



MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS AUTHORITY

MARKETING GRANT GUIDELINES

Fiscal Year 2026



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**MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS AUTHORITY
MARKETING 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. Marketing 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 Marketing 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:

- **Certified Heritage Area** (“Heritage Area”) management entities
- **Destination Marketing Organization(s)** (“DMO(s)”) recognized by the Maryland Office of Tourism Development (“Tourism”)

Applications must be submitted jointly, and both organizations must be in good standing with the State of Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation, be qualified to do business in Maryland, and have the legal capacity and authority to incur obligations involved under the grant program.

Certified Heritage Areas and DMOs must have jointly completed within the last 24 months a **heritage area marketing plan** applicable to the time period when marketing activities proposed in the application will occur in order to be eligible to apply for funding. See **Appendix E** of these instructions for more information about the required contents of the marketing plan.

Upon completion of a marketing plan, Certified Heritage Areas and their DMO partners may apply for funding for marketing activities as a part of the annual grant round and may choose to either **apply annually for a marketing grant of no more than \$25,000; or may apply every other year for a marketing grant of no more than \$50,000**. A Heritage Area and their DMO(s) may only have one marketing grant open at any given time. **All previous marketing grants must be closed before a FY25 marketing grant agreement can be executed regardless of whether the Heritage Area or the DMO is the grantee.**

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Eligible activities must address or complete a priority activity identified in and/or consistent with the goals, objectives, strategies, and actions outlined in the approved Certified Heritage Area Management Plan and/or Five-Year Action Plan. Content for all activities will only include marketable products within the Certified Heritage Area. The following types of marketing activities are eligible for funding:

- Advertising Placement – defined as the actual time, space, and/or other format of media necessary to reach a selected audience. Allowable expenditures are limited to the purchase of print space, television time, radio time, and internet or other digital media time/space.
- Participation in Consumer and Travel Trade Shows – defined as the selling of Heritage Area travel products at consumer and travel trade shows in identified target markets, such as the Group Tour market. Both in-state and out-of-state shows are allowed. Allowable expenditures include booth space costs and delegate registration fees. Consideration of Trade/Consumer shows listed in the Maryland Office of Tourism Development Annual Development and Marketing Plan is encouraged (see www.visitmaryland.org/).
- Printed Material/Collateral – defined as the preparation of communication documents, i.e. brochures, guides, maps, consumer/travel trade show exhibits, video/films, and other similar forms of messaging. Such material must be for the specific purpose of supporting all other marketing activities by design and content. Allowable expenditures include creative, design, production (including layout, etc.), photography, and printing costs.
- Website Development and Online Marketing Presence – defined as the necessary

actions/expenses required to establish a Heritage Area on the web. Allowable expenses include website creation and other expenses related to creating and/or significantly enhancing a web presence, including websites, social media and online marketing for the Heritage Area.

Please note that any materials created with marketing grant funding should include MHAA's logo or link back to a webpage that includes MHAA's logo.

NOTE: Interpretation (defined as: *the development and presentation of interpretive exhibits, interpretive signage, materials, or other appropriate products to further the educational and recreational objectives of the Heritage Area*) is not considered a marketing activity; therefore, it is not eligible for funding under a marketing grant application.

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND RESTRICTIONS

The following types of activities are **not eligible** for funding with a Marketing Grant, but **may serve as match for the grant**:

- Advertisement design/production
- Travel expenses
- Expenses directly related to the fulfillment of advertising inquiries, such as postage, call center fees, etc.
- Website/database routine maintenance (significant enhancement of a Heritage Area website may be eligible). **If considering a website project, contact MHAA Program staff to discuss.**

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

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

APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND DEADLINE

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

GRANT AMOUNTS AND MATCHING FUND REQUIREMENTS

FY26 Marketing Grants can be awarded **up to \$50,000**. This amount is contingent upon sufficient funding being made available in the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund. **Only one marketing grant in a Heritage Area can be open at a time; if a previous marketing grant (whether the Heritage Area or the DMO is the grantee) is still open at the time of grant award, a new marketing grant will not be awarded.**

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
- Marketing expenditures supported by a non-state grant or loan fund
- Applicant staff salaries for work specifically on the project
- Volunteer time for work on the project (see http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time for current value of volunteer time in Maryland)
- Donated or discounted professional services (can be valued at their professional rate, but only if working on the project in their professional role, e.g., architect donating architectural design services)
- Donated or discounted project materials/supplies

Other Project Costs (“Over Match”)

If the total project is expected to cost more than the total grant request and required match, those additional costs should be listed on the application budget as Other Project Costs, but should not include State funds. Review criteria take into consideration whether or not a grant project leverages significantly more funds than the required dollar-for-dollar match and what portion of this “over match” is cash versus in-kind match.

GRANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All successful grantees will be required to enter into a grant agreement with MHAA. 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.**

Grants Review –

- Complete applications are forwarded to MHAA for review in May 2025.

Grant Awards –

- 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 all project work can begin that day.

APPLICATION FORMAT

A link to the Marketing Grant application will be emailed to all Heritage Area directors. All applications must be submitted online. All other online grant materials are available [here](#). See the [Quick Start Guide](#) for full details on the online submission process.

Applicants will be required to submit 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 encouraged but are not a required submission. Letters from elected officials, partner organizations and community members help to demonstrate the importance of, need for, and urgency of your project.

APPENDIX A - PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be considered by MHAA in reviewing grant proposals:

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

- Are the planned activities for the Heritage Area consistent with their Management Plan and/or Five-Year Action Plan or other planning documents?

MARKETING PLAN

- Will the planned grant activities significantly contribute to fulfilling the [goals of the Maryland Heritage Areas Program](#)?
- Are marketing objectives and the methods to accomplish those objectives clearly stated?

PROJECT DESIGN

- Does the budget contain the necessary expenditures to accomplish the tasks outlined?
- Are the costs outlined in the project budget reasonable and customary given the goals of the project 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 Project Description, Methodology, and Timeline?
- Does the project or its products significantly leverage local and/or private non-state investment?
- Are marketing objectives and the methods to accomplish those objectives clearly stated?

MATCH

- Is there a reasonable plan for how the funds will be matched?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Are project personnel (if known) appropriately qualified?
- Does the applicant have other open Heritage Area 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 the project will be?
- What is impact of the proposed marketing activities?

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 grantee 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 MARKETING GRANT BUDGET

Use the budget sheet to prepare a realistic project budget. **The budget MUST address project components mentioned in the Project Description, Methodology, and Timeline.** The following sample budget for a marketing project is provided to illustrate both the process and format grant project budgets must follow.

1. Calculate the total cash needs of the project:

Project Manager – HA (\$20/hr x 125 hrs)	\$2,500
Project Monitor – DMO (\$25/hr x 20 hrs)	\$500
Design of Print Ads	\$2,000
Brochure Design	\$1,000
Photography (5 days @ \$400/day, \$725 editing/printing costs)	\$2,725
Brochure Printing (10,000 copies, .50 each)	\$5,000
Print Ad Purchases	\$5,000
Design & production of promotional exhibit	\$1,500
Trade show registrations	\$400
Postage for mailing brochure	\$1,175
TOTAL CASH NEEDS:	\$21,800

2. Calculate the available in-kind match:

Photographer donated time and travel	\$3,000
TOTAL IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION:	\$3,000

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

Total Project Cost: (\$21,800 + \$3,000)	\$24,800
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MHAA Grant Funds To be Requested	\$10,900
Required Match	\$10,900

Total Grant Funds & Require Match -	\$21,800
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Other Project Costs (Over Match)	\$3,000
Total Project Cost: (\$21,800 + \$3,000)	\$24,800

4. **Once a workable budget structure has been prepared, enter the line items on the budget page provided.** Items should be organized by cost category so that similar costs are grouped together, 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.

See next page for Sample Marketing Budget

SAMPLE MARKETING BUDGET

Line Item No.	Work Item (Description)	Grant Funds (rounded to nearest dollar)	Match (total should equal same amount as grant funds)	Other Project Costs (non-state funds)	Total Project Cost	Source of Match if Known (not required at time of application)
1	Project Manager – Heritage Area (\$20/hr x 125 hrs)		\$2,500		\$2,500	
2	Project Monitor – DMO (\$25/hr x 20 hrs)		\$500		\$500	
3	Design of print ads (Consultant Services-flat fee)		\$2,000		\$2,000	
4	Brochure design (Consultant Services-flat fee)		\$1,000		\$1,000	
5	Photography (5 days @ \$400/day for on-site photo shoots; \$725 for editing & printing photo lab services)		\$2,725		\$2,725	
6	Photographer donated time (72 hrs. x \$35/hr) and travel (\$480)			\$3,000	\$3,000	
7	Brochure Printing (10,0000 copies)	\$4,000	\$1,000		\$5,000	
8	Purchase of print ad space (Civil War History magazine @ \$2,000, the Washington Post @ \$500, the Baltimore Sun @ \$500, Motor Coach Traveler magazine @ \$750, and American Heritage magazine @ \$1,250)	\$5,000			\$5,000	
9	Design & production of heritage area promotional traveling exhibit	\$1,500				
10	Trade Show Registration Fee (Eastern Sport, Travel & Outdoor Show @ \$150; Motorcoach Assoc. @ \$250)	\$400			\$400	
11	Postage for Brochure Mailing		\$1,175		\$1,175	
	TOTALS	\$10,900.00	\$10,900.00	\$3,000.00	\$24,800.00	

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 local jurisdictions and State agencies.

APPENDIX E – HERITAGE AREA MARKETING PLAN OUTLINE

Heritage Area marketing activities may be funded by MHAA provided that the Heritage Area management entity has completed a Marketing Plan in coordination with its affiliated Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) within the last 24 months. Please submit a copy of the approved Heritage Area Marketing Plan. The Heritage Area Marketing Plan should reflect the goals and objectives of the Heritage Area Management Plan and/or Five-Year Action Plan and must:

- include a mission statement
- outline a marketing positioning summary that includes strengths, weaknesses, and market segmentation
- identify marketing programs with associated objectives and performance measurements
- list strategies for obtaining the plan's objectives associated with the marketing activities that are eligible for funding, which include advertising placement, consumer/travel trade shows, printed material/collateral and website development
- include a media plan/schedule for all ads paid for wholly or in part with grant funds.

Ideally, the heritage area Marketing Plan should include information about the following types of activities:

I. Administrative activities

- a) Budget and Clerical
- b) Office Management

II. Sales and Marketing activities

- a) Advertising
 - i. Audience segmentation by demographics, geography, types of travelers (consumer, trade, special interest or niche)
 - ii. Media outlet selection
 - iii. Integration of communications tools such as direct mail, cooperative promotions, or advertorials.
- b) Public Relations
- c) Specialized Group Markets
- d) Packaged Travel Market
- e) Consumer and Travel Agents
- f) International

III. Development activities

- a) Research
- b) Destination Resource Management
 - i. Product Development
 - ii. Grants and other alternative funding sources
- c) Special Events/Promotion
- d) Publications
- e) Welcome Centers
- f) Workforce Education and Training Program
- g) Information Technology
 - i. Database Management
 - ii. Telemarketing and Direct Response
 - iii. Website Development and Maintenance
- h) Professional Staff Development