



# MERCER COUNTY FY25 HISTORY REGRANT PROGRAM

## GRANT Guidelines

**Mercer County Cultural & Heritage Commission**  
**Invites General Operating Support and Special Projects History Regrant Proposals for**  
**Fiscal Year 2025:**  
**January 1 – December 31, 2025**

**County of Mercer**  
The Honorable Dan Benson, *County Executive*

**Board of County Commissioners**

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Cathleen M. Lewis  
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**Office of the County Administrator**  
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Applications must be **completed digitally** **by Monday, July 1, 2024**

*Mercer County Cultural & Heritage Commission receives an operating support grant in support of the Mercer County History Regrant Program from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the NJ Department of State.*

NEW JERSEY  
*Historical*  
COMMISSION

# MERCER COUNTY HISTORY REGRANT PROGRAM FY25 GUIDELINES

We are pleased to offer this State/County History Regrant initiative, a partnership between the New Jersey Historical Commission, 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 New Jersey Historical Commission.

The following pages explain the goals and application process involved in applying for a Mercer County History Regrant. The application is now available ONLY online. Applications must be submitted by creating an account with Foundant and applying through the website.

**LINK TO FOUNDANT (log in or create a new account):**

<https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=mcdch>

## APPROX. APPLICATION CALENDAR

April 1, 2024	Application Open
July 1, 2024	<b>Application Deadline</b>
August, 2024	Peer Panel Review
September, 2024	Commission Review, Administrative Review & Approval
December, 2024	Notification of Awards/ Contracts Issued
June, 2025	Interim report update
January, 2026	Final report due

**The Program Year for this grant cycle is  
January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025.**

## INTRODUCTION

The Mercer County Executive and Board of County Commissioners, through the Mercer County Division of Cultural and Heritage, offers General Operating Support (GOS) and Special Projects (SP) 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* GOS or 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** grants. Other non-profit groups presenting special New Jersey/Mercer County (including local) history programs or events may apply for **Special Project** 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 grant from more than one County in the same fiscal year.]

The NJ Historical Commission's established priorities are fully supported by the Mercer County Cultural and 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

## 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; OR
- ❖ Mercer County- based community and educational entities, including libraries universities, colleges, and schools.

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 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

## TYPES OF GRANTS

### GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT (GOS)

GOS grants are available to **non-profit history organizations** only. Requests may not exceed 45% of the organization's annual operating budget and require a **\*1:1 cash match**. GOS grants provide funding for the basic operating costs of an 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, eg.) 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 PROJECTS GRANTS (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 History Program Coordinator to discuss your project **before** completing this application packet 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., fund-raising, 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.

- 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.

## **MATCH REQUIREMENTS**

All Mercer County History Grants require a **cash** match from the applying organization. **GOS (General Operating Support)** grants require a **full cash match (1:1)** from the applicant. No in-kind match is applicable for this award. GOS grants may be awarded for up to 1/3 of an organization's annual budget. None of the monies used for matching this grant may come from funds from any division, department or any other part of the State of New Jersey.

The full amount of **SP (Special Project)** grants must be matched by the organization, but the required cash match only needs to be *50% of the amount of the total grant requested*. The other 50% of the grant can be matched by *either cash or documented in-kind donations* (goods or services that would have otherwise been purchased by the organization.)

## **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 funds from the Mercer County Division of Culture & Heritage, a partner of the New Jersey State Historical Commission.**

Whenever possible, the County logo should be included with this credit line.

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 EXPENSES**

Funding from this program **may not** be used for:

- 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



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.

## **SUPPORT MATERIAL**

Applicants are encouraged to include materials that demonstrate the organization's success in presenting programs similar to the project described in their grant proposal. In addition, consider including support materials that display programming and administrative capability (including resumes, program brochures, press clippings, etc.). Support materials should be no more than two years old. If older materials are being attached, a brief explanation discussing what has happened in the interim should be included.

## **REVIEW 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 before July 1, 2024, 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, 2024. Any budget or programming adjustments required (based on final grant amounts) must be submitted along with signed contracts. The FY25 History Re-grants covers program activities that take place between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025.

## **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 in this office.

A brief update on activities will be due by **June, 2025**. (NOTE: This is interim update on the project funded and use of grant funds up to that time may be emailed.)

A completed Final Report, including the Final Report form must be submitted to the Division by **January 2026**. (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.

## **APPEALS PROCESS**

Organizations that can demonstrate that their application was misinterpreted or misunderstood by the Review Panel may register an appeal to the History Re-grant Program. Appeals may only be made on the basis of the information and materials included in the grant application. No additional information or support materials can be considered. Award amounts are not grounds for an appeal. All appeals will be reviewed by a 3-person panel of C&H Commissioners. Applicants requiring further clarification of this process should contact [CJohnstone@mercercounty.org](mailto:CJohnstone@mercercounty.org)

## **NOTICE**

Grant awards made through the Mercer County History Re-grant Program are dependent on funding levels approved by the State for the New Jersey Historical Commission – and County History Partnership Program grant awards approved by the NJ Historical Commission for Mercer County Division of Culture & Heritage. Organizations should plan their programming and expenditures as carefully as possible, and avoid committing to grant-reliant projects until official awards notification and contract from the County have been received

# GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR NARRATIVE

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Starting with the FY25 application, the MCDC&H has digitalized the grant application. You will **NO LONGER** be asked to write an essay-style narrative. Instead, grantees are asked to answer prompting narrative questions. Be sure to answer each application question with as much detail as possible, to give the review panel a full picture of your grant request. The following prompts provide suggested topics to consider when answering.

The *narrative section* is the heart of your application. It tells the *story* of your organization and the project you are proposing. Answer the prompted questions as if the reader knew nothing about your group or the topic you'll be addressing – but also, be succinct.

1. Follow directions. Read through the entire Guidelines and Application packet before beginning your grant. As you answer your narrative questions, continue to refer back to the eligibility criteria to make certain that the grant falls within guidelines.
2. Identify specific planning goals. Discuss, in clearly written sentences, the goals and priorities of your project. Be sure to describe the evaluation criteria that will be used to measure the success of the project.
3. Be specific and include details. Do not assume that the reader knows anything about your organization. Describe your proposed project, any topic that you hope to address, any partner organization and own group's history fully.
4. Describe outreach and marketing efforts thoroughly. Discuss your marketing plans, and be sure to demonstrate how these efforts will increase accessibility of historical resources and programming to your community. Be sure to talk about any special efforts you plan to use for reaching out to diverse communities of any sort.
5. Be thoughtful and responsive to ADA issues. The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal law that applies to all providers of public programs, regardless of whether you own the site or not. Grant reviewers are aware of special circumstances faced by programmers at historic sites, however applicants are still responsible for working to increase program accessibility in whatever way possible (publications in large type format, assistive hearing devices, videotaping or simulcast of inaccessible portions of sites, etc.). Programming of this sort may be funded through this grant.
6. Label and refer to your support material. If your support materials are well organized, you can easily reference them in the narrative section. This helps you further describe important details about your program or organization while staying within the page limits for the grant application.
7. Submit a well-constructed budget. Be certain that all your projected expenses are based on research, not 'guesstimates'. Your budget must accurately reflect the project and numbers that are described in your grant narrative; be sure that the numbers match up. Ideally, income and expenses should match up in a balanced budget. **Have someone check your math to make certain the numbers add up correctly.** [NOTE: you do *not* have to have a figure on each line of your budget.]
8. Give clear details in your financial narrative. Explain specifically how you arrived at each cost shown on the line items of your budget. If you hope to hire a speaker or a consultant, for example, explain how you arrived at your estimated cost. Briefly describe how you determined costs of printing, postage, supplies, advertising, etc. Be sure to explain your major projected income sources.

## Helpful Suggestions for Answering the Narrative Questions:

### General Operating Support

- 1. Mission, Goals, Vision.** Describe your organization's stated mission, its goals and objectives. When were they adopted? How are they related to Mercer County history? How do they relate to the priorities identified by the Commission? What is your organization's vision for the next 3-5 years? How does that fit with your mission and goals? [Organizations not wholly related to regional history must identify what portion of your program is dedicated to local/Mercer County history. Describe all points below for that part of your organization's mission.]
- 2. Management/Governance.** How is your organization managed and governed? Is there a staff? What is the role of the board and staff, and what is their relationship with each other? What is your committee structure? Describe board process: how often they meet, how they are nominated, length of terms, expectations of board members. If there is no board, how are you governed? [Be sure to include a list of board members and resumes for staff and/or primary volunteers with your supplemental materials.]
- 3. Programs and Services.** Describe the **key programs** and services of your organization. Include collections, public programming, exhibitions, publications, and educational outreach. Describe how your programs serve the interpretation of local history or how they help audiences to experience that history in a new way. Reviewers will be looking for programs with solid historical content. Describe any innovative programming directions; include any efforts at cultural diversity, collaborations with other organizations, creative partnering of historical content with other disciplines. If you have collections, describe their management and care. Describe how your program is evaluated.
- 4. Audience.** Describe the size and composition of your audience for your programs, including as many defining characteristics as possible. Is your audience mostly local or do you attract a regional or statewide attendance? Does your audience match the demographics of the region? What is your current marketing strategy? What efforts are you making to attract new and diverse audiences? Is part of your audience 'virtual' (served via email, website, distance learning, mailed materials, etc.? If yes, please describe. How does your audience (live or virtual) benefit from your programs?
- 5. Fundraising.** How do you raise the money to support your current operations? Briefly discuss all fundraising activities. Reviewers will look for evidence of active, diverse fundraising efforts. If there are none, please explain why.
- 6. Finances.** What is the current financial condition of your organization? Please explain any deficits or surpluses represented on your budget forms, and how they are being handled. Is the organization currently building an endowment or working on any capital plans? Does the organization have loans or lines of credit? If yes, for what purpose?
- 7. Problems and Opportunities.** Briefly describe recent or anticipated changes in staff, finances, facilities, management, or governance. How will the organization deal with them? If none are expected, say so.
- 8. Use of Support Funds.** 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.

**Important Note:** Both the NJ Historical Commission and the Division are particularly interested in projects and programming that place a significant emphasis on helping to broaden, deepen, and diversify the audience for New Jersey history. On-line and interactive programming may offer unique opportunities to make history programming available to a much larger audience. Be sure to share any ways your organization is considering this challenge.

## Helpful Suggestions for Answering the Narrative Questions:

### Special Projects

Although organizations applying for a Special Projects grant do not need to go into as much detail about the organization as those applying for a GOS grant, they should provide a good, general description of the history, mission and programs of your organization, its governance and organizational structure, backgrounds for its staff and board leadership, and its fiscal and administrative health.

In addition, be sure to include specifics on the proposed project:

- 1) **Describe your project, its purpose; what will it produce?** how does it fit the basic **eligibility** criteria for Mercer County History regrants?
- 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.
- 5) Give the **qualifications** of the individuals who will be responsible for the project. Identify skills, experience, or educational background related to the proposed project. *We strongly suggest that you attach resumes* (no more than three pages per person) of any key (to the project) personnel in your support materials.
- 6) Explain how the Mercer County and larger New Jersey **public benefits** from this project. Describe the anticipated audience and your outreach strategies. Summarize the promotion/marketing plan for the project.
- 7) Explain how the project will be evaluated. How will you determine its success?
- 8) Finance: Explain exactly how the grant funds will be used. Describe the cost of the project and describe the revenue source(s) that you have itemized on the budget form. *Be certain that your description demonstrates that the funds are being used for ELIGIBLE activities.*

EXAMPLE: If you are holding a symposium on a local historical figure, and are ending the event with a reception and announcement of scholarship awards, DO show the funds being used to pay honorarium to key speakers or to develop literature for the event. DO NOT show the funds being used for reception costs or scholarship funds – neither are eligible expenses for the grant (see eligibility guidelines.)

**Important Note:** Both the NJ Historical Commission and the Division are particularly interested in projects and programming that place a significant emphasis on helping to broaden, deepen, and diversify the audience for New Jersey history. On-line and interactive programming may offer unique opportunities to make history programming available to a much larger audience. Be sure to share any ways your organization is considering this challenge



