

Museum Assistance Program

FY26 GRANT GUIDELINES

*completed grant applications must be submitted ONLINE by
December 31, 2025, at 11:59PM EST.*

Access the online grant application at: bit.ly/4qymW9V.

Maryland Historical Trust
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
www.mht.maryland.gov



Museum Assistance Program Grants

The Maryland Historical Trust's Museum Assistance Program (MAP) provides grants and technical support to Maryland's historical and cultural museums.

The program has \$285,000 in funding available for FY26, which will be awarded as operational grants. The FY26 deadline to apply is **December 31, 2025**.

Questions? For clarification about the following guidelines or requirements, or to discuss an application, please contact Nell Ziehl at nell.ziehl@maryland.gov or 410-697-9592. Email is preferable for a quick response.

For assistance with the grants software system, please contact Caitlin Swaim at caitlin.swaim@maryland.gov or (410) 697-9571.

Operational Grants

Operational grants help museums cover the essential, day-to-day costs of keeping their doors open and running smoothly. These operational grants are designed to strengthen the core functions that keep museums stable, sustainable, and ready to serve their communities.

Museums may request up to \$20,000 for operational needs, although awards will typically range from \$10,000 to \$15,000. There is no match requirement.

Eligible Applicants

Nonprofit organizations and local governments (jurisdictions or agencies) that administer museums may apply for this program. The museum that will benefit from the grant must have been operating for at least three years before the application date.

Nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply if they are:

- in good standing with Maryland's [State Department of Assessment and Taxation](#) and legally able to do business in the state, and
- recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt organization or have applied to the IRS for recognition as a tax-exempt organization.

Local governments operating multiple museums may apply on behalf of multiple museums, but each application must be submitted separately.

Ineligible Applicants

Museums that are run in whole or in part by the state or federal government are ineligible to receive MAP funds.

Eligible Activities

FY26 grants are for operational support, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Staff salaries
- Contractual services
- Professional development and training for staff and volunteers
- Administrative costs such as accounting, reporting, and insurance
- Environmental monitoring (e.g., humidity/temperature control, pest management)
- Facilities costs such as rent and utilities (e.g., electricity, telephone, water, internet, and heating)
- Routine building maintenance
- Security and safety systems
- Operational capacity plans and reports (e.g., emergency/disaster plans, governance basics)
- Activities required to achieve accreditation by the American Association of Museums or other pertinent entity that provides museum accreditation

Programmatic costs, including research, documentation, conservation, and interpretation, can be included as eligible activities for operating support, with certain limitations (see “Ineligible Activities”).

Ineligible Activities

FY26 grants cannot be used for:

- Development of plans and specifications and provision of architectural, engineering, or other special services directly related to the restoration, rehabilitation, renovation, and/or major repair/modification of museum facilities
- Activities related to the care or preservation of, or access to, archival material
- Installation of exhibits or trails
- Any major capital construction, including the restoration, rehabilitation, renovation, and/or major repair/modification of museum facilities
- Any expenses incurred before the date of award notification

Applicant Selection

Applications are reviewed by MHT staff and a Review Panel appointed by the Secretary of Planning, the Maryland Speaker of the House, and the Maryland Senate President, reflecting Maryland’s geographic and institutional diversity. Panelists who are affiliated with an applicant must recuse themselves from scoring that application. The Review Panel makes award recommendations to the MHT Board of Trustees, which reviews the Review Panel’s recommendations and forwards the Board's recommendations, along with those of the Review Panel, to the Secretary of Planning for final decision. The Secretary will approve, disapprove, defer, or modify the recommendations, and MHT staff will provide applicants written notice of the Secretary's decision (see “Notification and Grant Disbursement” below).

A successful application will demonstrate both the need for operational support and the capacity to use it effectively. The MAP grant application is designed to help reviewers evaluate the following criteria: **organizational capacity, financial need, impact of funding, mission & purpose, and equity & geographic distribution**. You can review the selection rubric [here](#).

Strong proposals show that the museum has stable leadership and systems in place to manage funds responsibly, while also making a clear case for financial need. Applicants should explain how grant funding will make a meaningful difference in their ability to meet their mission and serve their community, whether by supporting staff, sustaining essential services, or maintaining safe and functional facilities. Reviewers will also look for evidence of proactive stewardship of facilities and/or collections, a clear and relevant mission tied to community needs, and the extent to which the museum contributes to equitable access to cultural resources across Maryland. To help achieve equitable statewide distribution, reviewers may consider geographic location, areas of service, and institutional size and type when making final awards.

General Grant Requirements

Grants are awarded for up to 12 months, with the possibility of extension of up to six months. Grantees must comply with all federal, state, and local laws and policies, including those related to equal opportunity, nondiscrimination, accessibility, and maintaining a drug- and alcohol-free workplace.

Each successful applicant will sign a grant agreement with the Maryland Department of Planning, and MHT may include additional terms and conditions as needed to ensure compliance, including reporting and verification of expenditures.

Grantees are required to submit one brief progress report at the mid-point of the grant period and one final report, summarizing the use of funds and the outcomes achieved, to support timely disbursement and closeout.

A small percentage of grantees will be randomly selected for “spot check” and required to provide financial documentation of their expenses. If selected, the grantee will be notified prior to its final report, and the grantee will need to submit proof of expenses (for example, invoices, receipts, bank statements) as part of the final report.

Notification and Grant Disbursement

MHT intends to notify recipients by early April 2026. If awarded a grant, the grantee may start incurring project expenses on and after the date of award notification, prior to the execution of the official grant agreement.

If awarded, MAP funds are released based on two disbursement requests submitted by the grantee: one as part of their progress report and one with their final report. All grant funds must be spent within the grant period unless an extension is granted due to circumstances beyond the grantee’s control.