

HEART OF THE CIVIL WAR HERITAGE AREA

Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

FY27 Mini-Grant Guidelines

(updated July 2026)

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About

In FY2027, the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area will award approximately \$25,000 for mini-grant projects. Mini-grants are matching grants of \$500 to \$5,000 that support heritage tourism projects. Successful projects will develop or enhance visitor experiences — programs, exhibits, tours, events, and more— or support another type of noncapital heritage tourism effort. See Eligibility for who may apply, and Budget Requirements for allowable costs and the 1:1 non-state match requirement.

Eligibility

Nonprofit organizations and government units may be awarded mini-grants. Nonprofits must be 501c3 organizations. Individuals are not eligible for mini-grants.

Projects must take place within the Heritage Area, which covers portions of Carroll, Frederick, and Washington Counties. Check Heritage Area boundaries [here](#): uncheck “Architecture” – select “Other MHT Base Data” – select “Maryland Heritage Areas.” Contact Emily Huebner at emily@heartofthecivilwar.org if you have any questions about whether your project is located within the Heritage Area.

Mini-grant projects must contribute in some way to heritage tourism. As described by the Heritage Areas program, heritage tourism is when historic, cultural, and natural resources are used to attract visitors and residents to an experience that provides access to places, stories, activities, and artifacts of the past and present that represent Maryland's unique heritage. In doing so, heritage tourism also contributes to local economic prosperity, conservation of resources, and social connections that support thriving communities.

If you aren't sure if your project is located in the Heritage Area or is an eligible noncapital project, contact Emily Huebner at emily@heartofthecivilwar.org

Budget Requirements

[Budget Form](#): You will be asked to complete and upload the budget form with your application.

Mini-grants may only fund **noncapital projects**. Noncapital projects are projects that do not involve bricks and mortar. Examples of noncapital projects are exhibits, websites, brochures, interpretive tools, interpretive signage, and even some conservation projects. Applicants are encouraged to view the list of previously funded projects on the [mini-grant page](#) on the HCWHA website.

Mini-grants must be matched by a grantee's contribution to the project in an amount at least equal to the grant (dollar-for-dollar match). A matching contribution means money (cash) or donated or discounted goods and/or services, including volunteer time (in-kind) that the applicant organization also spends on the project. Applicants' matching contribution may equal or exceed their requested grant, but it may not be lower than the grant request. A \$5,000 grant request must include a \$5,000 grantee contribution in any combination of cash and in-kind value.

Ineligible match:

- State funds
- Expenditures made before the grant term (calendar year 2027)
- Expenditures that do not relate to the grant project
- Expenditures that were not included in the original application or approved in a budget amendment

Examples of match:

- Cash expenditures on project-related expenses
- Project-related expenditures supported by a non-state grant or loan fund
- Applicant organization salaries for work specifically on the project (note, this can include state employee staff time)
- Volunteer time for work on the project, see http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time for current value of volunteer time in Maryland
- Donated and discounted professional services can be valued at their professional rate, but only if working on the project in their professional role (e.g., an architect donating architectural designs)
- Board members' donated professional services or general volunteer time spent on the project (please note that applicant organization board members may not be paid for services, but their donated time may count as match)
- Donated materials/supplies
- Discounted services (the amount that is discounted can be used as match)

Up to 10% of your requested grant funds may go towards indirect costs, such as rent, utilities, salaries, personnel costs. A \$5,000 grant request may have a maximum of \$500 of indirect costs budgeted from grant funds.

If your project is funded, you must retain financial documentation for three years after the grant period; they may be requested by the State program.

Special Project Requirements

- All interpretive signage projects must adhere to [National Park Service](#) or Civil War Trails standards for design. Contact HCWHA staff for further information about participating in Civil War Trails.
 - If your project is funded you will be required to submit a draft for approval by HCWHA.
- All printed material created with mini-grant funding must include the HCWHA and MHAA logos and include the credit line "This project has been financed in part with State funds from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority but does not necessarily reflect its views or policies."
- All archaeological projects must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for archaeological documentation.

Application Process

1. Review guidelines to ensure you are an eligible applicant, confirm your project is an eligible noncapital heritage tourism project, and check that the work will take place within the boundaries of the Heritage Area.
2. Contact HCWHA staff (Emily Huebner, emily@heartofthecivilwar.org) to discuss your proposed project and seek feedback on project ideas and application drafts.
3. Download or use the Google Drive “Make a Copy” function for the [Budget](#), [Timeline](#), and [Narrative Questions](#) to prepare your application. These are also linked at <https://heartofthecivilwar.org/stakeholders/grants-other-benefits/mini-grants/> and in the [Form application](#). You may also view the budget, timeline, and questions in the appendix of these Guidelines.
4. Refer to the [Management Plan](#) and/or [Strategic Plan](#) when planning your project and preparing your responses to the “Narrative Questions.” Strong applications will make reference to and support these plans. To search the PDFs for a specific word related to your project, use CTRL + F.
5. Gather supporting materials (photos, written cost estimates, letters of support, etc.)
6. Submit the [online application](#) by 5 PM on Friday, October 30, 2026.
7. Be prepared to answer questions or send additional documentation, if required.
8. Expect to receive grant results in December, 2026.

Review Criteria

Successful applications will make a strong case that a project:

- Is consistent with interpretive themes and/or suggested programs, projects, and activities in the Management Plan and/or Strategic Plan
- Enhances heritage tourism by visitors and residents
- Leverages other funding
- Demonstrates the ability of applicant to initiate, administer and complete a project
- Includes collaborative heritage partnerships (when applicable)

Award Management & Reporting

- Mini-grants are reimbursable. The grantee must submit a final project report and copies of any product resulting from the grant. The grant award check will be issued to the grantee within 30 days of receipt of the completed report as described and approved by HCWHA.
- Any grant funds awarded must be matched \$1:\$1 with any combination of cash and in-kind matching funds, review “Budget Requirements” in the Guidelines for more information.
- Projects must be completed within one year of grant approval, including submission of the final report. Failure to begin a project within one year of the grant agreement may result in cancellation of the mini-grant award.
- Drafts of signage and any printed material must be submitted to HCWHA for approval before completion.
- The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area and the Maryland Heritage Areas authority must be acknowledged on any materials produced or in publicity for the funded project, program or exhibit. **Failure to acknowledge as indicated may result in forfeiture of up to 100% of the mini-grant award.**
 - Acknowledgement line for printed materials: This project has been financed in part with State funds from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority but does not necessarily reflect its views or policies.
- HCWHA reserves rights to use images and other materials connected with funded grant projects/programs/products.

Financial Documentation

Mini-grantees are required to retain financial documentation of mini-grant expenditures for three years after either the date of grantee’s final expenditure of grant funds or the termination of their grant agreement, whichever is later.

Mini-grantees must retain records that show proof of all project expenditures, both grant-funded and matching funds.

Acceptable documentation for proof of cash expenditures includes invoices, receipts, timesheets, contracts, payroll and/or accounting system reports (e.g. QuickBooks). These records should show what was purchased or completed, when it occurred, and the cost.

Donated or discounted goods, services, or equipment (“in-kind” contributions such as paint, photography, architectural fees, etc.) must be documented at time of acceptance with a signed

invoice, voucher, or similar record showing a reasonable market rate for the cost of the goods or services.

Volunteer time used as match must be documented with a timesheet or log that includes the volunteer's name, work completed, the date(s) of their service, the hours volunteered and the hourly rate used. The rate can be calculated using the current [Maryland hourly rate issued by Independent Sector](#). This rate changes annually. It is recommended that mini-grantees check the rate at the start of the project and use the same one throughout the life of the project.

This documentation may be requested at any point while the project is active or for up to three years after the grant period as part of a financial spot check and/or subject to state audit.

If financial documentation is requested, proof of payment (such as bank statements or canceled checks) is not required, but it is recommended that the grantee keep these for their files.

Appendices

Goals stated in the HCWHA Management Plan

Economic Benefit

- Thematically link and market the area's heritage resources, thereby creating synergy among varied historic sites, recreational resources, and cultural assets.
- Support the creation of economic gains for new and current visitor-serving businesses within the heritage area by generating greater visitation; in so doing, deemphasize county borders and focus effort on the heritage area at large.
- Guide visitors to places of unique character, such as Main Street communities and small town centers that provide visitor services.

Stewardship

- Help stewardship and preservation organizations become more effective through networking and coordination of effort.
- Foster stronger appreciation for sacred historic places, pristine landscapes, crisp town edges, and one-of-a-kind historic, recreational, and cultural resources in the heritage area among residents – newcomers as well as long-time landowners – and their elected officials.
- Help the region and its communities plan for the future of historic resources, including managing development pressures on historic sites and their surrounding grounds. Connect those seeking conservation of sites, such as battlefields, with relevant organizations and programs.

Storytelling & Interpretation

- Expand on Maryland's status as a border state, in both geographical and ideological terms, to explore issues related to the Civil War period.

- Expand interpretive activities to the human-interest dimension of the conflict: differing views on secession, divided loyalties within families, how civilian life was impacted by the war, and the difficulties people faced afterward in returning to normal life.
- Continue to promote accuracy in information about Civil War military action and troop movement. Frame military actions within a national context, relating their importance to the outcome of major battles and of the war.

Coordination

- Foster a regional perspective that allows progress on heritage area goals regardless of jurisdiction.
- Serve as an umbrella organization for connecting and protecting the diverse, valuable heritage resources in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area and making its stories more accessible to visitors and residents.
- Support collaboration among the three counties' destination marketing organizations and other tourism marketing vehicles to facilitate regional marketing activities.

Narrative Questions

Refer to these questions to prepare your answers before starting the online application. Word limits are noted where applicable.

1. **Urgency:** Does this project have urgency? Briefly explain why the project should happen at this time.
2. **Management/Strategic Plan Connection:** How does this project relate to the goals outlined in the Heritage Area's Management Plan or Strategic Plan? Be as specific as possible in listing goals. (Maximum 400 words)
3. **Partnerships:** How will partnerships be formed or strengthened through this project? Will you work with your county tourism organization (DMO), scenic byway, Main Street community, local museum consortium or association? Be specific about how partners are involved in this project. (Maximum 400 words)
4. **Matching Funds:** How/where will you secure matching funds beyond the HCWHA mini-grant to complete this project? Grant awards must be matched \$1:\$1 from non-state sources. (Maximum 400 words)
5. **Partial Funding:** How will you complete this project if you only receive partial funding? (Maximum 400 words)
6. **Maintenance:** If your project will create a tangible product (either physically or virtually), how will it be maintained after the grant period has ended? (Maximum 400 words)

Budget Guide

To access the budget template, go to this [link](#).

For Google users:

- Go to the linked Budget file.
- Select “File”
- Select “Make a copy”
- Rename your budget document – currently named “Copy of Mini-Grant Budget Template – Google Sheet”
- Fill in the budget in the highlighted cells, including “mini-grant amount requested.”
 - The spreadsheet should automatically calculate totals and notify you if your proposed budget does not fulfill the match requirement.
- To upload it to the Form, at that question in the form select “Add File,” select “My Drive” from the tabs displayed, then select your budget from the Drive files and select “Insert.”
- If you have difficulty uploading the budget form, send it directly to Emily Huebner at emily@heartofthecivilwar.org

For non-Google users:

- Go to the linked Budget file.
- Select “File”
- Move your cursor down the dropdown list to “Download”
- Select “Microsoft Excel” – this should download the file to your computer.
- Fill in the downloaded budget in the highlighted cells, including “mini-grant amount requested.”
 - The spreadsheet should automatically calculate totals and notify you if your proposed budget does not fulfill the match requirement.
- To upload it to the Form, at that question in the form select “Add File,” select “Browse,” then navigate to your budget in your files and select the file.
- If you have difficulty uploading the budget form, send it directly to Emily Huebner at emily@heartofthecivilwar.org

Timeline Guide

To access the timeline template, go to this [link](#).

For Google users:

- Go to the linked Timeline file.
- Select “File”
- Select “Make a copy”
- Rename your Timeline document – currently named “Copy of Mini-Grant Timeline Template – Google Sheet”
- Fill in the timeline in the highlighted cells
- To upload it to the Form, at that question in the form select “Add File,” select “My Drive” from the tabs displayed, then select your timeline from the Drive files and select “Insert.”
- If you have difficulty uploading the budget form, send it directly to Emily Huebner at emily@heartofthecivilwar.org

For non-Google users:

- Go to the linked Timeline file.
- Select “File”
- Move your cursor down the dropdown list to “Download”
- Select “Microsoft Excel” – this should download the file to your computer.
- Fill in the downloaded timeline in the highlighted cells.
- To upload it to the Form, at that question in the form select “Add File,” select “Browse,” then navigate to your timeline in your files and select the file.
- If you have difficulty uploading the timeline form, send it directly to Emily Huebner at emily@heartofthecivilwar.org

Quick Links

1. [HCWHA Mini-Grant Webpage](#)
2. [Application Form](#)
3. [Budget Template](#)
4. [Timeline Template](#)
5. [Narrative Questions](#)
6. [Management Plan](#)
7. [Strategic Plan](#)
8. [Independent Sector - Value of A Volunteer Hour](#)

