On May 29-30, 2019, the Society for Ethnomusicology held a National Planning Conference on Careers in Public and Applied Ethnomusicology at the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, in Washington, DC. Funded by a $15,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (Folk & Traditional Arts program), the Society assembled twenty conference participants from across the country, including professors in academic ethnomusicology programs, professionals at public-sector institutions with traditional arts programming, and ethnomusicology graduate students.

The objective of the conference was to develop an action plan for strengthening career preparation in public and applied work in ethnomusicology. Through expanding learning opportunities and resources, the Society aims to offer greater support to ethnomusicologists as they seek employment in such settings as archives, museums, arts-presenting institutions, primary and secondary schools, government agencies, publishing and media firms, and organizations focused on health, community development, environmental sustainability, cultural heritage, social justice, and other issues.

The below action plan was formulated by the conference participants, with additional input from the SEM Board, Council, and Applied Ethnomusicology Section. The Society looks forward to collaborating with its members, academic programs, and other organizations to pursue components of the plan, secure funding, and build capacity for innovative work in public and applied ethnomusicology.

1) Issue a statement on the value and impact of work in public/applied ethnomusicology. Promote a vision of ethnomusicology as a field that has long included individuals engaged in research, teaching, and public/applied projects, in settings both inside and outside the academy. Demonstrate that ethnomusicology continues to offer wide-ranging opportunities for collaborative projects with musicians, audiences, and communities.

2) Liaise with organizations outside the academy to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful employment and effective contributions in public/applied ethnomusicology in these settings.

3) Liaise with other academic societies that have developed programs and resources in career diversity and that have demonstrated the value of expanded knowledge and skills for employment both inside and outside the academy.
4) Compile annual data on advertised position openings related to public/applied ethnomusicology and on graduation rates and job placement in graduate programs. Apply this data to strengthen career preparation.

5) Promote the establishment of a core seminar (or seminar component) in public/applied ethnomusicology in all ethnomusicology graduate programs in order to better prepare students for diverse career paths. Provide resources to professors, such as syllabi, reports on curricular innovations, online lectures, and an advisory network. Encourage employment of professors of practice in graduate programs. Address curricular issues at the program directors meeting during the SEM Annual Meeting.

6) Develop an annual summer institute in public/applied ethnomusicology that assembles, from across the country, professors, professionals outside the academy, and graduate students. Frame the institute to complement seminars at individual institutions and to expand conversations and initiatives in public/applied ethnomusicology.

7) Organize professional development workshops at the SEM Annual Meeting and at SEM chapter meetings. Address such topics as career development, public communications, collaboration with community organizations, project design and management, fundraising, ethics, and social activism. Video record and/or stream workshops as webinars.

8) Promote internships at organizations with arts programs: compile a list of organizations that currently offer opportunities, encourage new opportunities, and build internship work into university ethnomusicology curricula. Identity funding sources for organizations and interns to ensure equity and inclusion. Disseminate reports on successful internships.

9) Establish a formal system for connecting mentors and mentees in public/applied ethnomusicology. Identify available mentors and their areas of expertise and prepare a statement on the responsibilities of mentors and mentees. Encourage mentoring relationships that can be sustained beyond single conversations.

10) Create on the SEM website a resource area for careers in public/applied ethnomusicology. Feature such material as key readings and websites, an informational document for administrators and professors (including expanded tenure and promotion guidelines), lists and reports on organizations and projects, toolkits, and information on internships and workshops.

11) Publicize the work and achievements of public/applied ethnomusicologists at the SEM Annual Meeting and through the SEM website, the SEM Newsletter, the SEM YouTube channel, and other electronic communications.

12) Liaise with organizations outside the U.S. in support of education and work in public/applied ethnomusicology. Explore opportunities to participate in international conferences, workshops, and publications.