



FY26 Mini-Grant Program

www.chesapeakecrossroads.org/grants/mini-grants/

Grant Application Guidelines for FY26

Applications OPEN: September 1, 2025
Applications DUE: October 3, 2025 (11:59 pm)
Awards ANNOUNCED: November 7, 2025
Projects Must Be Completed within ONE-YEAR of Grant Agreement Execution

Purpose:

Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area (CCHA) awards mini-grants of up to \$5,000 each Fall to heritage area partner organizations and local governments. Funds can be used to create, launch, and implement programs, activities, products, partnerships, interpretive signs, lectures and public events that support and help reinforce the Chesapeake Crossroads mission: **To enhance support and promote heritage tourism, preservation, and/or the stewardship of historical, cultural, and natural resources across the Heritage Area.**

Who is Eligible?

Non-profit organizations in good standing, and municipalities are eligible to apply for projects that will take place within the boundaries of the Heritage Area. [Check here to confirm if your organization is located within the Heritage Area Boundary.](#)

NEW FOR FY26:

- Applications will be submitted ONLINE this year.
- Grant agreements must be fully executed no later than December 20, 2025, or funds may be rescinded and reallocated.
- A mid-project “check-in” will be required to ensure adequate progress is being made on your mini-grant.
- Final reporting and grant close outs at the end of the project will also be ONLINE moving forward.
- The Grant Workshop will be ONLINE.
 - In lieu of the in-person, virtual and one-on-one workshops required in past years, for FY26 all applicants are required to view the online [CCHA Mini-Grant Workshop Video](#) before beginning the application. This brief video and [slide deck presentation](#) will answer many of the more detailed questions you might have about the program, and can be done on your own time and at your own pace. You will then be asked to [answer a few quick questions in an online QUIZ to demonstrate that you watched the video](#) and presentation before proceeding to the application.
- **ADVANCE FUNDING REQUESTS**
 - While the mini-grant program has to date been fully "reimbursable," and organizations were responsible for expending all costs upfront, we recognize that this is a barrier for smaller non-profits that might not have the cash available to launch and support meaningful and impactful projects. To help lower that start-up cost barrier, CCHA will consider on a case-by-case basis, requests for the release of up to 40% of the full grant funds upfront, if the organization can make a clear and compelling case for the need.

What Types of Projects are Supported?

The grant program supports NON-CAPITAL projects only. Grant funds cannot be used for staff salaries, operations /administrative expenses, alcohol, or capital improvements such as building repairs. Examples of projects include, but are not limited to:

● Research and Documentation	● Host Heritage or Cultural Events
● Oral History Projects	● Exhibits and Way Finding Projects
● Feasibility Studies	● Natural Resource/ Gardening Project
● Videos or webinars	● Educational seminars, workshops, and conferences
● Website Development	● Preservation Planning
● Brochures/Rack Cards	● Lectures and Workshops
● Hiking, paddling or guided tours or maps (In-person or virtual/ online).	● Heritage-related programming in the Arts (plays or performances)
● Historic Markers or Interpretive Signs	● K-12**, home-schooled, and/or after-school educational programming.
● Interpretation Planning	● Certain Capacity building projects

***:. If Anne Arundel County Public Schools are a project partner, the application MUST include a scope of work, and a letter of commitment from the AACPS partner representative.*

Application Process & Requirements:

To be considered, a completed application must be received by the deadline of October 3, 2025 (11:59 pm). The online application includes the following sections:

- **Applicant Information:** (Organization name and contact info.);
- **Project Description:** (Project title/ description; consistency & relevance with CCHA mission and goals; schedule, key staff and outcome/ results.);
- **Project Budget:** (Funds requested, an itemized budget, and details about the proposed match);
- **Supporting Information/ Signatures:** (Organizational Docs/ Non Profit status and signature by authorized rep.)

(!) We suggest that you review the full application first: Prepare your responses in a Word or Google Doc OUTSIDE the online form, then plan to copy and paste your answers at one sitting, when you have your proposal ready to go. The form does allow you to save and return with a link if you do not complete the form in one sitting. Note- for document uploads, accepted file types include pdf (PREFERRED!) doc, jpg, docx, png, xls, & csv. File sizes are limited to 5MB.)

Selection Criteria:

A panel of 3 to 5 reviewers selected by the CCHA Board will read, assess, and rank each application, based on the following criteria:

- General Considerations:
 - Is the application complete and is the applicant eligible for funding?
 - Is the project consistent with the CCHA Mission, Management Plan, Five-Year Action Plan for FY2024-2028, and represent/ explore one or more of the CCHA Interpretive themes?

- Does the project enhance heritage tourism for visitors and residents?
- Does the application demonstrate the organization's administrative ability to manage grants and execute projects within a required timeframe and proposed budget?
- Are the proposed activities, deliverables or events realistic within the budget proposed?
- Does the proposal offer clear objectives or goals, and measurable results by which success can be assessed?
- Is this a new or innovative project, or one that could be a model for others?
- **CCHA PRIORITIES FOR FY26:** (Preference will be given to projects that will achieve one or more of the following operational and programmatic goals of the CCHA.)
 - Projects that launch or occur during the MarylandDay Week of March 19 - 25, 2026;
 - Programs or events that include strong collaboration with other CCHA partners;
 - Projects that observe or commemorate an upcoming historical anniversary, such as the U.S. Semiquincentennial (250th) or the founding of the B&O Railroad in 1827;
 - Proposals that result in a historic wayside marker or interpretive sign; or
 - Projects that address unanticipated programmatic hardship related to cuts or delays in Federal funding.

A Few Funding Notes:

- While grants up to \$5,000 will be considered, the average grant award over the past two years has been around \$2,500. CCHA receives \$25,000 from the State in the form of a Block Grant to support these mini-grants. CCHA reviewers reserve the right to offer partial allocations. If you cannot achieve your project goals with partial funding, please note this in your application so the reviewers can take that under advisement.
- A one-to-one match is required to receive funding, which can be any combination of Cash or In-Kind contributions.
 - ***How does the One to One match work?*** The grant requires that for every dollar awarded, the applicant must provide a dollar for dollar MATCH. This can be a cash and/or in-kind match (in any combination) with proof that the match is equal to (or greater than) the grant request. No grant will be made for more than 50 percent of the total project cost. Note that the match must be from a non-state source. These funds originate from the State, so you cannot match these funds with another state grant.
- Grant funds can only be used for activities and expenses incurred after the Grant Announcement Date.
- Staff time can be used as a match – but cannot be funded by grant money: Note the portion of the staff person's time dedicated solely to a funded project and their equivalent hourly rate. (Benefits may NOT be included).
- **Non-profit organizations may include up to 10% indirect costs in their Project mini-grant request.**

Have Further Questions?

Email us at grants@chesapeakecrossroads.org if you have additional questions or would like to discuss your project ideas. If you have any technical challenges and would prefer to submit a hard copy of your application, please contact us as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Additional details about how to apply for and administer your grant from beginning to end, including how to receive the funds and requirements for final reporting will be available online, and will also be clearly stated in your grant agreement, should funds be awarded.

GOOD LUCK!