

Creating Community:

Homeschool Days at the Nebraska History Museum

Samantha McCarville

Introduction



- Samantha McCarville
- Education: Morningside University, UNL, and UNK
- Career path:
 - Preschool teacher
 - Secondary Social Studies teacher
 - Middle and High School
 - Curator of Education and K-12 Educator at the NSHS



About the NSHS

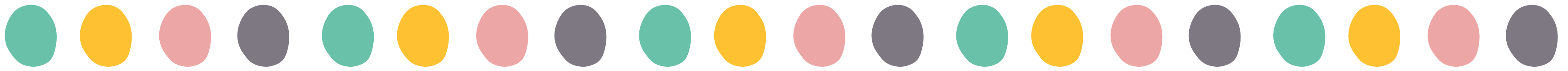
- Nebraska State Historical Society was founded in 1878 and became a state institution in 1883.
- Mission:
 - The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all the histories we share.



Homeschool Days

- Monthly program for homeschool learners
 - Themed activities
 - Drop-in style program
 - Quick activities and demonstrations
 - Designed for Pre K-8th grades





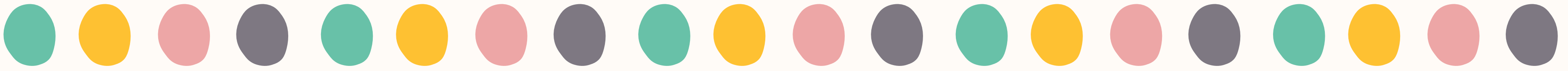
Initial Challenge

- Increase requests from homeschool families for traditional field trip programs each year

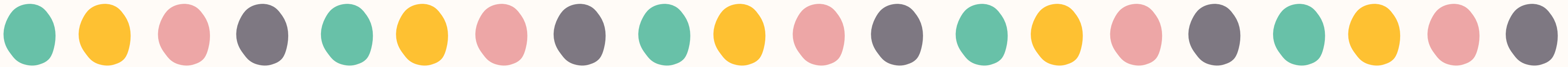
1 Program
format

2 Timing
and
flexibility

3 Internal
policies and
staff time



Solving the Problem(s)



Research

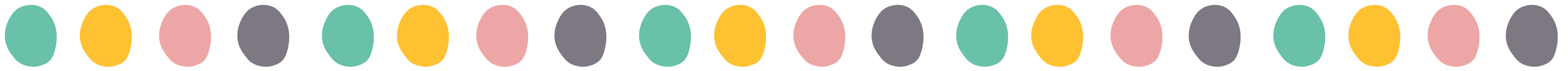
- By the numbers:
 - 16,419 homeschool learners in 2024/25
 - Estimated **18,000+** this year
- Students in all counties
 - 53% live in Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy
- Evenly distributed by age
- Local programs?



Pilot

- November 2024
 - Theme: Western Expansion
 - Hybrid Event:
 - Two onsite locations
 - Stations set up at both
 - Online presentation
 - Set times for activities





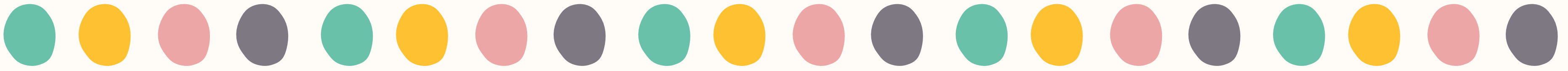
New Challenges

- Survey results and staff observations indicated some new challenges:

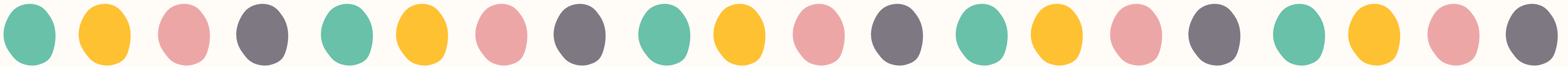
1 Engaging
hybrid
audiences

2 Capacity
(spaces and
staffing)

3 Promotion



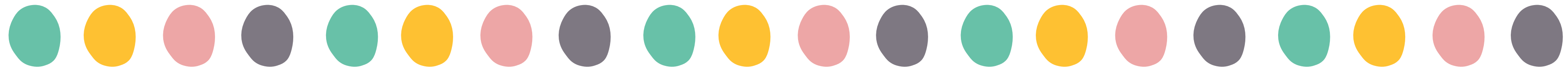
Back to the Drawing Board



New Format

- On-site only
 - Limited access
 - Serve one audience well
- Drop-in style activities
 - Flexibility for families
- Invited other community organizations
 - Academic diversity - not just history





Funding

- Format shift led to more supply costs
- Generous support from the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation
 - Purchase activity supplies for about 100 learners





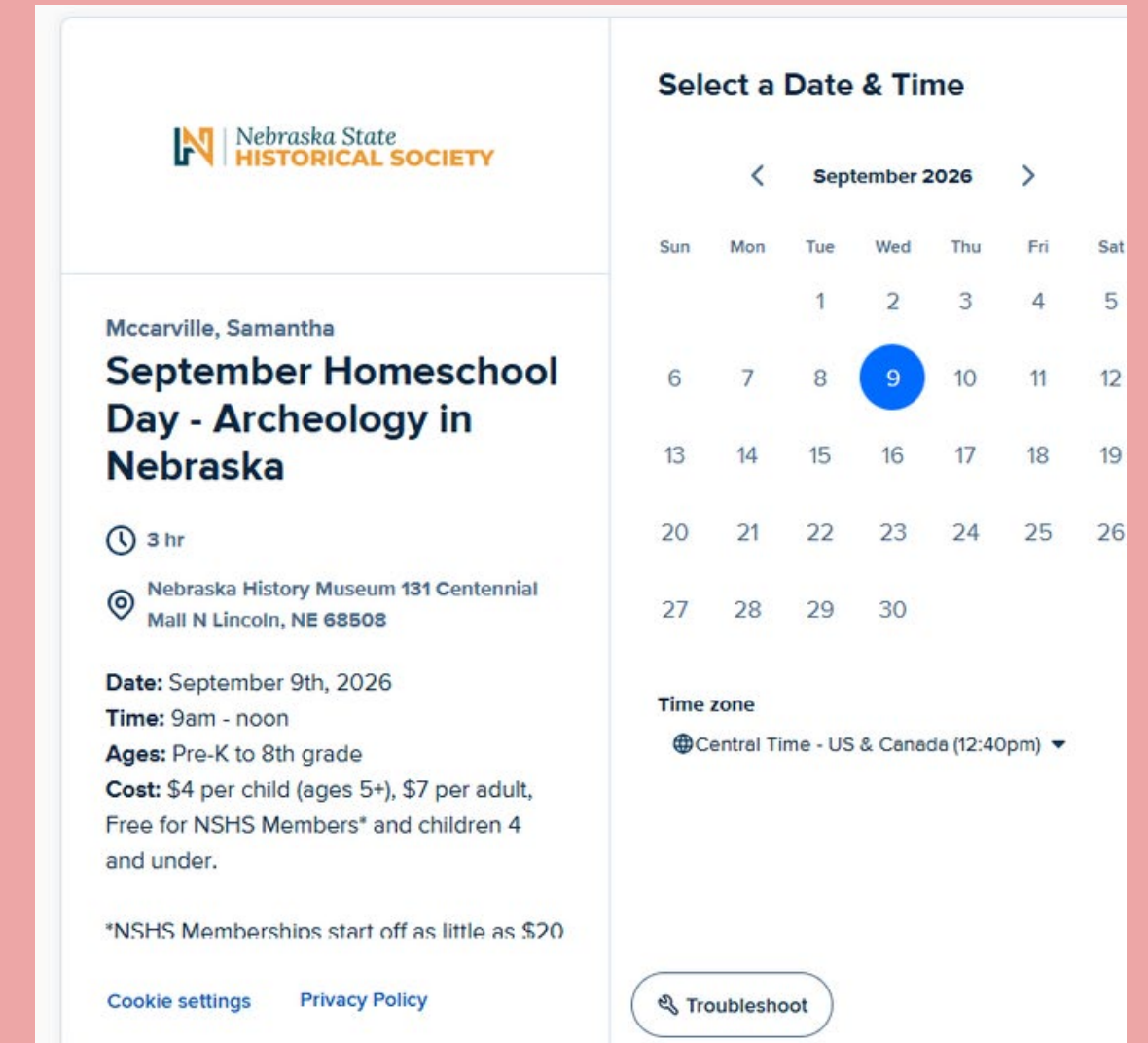
Promotion

- No centralized list/hub
- Didn't follow NSHS on social media
- What has worked:
 - Private social media forums
 - Word of mouth/ posts
 - Gathering contact info at events
 - Creating contact list
 - Memberships



Registration

- Attendance estimate for supply purchases
 - Optional pre-registration on Calendly
 - Sends email and text reminders
 - Guests get our contact info
 - Collects contact info
 - Auto-send surveys



The screenshot shows a registration page for the Nebraska State Historical Society. The header includes the logo and the text "Nebraska State HISTORICAL SOCIETY". The main content area displays the event details: "Mccarville, Samantha", "September Homeschool Day - Archeology in Nebraska", "3 hr", "Nebraska History Museum 131 Centennial Mall N Lincoln, NE 68508", "Date: September 9th, 2026", "Time: 9am - noon", "Ages: Pre-K to 8th grade", and "Cost: \$4 per child (ages 5+), \$7 per adult, Free for NSHS Members* and children 4 and under." A note at the bottom states "*NSHS Memberships start off as little as \$20". The right sidebar shows a calendar for September 2026 with the 9th highlighted. Below the calendar is a "Time zone" dropdown menu set to "Central Time - US & Canada (12:40pm)". At the bottom, there are links for "Cookie settings", "Privacy Policy", and a "Troubleshoot" button.

Nebraska State HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mccarville, Samantha

September Homeschool Day - Archeology in Nebraska

🕒 3 hr

📍 Nebraska History Museum 131 Centennial Mall N Lincoln, NE 68508

Date: September 9th, 2026
Time: 9am - noon
Ages: Pre-K to 8th grade
Cost: \$4 per child (ages 5+), \$7 per adult, Free for NSHS Members* and children 4 and under.

*NSHS Memberships start off as little as \$20

[Cookie settings](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Troubleshoot](#)

Select a Date & Time

< September 2026 >

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Time zone
🌐 Central Time - US & Canada (12:40pm) ▼



Volunteers

- Staff time is valuable
 - Wanted 3-4 NSHS activity stations - not enough staff
- Volunteers
 - All backgrounds
 - Send info early
 - Clear and concise directions
 - Opportunities to contribute
 - Comfort levels

Community Partners

- Lack of opportunities for homeschool families
- Provide space for a learning community
 - Approach one theme from multiple subjects
 - Science
 - Art
 - Share resources with families
 - Professional connections





Impact

- 2025-26
 - 9 Homeschool Days
 - **754** learners in 2025-26
 - Connected with **10** community partners
- 2026-27
 - First event will be September 9th
 - 94 learners pre-registered from 15 communities

