



**Mercer County Cultural & Heritage Commission  
Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26)**

**History Re-grant Program Grant Guidelines**

**Grant Period: January 1 – December 31, 2026**

**Grant Opens: June 16, 2025**

**Deadline for submission: August 29, 2025**

Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission • McDade Administration Building  
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**County of Mercer**

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## Overview:

This State/County History Regrant initiative is a partnership between the New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) and the County of Mercer. These funds – offered in support of historic sites, organizations, and history programs throughout Mercer County – are made available through a Community History Partnership (CHPP) grant from the NJHC.

The Mercer County Executive and Board of County Commissioners, through the Mercer County Cultural & Heritage Commission (MCC&HC), offers grants to Mercer County-based organizations that demonstrate professionalism, commitment, and excellence in supporting and producing history-related sites, events, and programs. These grants are administered by the County's Division of Culture and Heritage. Organizations may request either **General Operating Support (GOS)** or **Special Project (SP)** support.

Mercer County History Regrant funds are available to assist Mercer County-based non-profit organizations (particularly historic sites, historical organizations,) libraries, schools, and local government entities that operate historic sites and/or offer historical programming and events (especially those with a focus on Mercer County and its communities) to a broad public audience.

County-based non-profits with a primary mission of presenting New Jersey and/or Mercer County-related history are eligible to apply for **General Operating Support (GOS)** grants. Other non-profit groups presenting special New Jersey/Mercer County (including local) history programs or events may apply for **Special Project (SP)** grants. Only **one** History Regrant application a year may be submitted per organization. Grants are evaluated by an independent review panel and are awarded competitively by the County to organizations and projects that demonstrate clear public benefit, responsible management, proven quality of work, and historical merit.

*[Mercer County organizations with an annual operating budget of at least \$100,000, who can document that 25% or more of their virtual and/or actual audience comes from beyond a 20-mile radius from their headquarters, may apply directly to the NJ Historical Commission (NJHC) for grant support. Organizations may NOT receive funding from the NJHC and Mercer County in the same fiscal year, nor may they receive a History regrant from more than one County in the same fiscal year.]*

## Eligibility:

### Eligible applicants must be:

- Mercer County-based, non-for-profit history organizations, societies, and sites (eligible to apply for **GOS** or **SP** grants); OR
- Other Mercer County non-profit organizations offering special programs, services, activities, or materials that relate to the history of the State, County or any of the County's 12 municipalities (eligible to apply for **SP** grants ONLY); OR
- Mercer County-based community and educational entities, including libraries, universities, colleges, and schools (eligible to apply for **SP** grants ONLY).

Grant recipients must demonstrate compliance with all applicable state and federal laws, including all fair labor and ADA regulations, and maintain good standing with all governmental filing requirements.

### Non-profit applicants must:

- be based in Mercer County
- be incorporated in the State of New Jersey
- have been in existence for at least two (2) years prior to submitting a grant application; and must demonstrate an ability to provide history or related services/programs to the general public
- be approved as a non-profit organization under the Internal Revenue Service's Section 501(c)(3) or Section 501(c)(4) – or have approval pending at the time of application \*\*

First time applicants are required to include a copy of the organization's IRS letter of determination with their grant application.

*\*\* Non-profits who have applied for, but have not yet received IRS designation, may apply through a fiscal agent (host organization that has received exempt designation). Please call our offices if you are interested in this option, but uncertain how to proceed.*

### Units of local government/educational groups:

- may apply for **Special Project (SP)** support grants only
- must demonstrate an ability to provide Mercer County/local history-related programs, services, or activities to the general public
- must describe, in detail, how the proposed Special Project relates to the overall mandate of their program

## Funding Request Caps:

**\*\*\*For FY2026 grant applications, requests for both General Operating Support and Special Projects may not exceed \$7,000. Use the guidelines below to determine your request with this parameter:**

For **General Operating Support (GOS)** the maximum amount of grant funds an organization may request is 30% of the average of last year and the current year total operating income, not to exceed \$7,000.

For **Special Project (SP)** support, the maximum allowable request would be 50% or less of the total estimated expense budget for that specific project. Project costs would be separate from the estimated expense budget for the applicant organization. The total amount requested may not exceed \$7,000

Applicants are encouraged to request the maximum amount of grant funds for which they can demonstrate the required cash match. Grant awards are based on the number of applications received by MCC&HC and funds available for the History Regrant program.

## Funding Categories:

Applicants may apply for either a **General Operating Support (GOS)** or **Special Project Support (SP)** grant each grant cycle. See both grant category specifications to determine eligibility:

### General Operating Support (GOS)

**GOS grants are available to non-profit history organizations only.**

Requests may not exceed 30% of the average of last year and the current year total operating income, not to exceed \$7,000, and require a \*1:1 cash match. GOS grants provide funding for the basic operating costs of a historical society, historical museum, historic site, or other not-for-profit history organization based in Mercer County. Applicants should describe the full range of their organization's operations, and their grant must demonstrate high standards of history programming and management. Annual budget expenditures may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Staff salaries
- Consultant fees
- Professional development
- Staff, volunteer, and board training

- Fees (for certified signer, e.g.) or materials to enable compliance with the ADA of 1990
- Printing, postage, telephone, utilities costs
- Marketing, publicity
- Fundraising and development
- Historic maintenance: collections, interiors, etc.
- HVAC expenses directly related to preservation of historic collections
- Lease and mortgage expenses
- Related equipment purchase, installation or lease
- Insurance and/or audit expenses

### **Special Project Support (SP)**

Special Project (SP) grants are available to Mercer County-based non-profits and government units. \*A 1:1 match is required; however 50% of the match for SP grants may be in the form of in-kind donations. These grants support history events, programs, or projects related to the history of NJ, Mercer County, or its municipalities. These grants may not be used for general administrative salaries. Examples of eligible activities are listed below. If you do not see an example (below) related to your proposal, contact the Mercer County Division of Culture & Heritage to discuss your project before completing an application to determine if your project is eligible for these funds.

#### **Eligible SP projects include:**

- Public historic/heritage programs including: lectures, performances, demonstrations, workshops, exhibitions, conferences, tours
- Educational projects that focus on New Jersey, Mercer County or local history Research, writing, and/or producing of publication projects with public benefit, including historic brochures and signage
- Technical assistance projects addressing a specific organizational need (e.g., fundraising, long-range planning, developing capacity to offer programming on-line, etc.)
- Conservation and preservation of historic materials
- Oral history projects (must include transcriptions and public access provision)
- Media and digital historic projects, and microfilming
- Research related to historic preservation projects
- Work necessary to nominate a site for State or National Registers of Historic Places

- Genealogical projects resulting in research tools that have use to the wider historical community
- ADA assistive services for historical programming, including sign or audio interpretation, rental of listening devices, publication of large print programs, etc.

### **Additional eligible Special Project expenses may include:**

- Stipends for Special Project personnel
- Honoraria/expense for lecturers
- Oral history tape transcription fees
- Archival or research library user fees
- Archival products including folder, boxes, etc., for the storage of historical materials
- Exhibition loan fees or shipping costs
- Costs for fabricating and installing exhibitions
- Project supply costs
- Printing, photocopying, postage, etc. related to special project
- Photography specific to the project
- Production of promotional materials
- Equipment rental (under \$750; rental costs in excess of this amount require special approval).

### **Ineligible Use of History Grant Funds:**

- Acquisitions of any sort, including artifacts and collections
- Capital improvements to grounds and building exteriors or removal/addition of interior walls
- Deficits; Endowments; Scholarships/prizes
- Restoration or preservation of structures
- Projects in religious or ethnic institutions that do not actively seek a wide public and general audience
- Staff salaries for regular organizational staff
- Refreshments/hospitality at meetings, lectures, seminars, etc.

### **Priorities for Funding:**

The NJ Historical Commission's established **priorities** are fully supported by the Mercer County Cultural & Heritage Commission. Grants addressing these priorities are given particular consideration:

- broadening, deepening and diversifying the audience for New Jersey history
- strengthening existing history organizations and programs
- initiating new programming on NJ history
- increasing accessibility to and awareness of historical resources to diverse communities
- increasing the body and quality of information on state history available to the public; and
- preserving materials, ephemera, artifacts, sites, etc., for the ongoing study of NJ history

### **Budget Documentation:**

Organizations applying for the **first time** for History regrant funds must provide:

- copy of previous year's tax return to the IRS
- a letter from an accountant certifying the expenses for the previous year.

Organizations that received a grant in the previous year only need to supply the accountant's letter. You do not need to resubmit an IRS document unless there have been major changes during the past year in the organization's structure and/or financials.

### **Match Requirements:**

**General Operating Support (GOS)** grants require a 1:1 cash match. (For example, an organization requesting \$1,000 must show at least a \$1,000 cash match in their budget).

**Special Projects (SP)** grants require a 1:1 match. However, up to 50% of an SP grant match may be from in-kind goods and services (goods or services that would have otherwise been purchased by the organization). New Jersey Cultural Trust and other MCC&HC grant funds **may not** be used to meet the match requirements.

### **Additional Requirements:**

On-site evaluation: Grantees must furnish a ticket to the Division for all grant-supported activities requiring tickets (this includes all events offered by groups receiving GOS support. For those receiving SP grants, this applies only to any events related to the Special Project.) If the project is a series, only a single ticket needs to be provided. Publicity announcements for all

grant funded programs must be included in your Final Report packet and must include acknowledgement of the County's support as laid out in grant contracts.

Technical Assistance Workshops: Grantees are asked to attend at least one technical assistance workshop offered by the Division of Cultural & Heritage or the NJ Historical Commission, annually.

Credit Line: All organization and projects receiving funding must include the following credit line in all print and publicity materials: **"Made possible by Mercer County Executive Dan Benson, the Board of County Commissioners, and the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission, a partner of the New Jersey Historical Commission."**

The County logo and the NJSCA logo should always be included to the left of this credit line.

Cooperative Marketing: Information on all funded activities must be sent to the Division (for inclusion in its calendar of events and website) as soon as program dates are firm. Ideally, publicity information will be sent to the Division at least two (2) months in advance of the event's date.

### **Accessibility and ADA Compliance:**

The Division of Culture and Heritage and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA) are committed to the compliance of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and require ALL APPLICATIONS for GOS and SP LAP funds complete the ADA Project Checklist for Accessibility.

Newly applying organizations will be required to submit an updated board-approved ADA plan, as well as attend an ADA Technical Workshop (offered by The Mercer County Division of Culture & Heritage). We ask that re-applying applicants upload their most up-to-date plan to their application. The ADA plan should be based on the comprehensive self-assessment survey tool developed by the New Jersey Arts Access Task Force.

### **Evaluation Process:**

Grants will be reviewed by an independent Grant Review Panel composed of professionals in relevant fields of history, academics, and non-profit or sites management. Proposals will be ranked by each reviewer against the grant criteria. The Panel will then meet to discuss each application and assign final rankings and recommendations.

As a courtesy to applicants, organizations whose applications are received two weeks before the deadline will be reviewed by the Division office for

completeness, and groups will be notified if any issues present themselves. Grants received after this date will not be pre-reviewed. **[Please note: Incomplete applications cannot be forwarded to the Review Panel.]**

The Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commissioners review applications, along with comments from the Grant Panel, and recommend award amounts, based on the Division's award from the NJ Historical Commission. Final grant recommendations are approved after a managerial review by the County administration. Applicants will be notified of their application's standing in December. Any budget or programming adjustments required (based on final grant amounts) must be submitted along with signed contracts. **The FY26 History Re-grants covers program activities that take place between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2026.**

### **Grant Payments & Reporting:**

Grant funds will be distributed in two payments. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the grant will be paid once a signed/completed contract is received. A brief update on activities will be due by July (the interim report).

A completed Final Report, including the Final Report form must be submitted to the Division by the January following the grant cycle year (January 2027, for the FY26 grant cycle year). (Note: Final Reports for SP grants may be submitted as soon as the updated Final Report forms are available. GOS should wait until end-of-year). Final Reports must illustrate the successful completion of the funded project and/or organizational year, and include complete documentation for all expenses (receipts, cancelled checks). The final payment of twenty-five percent (25%) will be made upon receipt and review of a satisfactory final report.

Maintain documentation of all expenditures and all in-kind contributions. Keep all receipts and cancelled checks for expenditures. Volunteer hours should be logged in, an approximate value for any donated goods and services should be included. Even if the combined total from an organization's matching funds and its in-kind donations is more than that required by the grant, it is important to note all these resources in the final report.

### **The Narrative:**

In FY2025, the Mercer County Division of Culture & Heritage digitalized its grant applications. During this process, the Division decided to do away with an "essay-like" narrative portion of the application. In its place, grantees are now required to answer a series of detailed questions:

- 1.) **Mission Statement and Brief History of the Organization**
- 2.) **Staffing and Board Structure** (Highlight qualifications and roles of key leadership of the organization).
- 3.) **Use of History Grant funds** (Provide a clear, detailed explanation of how History grant funds will be used).
  - i. **GOS:** Describe how grant funds will be used for the next year and how this will help improve the organization's services, programs, outreach and/or management.
  - ii. **SP:**
    1. Describe your project, its purpose; what will it produce? How does it fit the basic eligibility criteria for Mercer County History regrantants?
    2. Describe how it relates to the mission of your organization and how it will complement other historical activities of the organization.
    3. Provide information to necessary to demonstrate your clear understanding of the history of the chosen topic, and make the case for its relationship to local, Mercer County, or New Jersey history.
    4. Detail how the project will be carried out. Include a schedule or projected timeline for the project's activities
- 4.) **Additional Narrative Information** (Use this section for additional information you wish to share in your narrative. This may include topics such as:
  - i. **Problems and Opportunities.** Briefly describe recent or anticipated changes in staff, finances, facilities, management, or governance. How will the organization deal with them.
  - ii. **Fundraising.** How do you raise the money to support your current operations?
  - iii. **Finances.** What is the current financial condition of your organization?
  - iv. **Audience.** Describe the size and composition of your audience for your programs

**While the narrative is no longer "essay-like", it is still vitally important that this section of the application paints a full picture of your organization and grant request.** Use the narrative to introduce reviewers to your organization and special project (if applicable). Along with

support materials, the narrative should provide all the information necessary to allow a person unfamiliar with your group to fully understand:

- who you serve
- your artistic vision
- the organizational structure (how is it managed?)
- how decisions are made
- qualifications of persons in leadership roles
- examples of recent work
- current accomplishments or challenges
- long-range or strategic plans

**A STRONG narrative section should:**

- Have a mission statement and a brief history of the organization; the history component of non-history-based organization; or the activities and goals relevant to the special project.
- Provide a clear, detailed explanation of how the grant funds would be used.
- Describe in detail the Project or Programs to be funded. How will they be carried out? Specify history-related elements involved, and include a schedule or calendar of activities. Include a brief explanation of how the project will improve the organization's outreach efforts. Explain how the project will be evaluated.
- Explain the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy of the applicant organization. Describe progress the organization has made in making programming more accessible and inclusive. Discuss any barriers that still exist and outline goals and specific steps to address and remove barriers in a detailed timeline, with assignment of responsibility and consideration of costs necessary to implement each goal. Include attention to facilities, marketing, programmatic access, employment, and sensitivity awareness, and identification of the access committee, ADA coordinator, and a grievance procedure.
- List and explain partnerships or collaborations with other cultural, ethnic or historical groups.
- Discuss your publicity plan for grant-funded activity or project and your efforts to target audiences. Identify your audience and its potential size. Be as concise as possible and include methods employed such as cable or network community shows, newspapers, mailings etc.

## Support Materials:

Support materials for both **GOS** and **SP** grant requests should demonstrate the quality and illustrate the kinds of arts programming of the applicant organization and the project to be funded. Support materials should be **no more than two years old**. If you are attaching older materials, you must add an addendum to explain why you consider these materials especially representative of your organization and important to this application.

It is only necessary to send one set of support materials, which will be made available to the review panel members at their request. Types of support materials might include links to digital content (websites, videos, etc.), a resume of artist, brochures, flyers, posters, program booklets, CDs, or DVDs, photographs, published books, catalogs or articles.

## Long Range Planning:

Long range organizational or program planning is essential to the continued success of any organization. **All GOS and SP applicants must submit a long-range plan for the operation or the program.** The plan should include statement of goals and strategic steps to realize those goals, assign responsibility for implementation of tasks, consider the resources needed to realize goals, and be placed on a realistic implementation timeline.

The plan should cover all essential areas of the organization such as artistic vision, governance, human resources, audiences and all forms of public participation including artists and volunteers, fundraising, marketing and outreach, advocacy, educational activities, etc.

If a formal long-range plan is not currently in place, or if the organization is between planning cycles, the narrative portion of the application should outline the process for developing the new long-range plan. This should include a timeline and the current status of that process. The strength of an applicant's long-range planning is an important factor in the evaluation process.

## County and State Funding:

Organizations may not apply to or receive grants from both the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission and the New Jersey Historical Commission within the same funding cycle. In advance of submitting a Notice of Intent to Apply with the NJHC, applicants should discuss their situation with NJHC staff to determine eligibility.

MCC&HC will not accept applications or award grant funds to organizations applying to or receiving grants from other county history commissions or county cultural and heritage commissions.

### **MCC&H E-blasts and Online Promotional Opportunities:**

The Mercer County Division of Culture & Heritage published both a quarterly and monthly newsletter – *Going Places*. This newsletter promotes regional art, history, and cultural events, with a strong emphasis on the events/activities hosted and produced by Culture & Heritage grantees. The Division also maintains an active Facebook and

Instagram page. These outreach tools are used by the Division to help publicize events and activities with no cost to our grantee organizations.

Any organization producing a cultural, historical, arts, ethnic or heritage-based event or activity or providing a service for the Mercer County arts and culture community may submit information to the office of Culture & Heritage at [c&hnewsletter@mercercounty.org](mailto:c&hnewsletter@mercercounty.org). Be sure to include a relevant image and any necessary links when sending information about an event.

### **Grant Application Assistance:**

The following assistance is available to applicants:

- Grant Writing workshops
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Workshops
- Individual appointments with staff (following workshops or schedule an appointment)
- Applicants may make an appointment to discuss any questions or concerns that might arise during the course of completing the application, as well as at any other time during the grant cycle.
- Staff members are available by email to answer questions. (see Division staff contact information, page 1 of these Guidelines.) When emailing, include your question(s), a preferred phone number, and good times to reach you.

### **Appeal Process:**

Organizations may appeal adverse grant decisions if they can demonstrate that their application was substantively misunderstood or misinterpreted, based on summary Review Panel comments (available upon request). Appeals must be in writing and addressed to the Division Chief. Appeals will be reviewed by a three-member panel of the Cultural & Heritage

Commission. Their ruling will be forwarded to the County administrative staff and a written report on that ruling will be sent to the applicant.

***NOTE: If your organization experiences any significant changes in staffing, programming or finances after submitting your grant application but before grants are announced, you must immediately notify MCC&HC in writing of those changes. Failure to do so could result in disqualification of the grant application.***

## **Mercer County Legislative & Congressional Districts:**

### **Town - NJ Legislative District**

- East Windsor Township – 14
- Ewing Township – 15
- Hamilton Township – 14
- Hightstown Borough – 14
- Hopewell Borough – 15
- Hopewell Township – 15
- Lawrence Township – 15
- Pennington Borough -15
- Princeton – 16
- Robbinsville Township – 14
- Trenton City – 15
- West Windsor Township - 15

### **Town - U.S. Congressional District**

- East Windsor Township – 12
- Ewing Township – 12
- Hamilton Township – 4
- Hightstown Borough – 12
- Hopewell Borough – 12
- Hopewell Township – 12
- Lawrence Township – 12
- Pennington Borough – 12
- Princeton – 12
- Robbinsville Township – 4
- Trenton City – 12
- West Windsor Township - 1