



MISSISSIPPI HILLS HERITAGE AREA ALLIANCE  
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## **GRANT GUIDELINES**

### **Introduction**

The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) was designated by Congress in 2009 in recognition of the remarkable cultural and heritage resources within this region. It covers 19 full counties and portions of 11 others in Northeast Mississippi. Boundaries of the heritage area were established by Federal law and are the Tennessee state line to the north, Alabama state line to the east, Interstate Highway 55 to the west and Mississippi state highway 14 to the south.

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHA), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, was named by Congress as the local coordinating entity. Its mission is to preserve, enhance, interpret and promote the cultural and heritage assets of the region in a manner that enhances exposure, education and economic growth. The MHNHA Management Plan was approved in 2014 and provides a framework for achieving this mission. All grant applicants should read the Management Plan prior to applying for an Alliance grant. The document is available on our website: [www.mississippihills.org](http://www.mississippihills.org).

### **Goals of the Grant Program**

MHHA offers grants for innovative projects that will help accomplish the goals and objectives defined in the Management Plan. The program is designed to provide strategic investments in heritage sites, events, programs and other projects of cultural, educational and recreational value within the boundaries of the MHNHA. The federal funds for this program are provided to MHHA through the National Park Service and require a 1:1 match. Please see "Matching Funds" on page 4 for specifics.

### **What We Fund**

MHHA funds projects that contribute to the mission of preserving, enhancing, interpreting and promoting the cultural and heritage resources within the Mississippi Hills. Details on eligible projects, grant categories and allowable expenses are on the following pages.

## **Who May Apply**

Within MHNHA, the grant program is open to non-profit organizations, school groups, attractions, museums, partnerships, federally-recognized Indian tribes, cultural & heritage events, programs, presentations and all MHHAA dues paying members in good standing. All applicants must demonstrate sufficient expertise to manage their project to completion. **PLEASE NOTE - Education, Flash and Small grants are available to any qualified applicant while Large grants are reserved for dues paying members in good standing.**

## **Eligible Projects**

To be eligible for funding, projects must address one or more of the goals listed below. Projects that address more than one goal will be given higher consideration. Projects that incorporate one or more primary interpretive themes – African American heritage, Civil War, Native American heritage and Music & Literature – are highly encouraged.

### **Education and Interpretation**

- \*Connect heritage sites/attractions through use of interpretive themes/strategies.
- \*Lift public awareness about Hills heritage through education and research.

### **Cultural and Heritage Tourism**

- \*Develop physical or programmatic linkages between destinations to enhance visitor experience.
- \*Promote greater brand awareness through comprehensive marketing and public-relations programs using both traditional and new media.
- \*Use a consistent visual identity and brand in all collateral materials.
- \*Encourage marketing and public relations collaborations between MHNHA and cultural & heritage assets in the region, as well as partnerships between individual sites/resources.

### **Heritage Resource Conservation and Enhancement**

- \*Conduct research to facilitate the identification, preservation and recognition/promotion of significant heritage sites and attractions within MHNHA.
- \*Conserve, preserve and enhance the cultural & heritage assets of MHNHA.
- \*Encourage sensitive resource development to protect cultural & heritage assets and natural landscapes and viewsheds.

### **Partnership Development**

- \*Promote entrepreneurial activity and business development related to MHNHA cultural & heritage assets and resources.
- \*Utilize cultural & heritage assets to foster sustainable economic activity.
- \*Provide planning & technical assistance to asset managers and operators.

## **Grant Standards**

Some things to keep in mind when developing your grant application:

- \*The grant request is eligible for funding.
- \*Matching funds are certified to be in place.
- \*Project ideally demonstrates collaboration between multiple partners.
- \*Project respects both the capacity and authenticity of the resource.
- \*Efforts exhibit a high degree of quality in all planning & design aspects.
- \*Narrative defines clear measures to manage/sustain project after grant completion.
- \*Project time-line and outcomes are well-defined and realistic.
- \*Application includes an evaluation process to measure results of project goals.

## **Grant Categories**

### **Education Grants (open to all schools districts, school support groups and non-profit cultural/heritage attractions within the Mississippi Hills NHA)**

- \*Requests of up to \$1,000 per trip will be considered and multiple trips may be requested on the same applications.
- \*Funds must be used for educational field trip transportation and interpretation costs only.
- \*Applications are accepted year-round; allow **6 weeks** for a decision.
- \*Funds must be used within a year of the award.

### **Flash Grants (open to all qualified applicants within the Mississippi Hills NHA)**

- \*Requests of \$1,000 – \$2,500 will be considered.
- \*See “Eligible Projects” and “Eligible Costs” on how funds may be used.
- \*Applications accepted through **January 31st, 2024**; all applications will be reviewed in February and successful applicants notified soon thereafter.
- \*Funds must be used within one year of the award.

### **Small Grants (open to all qualified applicants within the Mississippi Hills NHA)**

- \*Requests of \$2,500 – \$5,000 will be considered.
- \*See “Eligible Projects” and “Eligible Costs” on how funds may be used.
- \*Applications accepted through **January 31st, 2024**; all applications will be reviewed in February and successful applicants notified soon thereafter.
- \*Projects must be completed within one year of the award.

### **Large Grants (open to all qualified dues paying members in good standing)**

- \*Requests for \$5,000 – \$20,000 will be considered.
- \*See “Eligible Projects” and “Eligible Costs” on how funds may be used.

- \*Applications accepted through **January 31st, 2024**; all applications will be reviewed in February and successful applicants notified soon thereafter.
- \*A status report is required every 6 months on projects exceeding one year.
- \*Every project or project phase funded must be completed within two years of the award.

## **Eligible, Non-Eligible Costs & Disbursement Schedule**

**Eligible project costs** include but are not limited to items such as site improvements, technical assistance, programs, events, presentations, publications, collateral materials, research, inventory and interpretation. Grant funds may be used to cover legitimate project costs that are necessary and reasonable for the accomplishment of project objectives. Such costs may include labor, services, materials, equipment rental, supplies and travel.

**Non-Eligible project costs** include *but are not limited to* items such as food, most advertising, overhead, salaries, general administrative expense, routine repairs, most maintenance and contingency or set-aside funds. Grant funds may not be used to acquire real property or any interest in real property. ***Please contact staff if you have any questions regarding eligible and non-eligible project costs.***

**Disbursement** of the approved grant award will be made upon receipt of grantee's project completion form, documentation of all paid expenses and certification of all matching contributions.

## **Matching Funds**

All MHHA grants require a 50-50 match. Matching may consist of cash only or a combination of cash and in-kind services such as materials or volunteer hours. How you propose to provide the required match must be detailed in the project budget. A priority will be given to grantee's who exceed their required match or use all cash as a match.

Your matching funds must come from non-federal sources. If you are using a state grant for the required 50% match make sure and verify that the state funding you receive is not from federal funds, also. For example, if you have a grant from an organization which utilizes federal funds, you could not use their federal money to match MHHA grants.

In-kind matches must be necessary and directly attributable to the project. Personnel time for employees, volunteers, service providers and consultants as well as tangible contributions of services, materials, supplies and products must be documented. All documentation must be submitted to MHHAA prior to final disbursement of grant funding.

## **Grantee Responsibilities**

1. Grantee will be required to sign a grant contract with MHHAA.
2. Each contract will be unique to the project requirements.
3. No work may begin on any grant-funded portion of the project until a contract has been signed by both the grantee and the MHHAA.
4. MHHAA grants utilize federal funds and therefore all applicable federal laws must be followed. Once a grant is awarded, MHHAA staff will work with the grantee to determine laws and regulations which apply to the project.
5. Grantee must provide proof of insurance, if applicable.
6. Grantee is required to submit financial and final performance reports for the project as specified in the contract. Interim reports may be required for complex projects or those taking longer than one year to complete.
7. Grantee will allow inspection of program records by MHHAA staff and any authorized federal agencies.
8. Grantee will acknowledge the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area and the National Park Service in all printed materials (contact staff regarding logo use).

## **Application Requirements, Transmittal & Assistance**

Submit a completed application form via email to [grantinfo@mshills.org](mailto:grantinfo@mshills.org) by 4:00 p.m. Central Time on the stated due date. Mailed or special handling applications must be received by the same stated deadline also. All support documentation must be included with your application by stated deadline. There are 4 grant categories, so please make sure you are using the correct one based on your project needs. Do not staple or bind your application and support material. Paper or binder clips are permissible. Incomplete or inappropriate applications will not be considered.

If sending your application by mail or special-handling delivery, please include the original and 5 additional copies for review purposes.

MHHAA staff is available during normal working hours at [grantinfo@mshills.org](mailto:grantinfo@mshills.org) to assist with the application process or answer any questions.

We encourage you to visit our website at [www.mississippihills.org](http://www.mississippihills.org) to learn more about the Mississippi Hills and to review the Management Plan.

## Conflict of Interest

The grant program is administered to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. Any member of the Grants Committee or MHHA Board of Directors will abstain from any discussion, deliberation or vote on projects they are connected to through employment, elected office, family relationship or financial interest.

## Applicable Laws & Regulations

Grantees must comply with all applicable Federal laws, including but not limited to:

- \*Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act ([www.achp.gov/106](http://www.achp.gov/106))
- \*National Environment Policy Act ([www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa](http://www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa))
- \*Americans with Disabilities Act ([www.ADA.gov](http://www.ADA.gov))
- \*Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([www.justice.gov/crt](http://www.justice.gov/crt))
- \*Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ([www.justice.gov/crt](http://www.justice.gov/crt))
- \*The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 ([www.dol.gov/dol/topic/discrimination](http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/discrimination))
- \*Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ([www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights))
- \*Fair Labor Standards Act ([www.dol.gov/whd/flsa](http://www.dol.gov/whd/flsa))

Additionally, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) produces circulars which both specify and clarify items like cost principles and audit requirements for different types of organizations. All OMB circulars are available at ([www.whitehouse.gov/omb](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb))

Of particular interest for cost principles, administrative requirements and audits:

- \*State & Local governments – OMB A-87; A-102; A-133
- \*Educational institutions – 2CFR, Parts 215/220; OMB A-21; A-110; A-133
- \*Non-profit organizations – 2CFR, Parts 215/230; OMB A-122; A-110; A-133

Grantees also must comply with all applicable Mississippi state laws in regard to the purchasing of goods and services where grant-funded items are concerned.

## Grants Committee Criteria

Following a MHHA staff review for eligibility only, members of the MHHA Grants Committee will meet as deemed necessary during award cycles to determine ranking and priority of all submitted applications. Committee decisions will be based on five equally weighted selection criteria worth 20% each. Each criterion will contain a quality scale of 1-5 with 5 being **excellent** and 1 being **poor**. A perfect score would be 25.

The five criteria for ranking and priority are:

- \*Project fits the MHNHA mission and addresses an appropriate theme.
- \*Project utilizes community resources in a unique or innovative manner.
- \*Project is realistic with a clearly-stated process and expected outcome.
- \*Project shows collaborative efforts with multiple partners.
- \*Project budget satisfactorily supports the stated objectives.

## **Primary Interpretive Themes**

Interpretation of the region's stories and resources is a key element of the federal Management Plan which guides the development of our program. While the plan addresses a range of issues, it specifies four dominant themes to be used to inform Mississippi citizens as well as out-of-state visitors about the culture and heritage of the Hills. Applicants should fully familiarize themselves with these interpretive themes -- African American heritage, Civil War, Native American heritage and Music & Literature -- and related subthemes.

## **Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals For Your Grant Project**

**(S)** Specific goals have a much greater chance of being accomplished than general ones. Answer the questions below to help set that specific goal:

- \*WHO... is involved?
- \*WHAT... do I want to accomplish?
- \*WHEN...is my time-line or time-frame accurate?
- \*HOW...have all goal requirements and constraints been considered?
- \*WHY...is the specific reason, purpose and benefit of this goal clear?

**(M)** Measuring progress on your goal will help you stay on track, reach target dates on time and experience a sense of achievement which pushes you forward to accomplish your task. Answer the questions below to help define measurable progress:

- \*How much is involved?
- \*How many are involved?
- \*How much time do I have?
- \*What comes first?

**(A)** Attaining a goal is much easier if it is well-defined and well-timed and can become an accomplishment when coupled with a positive attitude, appropriate skills and enough financial capacity. Planning your steps wisely is central to attaining a goal.

**(R)** Realistic goals are those that reflect some points mentioned above and are then executed with both a willingness and commitment from those charged with the responsibility. Remember, each goal should be measurable and represent a step forward.

**(T)** Timely goals are more apt to get accomplished than those without a time-frame. By setting an accurate and realistic time schedule, you build a sense of urgency. With urgency comes action and with action comes progress. As you make progress, your goal becomes more tangible...thus, more attainable.

(Thanks to the Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership for their assistance with this document.)