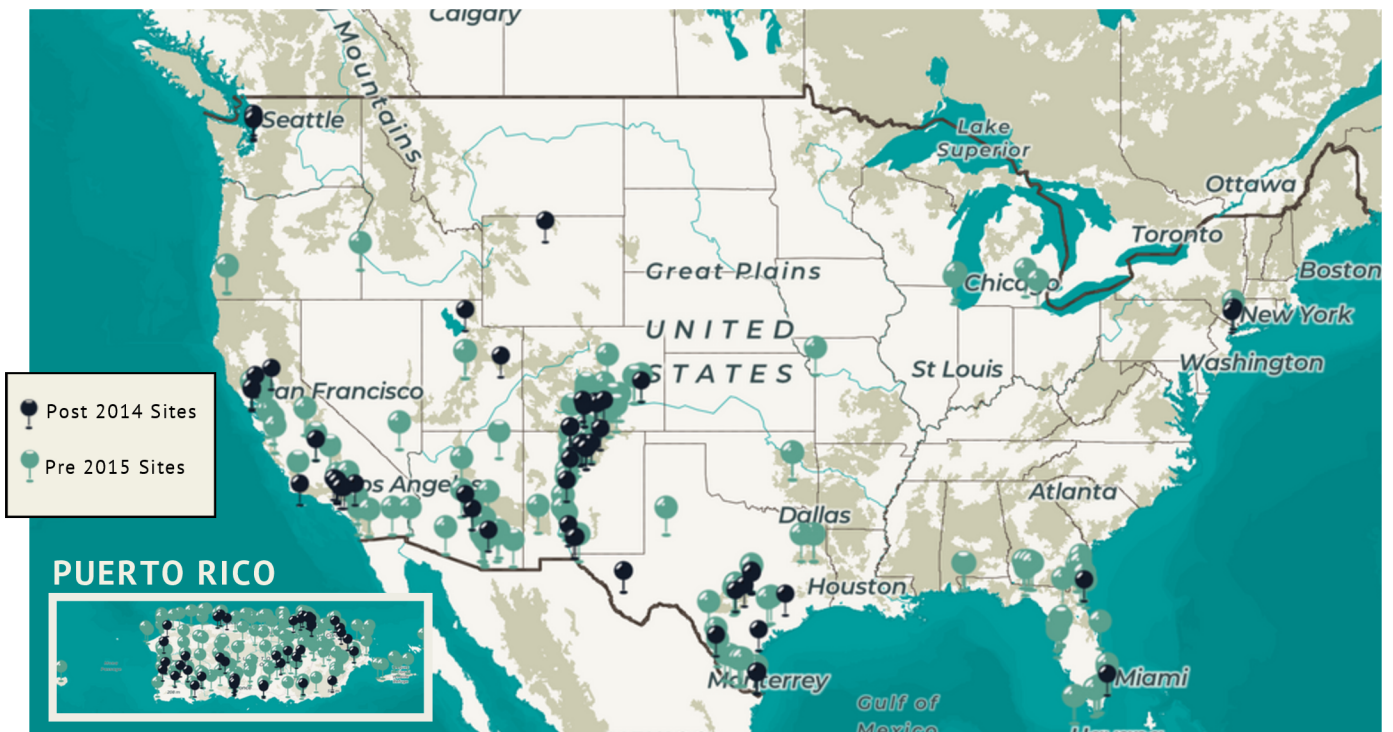
Results show that the majority of identified sites elevating Latinx history reside in Puerto Rico, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and Florida. The number of sites on the National Register remains less than 1%. Despite the low representation, the number of sites has grown 24% since 2014 with an additional 121 sites being added to the National Register during that time. Additionally, a total of 38 National Historic Landmarks have been identified, 7 of which have been added since 2012.



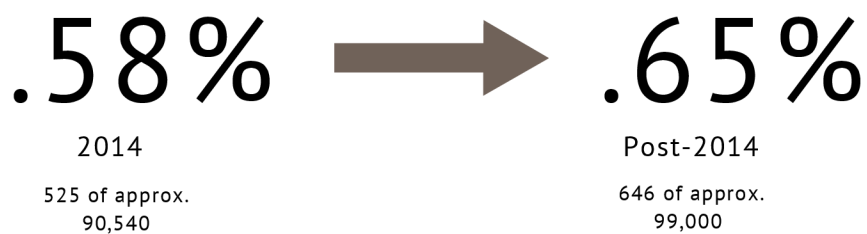
07

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Latinx Sites on the National Register of Historic Places



Results show that the majority of identified sites elevating Latinx history reside in Puerto Rico, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and Florida. The number of sites on the National Register remains less than 1%. Despite the low representation, the number of sites has grown 24% since 2014 with an additional 121 sites being added to the National Register during that time. Additionally, a total of 38 National Historic Landmarks have been identified, 7 of which have been added since 2012.



08

THEMES

1. Limited Programming, Outreach, and Funding for Latinx Heritage
2. Absence of Nominations
3. Integrity and Age of Properties
4. Limited Survey & Inventory Work



09

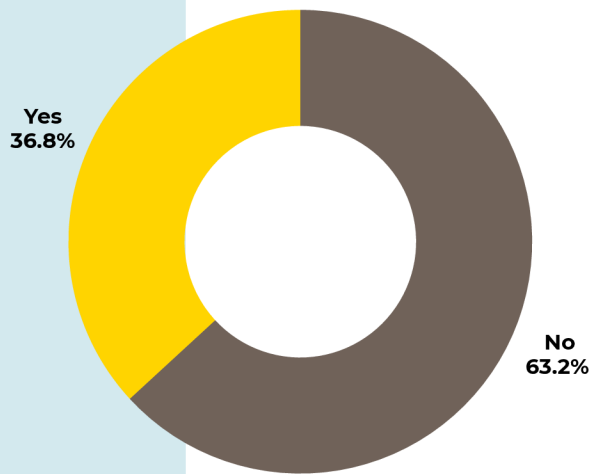
LIMITED PROGRAMMING, OUTREACH, AND FUNDING FOR LATINX HERITAGE

Less than half of participating SHPOs noted having some form of diversity programming, while less than 30% noted having any programming and outreach efforts tailored specifically to Latinx communities. In regards to funding, these numbers decrease significantly with only Puerto Rico having dedicated funding for outreach and programming as nearly the entire population in Latinx.

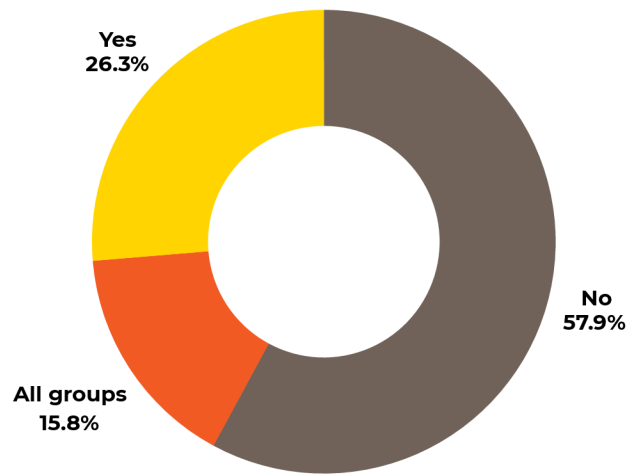
Underrepresented Communities Grants under the Historic Preservation Fund administered by the National Park Service have provided the necessary funding for projects serving Latinx communities. However, less than 7% of funding provided through the grant program has served such projects since 2014. Additional research is needed to determine whether such numbers stem from a lack of grant applications submitted or whether funding for this competitive grant should increase to better serve underrepresented communities.

LIMITED PROGRAMMING, OUTREACH, AND FUNDING FOR LATINX HERITAGE

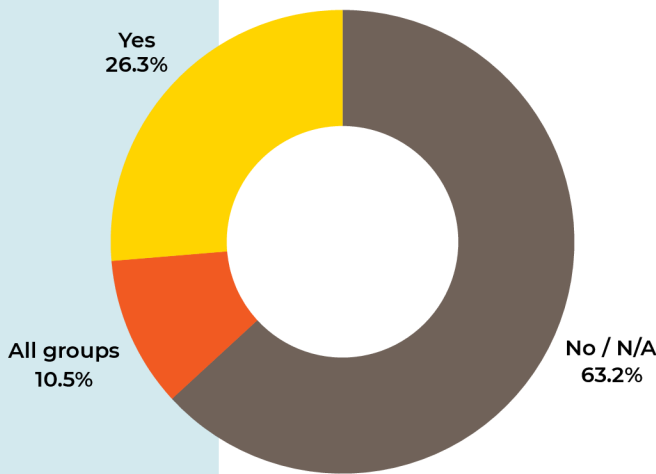
Diversity Programming



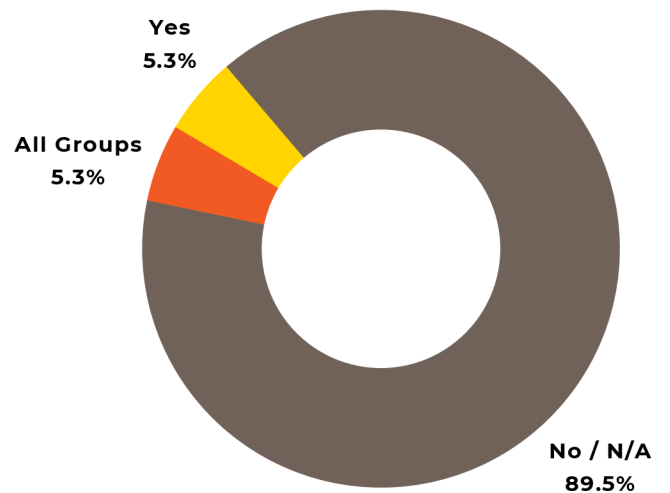
Outreach to Latinx Communities



Funding for Diversity Programming & Outreach



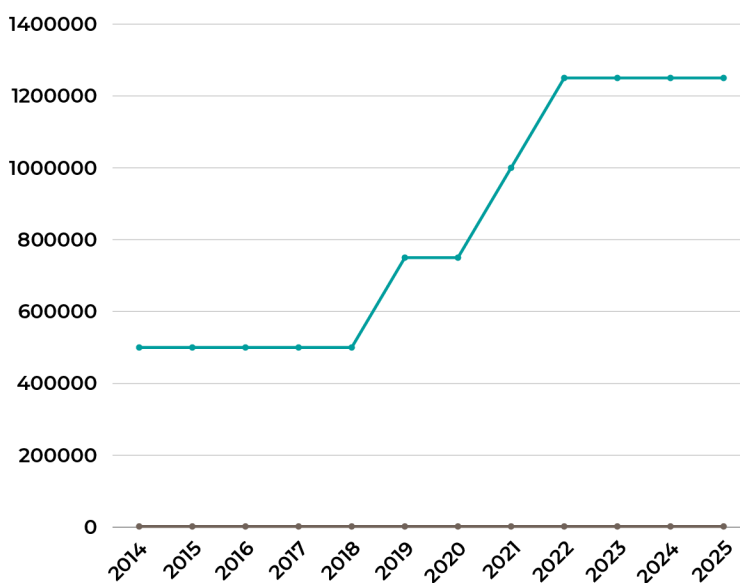
Funding for Latinx Programming & Outreach



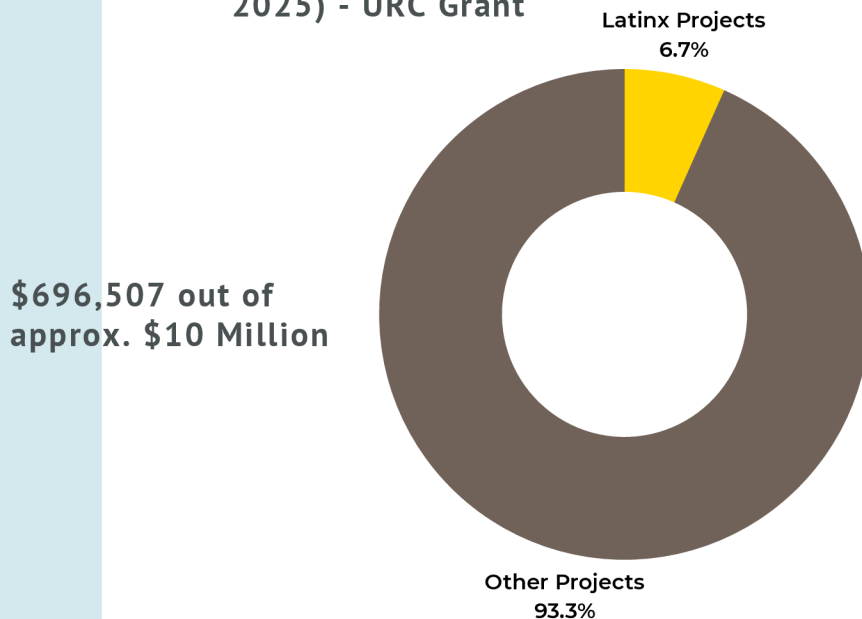
“All groups” reflects SHPOs that do not target specific groups, but instead serve all.

LIMITED PROGRAMMING, OUTREACH, AND FUNDING FOR LATINX HERITAGE

Underrepresented Communities Grant Total Giving Per Fiscal Year



Total Funding for Latinx Projects (2014-2025) - URC Grant



12

ABSENCE OF NOMINATIONS

“

We have a passive National Register program so we process nominations brought to us by communities, neighborhoods, and interested citizens. I would say the major deterrent to more nominations is simply lack of interest

”

A recurring challenge is the lack of community interest and engagement in the National Register process. Several states report limited community involvement and a general disinterest in submitting nominations. This stems from a lack of understanding regarding the benefits of National Register inclusion and from the belief that such recognition may restrict property owners' rights, particularly limitations on property use.

Concurrently, several State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) indicate adopting a passive approach to nominations, meaning they do not proactively engage communities in identifying potential sites for inclusion on the National Register.

13

INTEGRITY AND AGE OF PROPERTIES

“

On nominations the Cultural Affiliation part can only be completed when Criterion D is marked on the form. This restriction contributes to the invisibilization of our Latino culture. Poverty, climate events, earthquakes are among the factors that compromise the integrity and therefore the eligibility of our resources.

”

Historic integrity and the age of buildings are frequently cited as barriers to National Register inclusion, particularly when properties are either relatively new or have undergone significant alterations that change their physical features through renovations, neglect, climate change, and natural disasters.

In some states, properties associated with Latinx heritage are often less than 50 years old, thereby not meeting the age criteria for National Register eligibility.

14

LIMITED SURVEY & INVENTORY WORK

“

At the current moment, our knowledge of Latino, Hispanic, and/or Spanish sites is limited. Of the sites that we've become aware of since the initiative launched, they are associated with more recent times. If there are sites that do meet the criteria, we have not identified those sites as of yet, either through survey work or owner interest.

”

A key challenge in some states is the lack of surveys and comprehensive inventory efforts to identify sites of historical significance related to Latinx heritage. Without these surveys, it becomes difficult to identify properties that meet the criteria for National Register eligibility.

Additionally, some states highlight the shortage of experts and professionals qualified to conduct survey work, as well as the high costs associated with hiring them, further hindering their inclusion of Latinx sites on the National Register and efforts to preserve them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

As evident through the data on budgets and funding, more work needs to be done by the federal government to ensure resources are available. Through the Underrepresented Communities (URC) Grant history of giving, the benefit of these grants in providing resources necessary for surveying and inventory work is apparent. However, that amount should increase substantially to meet the needs of Latinx communities concerning the National Register.

The current interpretation of Integrity has deterred sites from being eligible for the National Register, especially those in areas prone to natural disasters. Reinterpreting integrity to include these affected sites should be considered.

SHPOs

Survey results indicate that outreach efforts across the country vary. Some offices have proactively launched initiatives addressing more representation on the National and State registers while other states lack outreach strategies but are open to connecting with Latinx communities. This creates an opportunity for growth and mentorship among SHPOs which can be done through panel discussions where SHPOs can share strategies specific to Latinx communities and outreach in general.

Additionally, noting that language also presents a barrier to the nomination process, creating a hub where translated documents can be shared with SHPOs would help efforts to engage the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Next Phase of Research

Research can continue with finding effective ways to advocate for increased funding and identifying other potential sources of funding. Additionally, research in best outreach practices could solidify establishing effective strategies to engage communities historically excluded from the National Register Process.

Conducting large-scale outreach to SHPOs, non-profits, architectural firms, contractors, and communities to assess their definition and understanding of integrity would aid in proposing amendments or policies that make the nomination process more inclusive.

