

Frequently Asked Questions about Historic Preservation Grants from the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC)/National Park Service

1. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THESE GRANT FUNDS?

Federal grant funds are made available to the states under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This legislation gives authority to the Secretary of the Interior "to expand and maintain a national register of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture" and to grant funds to assist the states in conducting historic preservation matters. The Tennessee Historical Commission is responsible for administering these programs in Tennessee. At the federal level the program is administered by the National Park Service.

2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE THESE FUNDS?

Any individual, government, private organization, or educational institution that is interested in the benefits of historic preservation may apply for funds. Owners or administrators of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) may apply for funds to restore or to plan for the restoration of those properties. If an applicant for a restoration grant is not the owner of the property, the owner must provide written consent to the applicant and must agree to execute the required preservation covenants on the property. Priority is given to properties that have a public use and public support.

3. HOW DO I APPLY FOR THESE FUNDS?

Applications may be downloaded from the THC Website <http://www.tn.gov/environment/article/thc-federal-preservation-grants> or you can call or write the office to obtain a grant application.

Tennessee Historical
Commission 2941 Lebanon Pike
Nashville, Tennessee 37214
(615) 532-1550

4. WHEN IS THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS?

The deadline for applications is January 31, 2017. Applications must be in the office that day.

5. HOW CAN THESE GRANT FUNDS BE USED?

The available funds are in two categories: 1) Survey and Planning (S&P) and 2) Acquisition and Development /Restoration (A&D).

Survey and Planning (S&P). These funds may generally be used for the following kinds of activities:

a. Survey projects are designed to identify and record archaeological sites and/or buildings and structures, usually over 50 years old, within defined geographical units such as counties, cities, neighborhoods, or central business districts; or which are related to a common theme, such as railroading, iron manufacturing.

Survey is one of the most important activities mandated by the NHPA. The survey is fundamental to most other preservation efforts and because completing and maintaining a data base of the state is such a large and never-ending task, survey projects are often considered a priority.

b. Planning projects encompass a variety of goals and objectives. Examples include projects to nominate properties to the NRHP, local preservation planning studies, or design review guidelines for historic districts. Projects to educate or inform the public regarding historic resources and preservation are also classified as planning projects. Pre-development planning, for example, architectural planning for the restoration of a National Register property, is considered an A&D project. (See below, Acquisition and Development/Restoration.)

The NRHP is the official list of the nation's cultural resources that are worthy of preservation. Nominations can be for significant individual properties, historic districts, or multiple property submissions. The multiple property nominations are usually related to a common theme or are for eligible properties in a specific geographic area such as a town or county. These types of nominations are often preceded by a survey project. Listing a property in the National Register helps in preserving the property by giving official recognition from the federal government that a property is considered significant, insuring consideration in planning for federal projects, making the property eligible for federal tax benefits, and qualifying the property for restoration grants.

Acquisition and Development/Restoration (A&D). A&D projects focus on the restoration of historic properties. Properties eligible for this type of grant must be listed in the NRHP. The work done must be reviewed and approved by staff of the Tennessee Historical Commission and must conform to *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. Owners of properties that receive A&D grants are required to execute a preservation agreement or covenant to maintain and preserve the property and to allow a measure of public access for a specified period of years. The term of this agreement is proportional to the amount of the grant. Though all properties listed in the National Register are eligible to apply for grants, privately owned residences or commercial buildings will usually not be competitive with projects sponsored by public interest groups, non-profits, or local governments.

6. HOW MUCH OF THE TOTAL PROJECT COST WILL BE PAID FOR BY THE FEDERAL FUNDS?

The federal grant will pay up to 60% of the total project cost **after** the proposed project has been properly reviewed and approved by the THC. These are maximum figures and the actual grant may be for less than this amount or may be for only a portion of the work included in the application. Work that has already been completed or is underway is not eligible for grant assistance nor may the cost associated with it be used as match.

7. HOW ARE THESE FUNDS ADMINISTERED?

Grant recipients will enter into a contract between themselves and the State of Tennessee which will spell out the terms and conditions of the grant. No work can be done prior to the effective start date of this contract. All state and federal regulations must be followed. **Grants are administered on a reimbursement basis.** In other words, the recipient must document an

approved expenditure of \$100 in order to receive a reimbursement of \$60. There are stringent requirements for documentation of expenditures and other reporting requirements. Projects may be audited by federal or state auditors.

8. CAN THESE GRANTS BE MATCHED BY OTHER FEDERAL MONEY?

Federal funds available under the Community Development Act of 1974 constitute an allowable source of matching funds. No other federal funds or donated services from any federal source may be used as match.

9. AM I ASSURED THE AMOUNT OF MONEY I REQUESTED?

No. Tennessee can provide funds for only some of the projects requesting them. Some projects are fully funded, some partially, some not at all. Funding depends upon the amount of money made available to the state, the number and quality of requests, and how well the project ranks when judged on the criteria discussed in No. 10 below.

10. WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES AND CRITERIA FOR AWARDING GRANTS?

The priorities and criteria for funding have been established by the THC to reflect goals and objectives for historic preservation in the state. These goals and objectives are developed each year with advice solicited from the public prior to the beginning of the grant cycle. They are also based on a comprehensive plan for historic preservation which has been developed by the THC to guide its efforts and programs. This plan, *A Future for the Past*, can be viewed on the THC website http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/environment/attachments/thc_historic-preservation-plan.pdf. Specific rating criteria designed to measure how well a project meets these factors have been developed. Projects are rated generally on the following factors:

Survey projects:

- a. How important is the project for completing or updating the statewide survey?
- b. Will the project fill a critical gap in information about historic properties either geographically or thematically?
- c. Is the project well-planned and realistic, and can the sponsor be depended on to complete the project in a timely and efficient manner and maintain quality standards?
- d. Will the project digitize files that can be added to the THC web?

Planning Projects:

- a. Is the project for the preparation of multiple National Register nominations, especially if done as a result of a survey?
- b. Is the project for a local preservation plan or design guidelines for historic districts?
- c. Does the project educate the public about historic preservation?

Acquisition and Development/Restoration:

- a. What is the level of significance of the National Register-listed property?
- b. The level of need for grant funding, for example, is the property endangered and is the grant critical for addressing and alleviating the danger?
- c. Will the project be used to restore an important (character defining) feature of the property?

- d. Can the project be expected to have a positive impact on public perceptions and opinions regarding the value and importance of historic preservation?
- e. How much planning has been done for the project? Have plans and specifications been prepared? If so, do they meet the *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*?
- f. Is this a second or later phase of a restoration grant awarded by the THC?

All Projects:

- a. Does the applicant appear able to meet all administrative and technical requirements and carry the project to successful completion?
- b. What is the degree of public interest, support and benefit of the project? Letters of support and endorsement from community leaders and the public may be included *in addition* to evidence of media interest.
- c. Is the project submitted by a Certified Local Government (CLG)? At least 10% of our federal funds must go to CLGs. See <http://www.tn.gov/environment/article/thc-federal-local-government-assistance>.

11. HOW ARE APPLICATIONS REVIEWED AND RATED?

Applications will be rated by the staff of the THC based on the above considerations. Each type of project is rated and ranked in competition with other projects of the same type. Final decisions are made by the State Historic Preservation Officer, who is currently the Executive Director of the Tennessee Historical Commission.

12. WHEN WILL I KNOW IF I WILL RECEIVE FUNDS?

Funds cannot be awarded until Congress completes work on the budget. This sometimes does not occur until many months into the federal fiscal year (Oct-Sept). Our target schedule is to award grants by August of each year. Once decisions are made applicants will be informed as to whether or not their project is funded. No work may be done prior to the effective start date of the contract which must be executed between the state and the grantee. Because state contracting procedures are time-consuming there may be a delay of months between the grant award and the date on which work can begin.

13. IF I HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS, WHOM DO I ASK?

Address your questions at any point in the application process to:

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Nashville, Tennessee 37214
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