



MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS AUTHORITY

MANAGEMENT GRANT GUIDELINES

Fiscal Year 2026



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MANAGEMENT GRANT GUIDELINES FY26

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INTRODUCTION

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (“MHAA”) is an independent unit of government in the Executive Branch of government that operates in the Department of Planning. MHAA oversees the Maryland Heritage Areas Program which is administered by the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT). Funding for MHAA, which is currently \$6 million dollars annually, comes out of Program Open Space funds. Management grants are awarded to the management entities of the Certified Heritage Areas through the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund, a non-lapsing, revolving fund. The following is information and instructions for completing the Management Grant applications online.

DISCLAIMERS

Each applicant shall comply with all applicable federal, State, and local laws, and departmental policies and programs, in carrying out the grant-funded project, including laws about drug-, alcohol-, and smoke-free workplaces; access for people with disabilities; equal opportunity in employment, housing and credit practices; and prohibiting discrimination.

The application process depends on complete and accurate information, and the failure to provide the information requested on the application may jeopardize MHAA’s approval of your application. If your application contains personal information, e.g., information that identifies a person’s education, financial information, or employment history—you should be aware of the following:

1. Any personal information supplied by the applicant will be used principally for MHAA’s evaluation of the application, but it also may be shared with other State, local, or federal government agencies involved with the applied-for project.
2. MHAA will permit the person whose information is included in an application to inspect, amend, and correct that information.
3. Your application and its supporting materials are public records that are generally available for public inspection under the Maryland Public Information Act. There are, however, certain types of information that are protected from disclosure under the Act. If there are portions of your application materials that you believe are exempt from disclosure under the Act, please indicate as much on your application. The Attorney General’s website contains helpful information about the Public Information Act and the types of information that it exempts from disclosure:
<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/OpenGov/pia.aspx>.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include the following:

- **Nonprofit organizations, local jurisdictions, and state agencies** that have been identified as **management entities** of Certified Heritage Areas (“Heritage Areas”).
- **Nonprofit organizations, local jurisdictions, and state agencies** to which Certified Heritage Area management responsibilities have been delegated by a heritage area management entity.

Nonprofit organizations must be in good standing, qualified to do business in Maryland, and have the legal capacity and authority to incur obligations under the grant program.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

To be eligible for a Management Grant, the proposed activities must be consistent with the goals, objectives, strategies, and actions outlined in the approved Management Plan and/or Five-Year Action Plan for the applicant Heritage Area. Management Grant funds may be awarded for activities/expenses that are directly related to heritage area management entity staffing, operating expenses, and provision of management services, including:

- **Personnel** (of the heritage area management entity)
 - Salary
 - Benefits
 - Employment taxes
 - Volunteer Hours (match only)
- **Contractual Services**
 - Bookkeeping
 - Payroll
 - Accounting / Audits
 - Legal
 - Planning
 - Design services
 - Other consultants related to management of the Heritage Area
- **Printing and Publications**
 - Newsletters
 - E-Newsletter service
 - Plans
 - Annual Reports
 - CHA-specific Brochures
- **Postage**
- **Telephone and Internet**

For full-cost reimbursement telephone and internet must be used **solely** or **primarily** for Heritage Area management purposes. If the device will also be used for non-heritage area purposes, costs must be pro-rated to reflect only the portion attributable to Heritage Area use.

- Land Line
- Cell Phone
- Internet Access
- **Website Maintenance and Hosting**
To include hosting and routine updates of Heritage Area website. This does not include major changes and new website development. If major changes or new website development are contemplated, please contact MHAA Program staff to determine eligibility for Management Grant funds.
- **Staff Development and Travel**
The training or conference must be directly related to Heritage Area duties performed by staff members. The cost of mileage and meals should be calculated at the same rates used by State of Maryland employees. See **Appendix E** for details about eligible meals, meal rates, and mileage rates.
 - Conferences
 - Workshops
 - Travel
 - Mileage
 - Memberships
 - Dues
- **Workshops and Trainings Hosted by Heritage Area**
- **Office Expenses**
For full-cost reimbursement equipment must be used **solely** or **primarily** for Heritage Area management purposes; if equipment will also be used for non-heritage area purposes, costs must be pro-rated to reflect only the portion attributable to Heritage Area use. Computer equipment is generally expected to have a minimum 3-year lifespan before replacement.
 - Purchase/lease/installation/maintenance of computers, office furnishings, copiers, etc.
 - Software purchase, lease, upgrade
 - Office Supplies
- **Rent and Utilities**
- **Insurance and Fees**
- **Board of Directors and Meeting Expenses**
- **Fundraising / Development**
 - **Alcoholic beverages** of any kind are not eligible expenses for MHAA Management Grants. Nor are they eligible expenses for the Heritage Area's match.
 - **Alcohol-related expenses** (e.g. liquor licenses, servers who serve alcohol) are eligible for inclusion in the Heritage Area's matching funds only.
- **Mini-Grants / Discretionary**
- **Marketing and Sponsorships** (match only)

If other types of Heritage Area activities/expenses are contemplated, please contact MHAA Program staff to determine eligibility.

Heritage Areas may set aside up to 25%, but not more than \$15,000, of a Certified Heritage Area Management Grant for discretionary purposes. These funds may be used by the Heritage Area to provide assistance to partners (for example through a non-capital mini-grant program), to support one or more **non-capital** projects, or to pay for other non-capital expenses that support the goals and objectives of the Heritage Area Management Plan or Five-Year Action Plan. All standard requirements for matching funds must be met for management funds utilized for discretionary purposes, and no more than \$15,000 of matching funds can be utilized for discretionary activities.

Another option for funding assistance to Heritage Area partners (mini-grants) is the **MHAA Block Grant for Mini-Grants** for CHA management entities. Block grants are applied for using a separate application and once awarded can be used to **fund mini-grants in a given fiscal year. If this occurs, the MHAA Management Grant awarded for the same fiscal year cannot include funding for mini-grants as part of the discretionary funds.**

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES AND ACTIVITIES

Management Grant funds may NOT be used to pay for the following:

- **Capital activities** (construction, building work including painting, trail installation, etc.);
- **Marketing activities** eligible for funding through a Marketing grant (however, discretionary funds for mini-grants may be utilized to support marketing activities by nonprofit organizations and local jurisdictions other than heritage area management entities, and marketing activities can be used as match for the Management Grant);
- **Programming, interpretive activities** and other stand-alone projects that do not directly relate to the management of the Heritage Area, unless they are part of the discretionary funds; or
- **Alcohol.**

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

See **Appendix A** for the list of criteria that are considered when applications are reviewed.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND DEADLINE

Management Grant applications are submitted online. FY26 applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. on May 19, 2025.

GRANT AMOUNTS AND MATCHING FUND REQUIREMENTS

Heritage area management entities may apply for up to **\$100,000** in Management Grant funds. **This amount is contingent upon sufficient funding being made available in the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund.** All grants must be matched in an amount at least equal to the grant (dollar-for-dollar match).

Ineligible Match:

- State of Maryland Funds, except for staff time from state employees
- Expenditures made prior to the award of the grant or after the completion of the grant period

Examples of Match:

- Cash expenditures
- Eligible management activities supported by a non-state grant or loan fund
- Proceeds from fundraising that are expended for eligible management activities.
- Volunteer time for work related to heritage area management activities (see http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time for current value of volunteer time in Maryland)
- Donated professional services (can be valued at their professional rate, but only if working on heritage area management activities in their professional role, e.g., accountant providing donated accounting services)
- Donated materials/supplies
- Donated office facilities

Other Project Costs (“Over Match”)

If total management matching expenditures are expected to exceed the total grant request and required match, those additional funds should be listed on the application budget as “Other Project Costs.” Review criteria takes into consideration whether or not grant-funded activities leverage significantly more funds than the required dollar-for-dollar match. If your Other Project Costs are from state funds, please explain those in the budget narrative portion of the application, but please do not include state funds in your Excel project budget or total project cost.

GRANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All successful grantees will be required to enter into a grant agreement. It is important that you understand these terms and conditions prior to applying for grant funds, because you will need to abide by them if a grant is awarded. See **Appendix B** for full terms and conditions.

GRANT SCHEDULE**Full Application –**

- Due no later than **11:59 p.m. on May 19, 2025.**

Grant Review and Award –

- MHAA Program Staff reviews all Management Grant applications in May and June and makes recommendations to MHAA
- MHAA takes final action on grant awards on **July 10, 2025.**

- Applicants are notified by email
- If awarded, the grant period begins **July 10, 2025** and project work can begin that day

APPLICATION FORMAT

A link to the Management Grant application will be emailed to all Heritage Area directors. All applications must be submitted online. See the [Quick Start Guide](#) on the MHT grants page for full details on the online submission process.

In addition to answering the questions in the online application form, applicants will be required to upload the following supporting documents with their applications:

- A detailed **budget** (See **Appendix C** for sample budget)
- **Resumes of key project personnel** (staff and consultants)
- **Proof of Nonprofit Status and Organizational Documents** (if applicable) (See **Appendix D**)
- **Letters of Support** – Letters of support for the grant application are welcome but not a required submission. Letters from elected officials, partner organizations and community members can help to demonstrate the importance of, need for, and urgency of your project.
- **Most recent Five-Year Action Plan** that clearly indicates which activities will begin or be taking place in FY26

APPENDIX A - PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be considered when reviewing Management Grant proposals:

CONSISTENCY WITH HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN AND/OR FIVE- YEAR ACTION PLAN

- Are the planned activities of the Heritage Area consistent with their Management Plan and/or Five-Year Action Plan?
- Will the planned activities of the Heritage Area significantly contribute to fulfilling [the goals](#) of the Maryland Heritage Areas Program?
- Are project objectives and the methods to accomplish those objectives clearly stated?
- Are there objectives in all four of the categories of activity – **Product Development, Building Partnerships, Sustaining Regional Identity, and Organizational?**

BUDGET

- Does the budget contain the necessary expenditures to accomplish the tasks outlined?
- Are the costs outlined in the budget reasonable and customary given the goals and activities outlined and for the services or products being obtained?
- Are the costs in the budget broken down in detail (e.g. rate X hours, # of items x cost per item)?
- Are all items in the budget clearly related to the products, activities and work described in the Scope of Work?
- Do the proposed activities or products significantly leverage local and/or private non-state investment?

MATCH

- Is there a reasonable plan for fulfilling the match requirement?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Are personnel (if known) appropriately qualified?
- Does the applicant have other open grants from previous fiscal years? Have previous grants required repeated extensions due to circumstances within the applicant's control?

DELIVERABLES

- Is it clear what the products/results of activities will be?
- What is the lifespan of the outcomes of activities funded by the Management Grant, and have all ongoing costs and maintenance been accounted for?

APPENDIX B - GRANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All grantees will be required to enter into a grant agreement with MHAA. The grant agreement is a binding contract with standard terms and conditions including the following:

Grant Term - All grant funds generally must be expended within no more than 24 months of the date the grant agreement is signed by all parties, unless MHAA Program staff agrees to a longer term or approves in writing an extension of the grant period. Written progress and final reports must be submitted to MHAA Program staff during the grant term, generally at the mid-point and end of the project (grant agreements will specify reporting requirements). The Heritage Area may also be required to submit supporting financial documentation with progress and final reports identifying project costs incurred to date.

Grant Disbursements – Grant funds generally will be paid in no more than three installments, unless otherwise specified in the Grant Agreement. Typically, you will receive 50% of your total award in your first payment. Then your second and third payments would each be 25%. Under certain circumstances, your project monitor may alter the number or percentage of disbursements. If you feel that your disbursement schedule may require alteration, please reach out to your project monitor. The second and third disbursements are reimbursements, meaning you must certify that you have incurred expenses for both grant and match funds to request the second and third disbursements. At the time of your second disbursement, you should be able to certify that you have incurred approximately 50% of your total project costs (grant and matching funds combined). Your final disbursement will be the balance of funds available, based on your final expenditures, and will not be issued until all project expenses have been incurred and all work products are finished and approved by MHAA Program staff.

Procurement Procedures – All grant recipients are expected to ensure that the costs they pay for goods and services necessary to carry out the project are reasonable and customary for the type of work performed and materials procured. The following conditions also apply:

- 1) **Local Government agencies:** Local government grant recipients must follow their normal procurement procedures and, if requested by MHAA, must be able to document that applicable procurement procedures were followed.
- 2) **Nonprofit organizations:** Nonprofit grant recipients must utilize a procurement process that allows them to obtain project goods and services at reasonable and customary prices, and if requested by MHAA, must be able to document that their expenditures are reasonable and customary. In addition, nonprofit grant recipients must adhere to the following requirements, depending on the amount of the procurement:
 - a) **Procurements greater than \$500 and less than \$10,000:** Grant recipients are strongly encouraged to obtain two or more written bids for any goods and services that are expected to cost **more than \$500 but not more than \$10,000**.
 - b) **Procurements greater than \$10,000:** If costs for any goods or services are expected to **exceed \$10,000**, written bids from at least 3 vendors must be obtained. Grant recipients must be able to document their compliance with this condition, if requested by MHAA.

- 3) When bids are obtained, grant recipients are not required to select the lowest bid, but they must be able to document why a vendor other than the low bidder was selected and what criteria other than bid price justified the selection.
- 4) Sole-source procurement of goods and services should not be utilized unless the grant recipient can demonstrate that competitive procurement is impractical because only one product or service vendor can meet specific project requirements. As with all procurements, sole source expenditures must be reasonable and customary for the type of goods and services being obtained. If requested by MHAA Program staff, grant recipients must be able to justify the use of sole source procurement and document that its expenditures are reasonable and customary for the goods and services obtained.

Workplace Restrictions – Each applicant shall comply with all applicable federal, State, and local laws, and departmental policies and programs, in carrying out the grant-funded project, including laws about drug-, alcohol-, and smoke-free workplaces; access for people with disabilities; equal opportunity in employment, housing and credit practices; and prohibiting discrimination.

Acknowledgment - Grant recipients are required to acknowledge MHAA assistance in all public messaging about grant-funded projects.

Compliance with Applicable Laws – Recipients of funds are responsible for complying with all federal, State, and local laws applicable to the project.

APPENDIX C - SAMPLE MANAGEMENT BUDGET

Use the required Excel budget form provided in the application to prepare a realistic management budget. **The budget MUST address management components mentioned in the Deliverables section of your application and should only include eligible expenses as outlined on page 4 of this document.** The following is provided to illustrate both the process and sample line items Management Grant budgets must follow.

1. Calculate the total cash needs:

Staff Salaries & Benefits (2 full-time staff)	\$124,000
Telephone/Internet	\$6,000
Copier Rental	\$1,200
Office Supplies	\$1,800
Travel (2 conferences; mileage)	\$1,200
Workshops (\$2,000 x 6)	\$12,000
Newsletters (6 issues x 5,000 copies x 0.40/copy)	\$12,000
Annual Report (500 copies x \$4.00/copy)	\$2,000
Web Hosting (\$500/month x 12)	\$6,000
Fundraising Plan Consultant (\$50/hr x 278 hrs)	\$13,900
Visitor Impact Study Consultant (\$50/hr x 280 hrs)	\$14,000
Mini-Grants	\$17,500
TOTAL CASH NEEDS:	\$211,600

2. Calculate the available in-kind match:

Mini-Grant In-kind Match	\$2,500
Visitor Impact Study Committee (40 hours x 10 people x \$20/hr)	\$8,000
Donated Office Space Rental (\$2,000/month x 12 months)	\$24,000
Donated Office Furniture Rental (\$250/month x 12 months)	\$3,000
TOTAL IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION:	\$37,500

3. Add the total cash needs and available in-kind match to find the total project cost:

Total Project Cost: (\$211,600 + \$37,500)	\$249,100
MHAA Grant Funds Requested	\$100,000
Match	\$100,000
Total Grant Funds & Required Match	\$200,000
Total Other Project Costs (Over Match)	\$49,100
Total Project Cost: (\$200,000 + \$49,100)	\$249,100

Once a workable budget structure has been prepared, enter the line items in the Excel budget form provided. Items should be grouped and organized by the eligible categories outlined on page 4 of this document, regardless of whether they are grant or matching expenditures. Rates of pay or similar cost breakdowns **MUST** be included in each line item. Attach any estimates you have obtained to support your budget.

APPENDIX D – PROOF OF NONPROFIT STATUS

Organizational Documents and Proof of Nonprofit Status (if applicable):

If the Applicant is a nonprofit organization, organizational documents and proof of nonprofit status must be submitted. This should include:

- Articles of Incorporation*
- By-laws*
- Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 approval letter (if applicable)

*Some organizations may have a constitution or charter instead.

This is not required for government agencies.

APPENDIX E – Travel Expenses: Meals and Mileage

Meals:

Food expenses are eligible costs for MHAA Management Grant funds in two cases:

- 1) When food costs are associated with a meeting hosted by the Heritage Area.
- 2) When food costs are incurred by the Heritage Area's employees as part of necessary travel for grantee business or training. The following State of Maryland travel per diem conditions also apply:
 - a. As part of the documentation for grant reimbursement, you must provide a brief travel memo, including the reason for travel, distance, names of employees who traveled, dates, and approximate times.
 - b. When an employee's travel schedule involves absence from home overnight, all meals are eligible costs.
 - c. **Alcoholic beverages are not eligible costs.**
 - d. The cost of breakfast is eligible when an employee must leave home 2 hours or more before the beginning time of the employee's standard work schedule. The cost of dinner is reimbursable when an employee cannot get home within 2 hours after the employee's standard work schedule quitting time. In both cases, the 2 hours are in addition to the normal commuting time.
 - e. An employee's lunch is only eligible if that employee's travel schedule meets one of the following conditions:
 - i. Involves overnight absence from home (clause b).
 - ii. That the employee is also eligible for both breakfast and dinner on the same date (clause d).
 - iii. Lunch is not eligible when the employee is away from the office during the day but working regular hours.
 - f. Breakfast and dinner are not eligible expenses because of the hour at which an employee is required to leave home, or at which the employee returns home, because of commuting to and from the employee's normal place or places of employment.
 - g. If the registration fee for a conference, convention, seminar, or training meeting includes the cost of meals, any outside meals purchased as alternatives to the meals already covered are not eligible.
 - h. Eligible meal expenses including tips may not exceed the following amounts, unless the employee is traveling to a [High Cost Metropolitan Area](#) in which case the specific meal rates are provided [here](#):

i. Breakfast....\$15.00	Lunch.....\$18.00	Dinner.\$30.00
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Mileage: Mileage is an eligible cost for MHAA Management Grants when Heritage Area employees use their private vehicles to travel to and from locations for grantee business and training.

- 1) Commuting distance to and from employees' homes to Heritage Area's places of business are not eligible for mileage costs.
- 2) Mileage rate: 70 cents/mile
- 3) A mileage log must be provided and signed by the employee as documentation