



Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program

**2026 Application and Guidelines for the
2029 Biennium**

February 2026



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2026 Montana Historic Preservation Grant Application Guidelines for the 2029 Biennium Projects

Introduction

The Montana Historic Preservation Grant (MHPG) Program is a state-funded program created in 2019 via Senate Bill 338, Sections 1 through 17. The MHPG Program is designed to support public or private entities with the preservation of historic sites, historical societies, or history museums through grant funding. The MHPG Program provides the opportunity to stimulate economic development, community revitalization, and statewide visitation through increased investment, job creation or retention, business expansion, and local tax base growth. The MHPG Program demonstrates the economic impact of historic resources throughout the state.

MHPG Program applications, application guidelines, project administration manual, other relevant information and resources are available on the Montana Department of Commerce, [Community MT Division website](#). Interested persons can also e-mail MHPG Program staff at doccdd@mt.gov or call staff at 406-841-2770 regarding any questions they may have about the MHPG Program.

Funding is made available for the MHPG Program through the legislative process. To be considered for the 2029 biennium, the deadline for submitting a grant application for funding is February 28, 2026. Funding will be available after July 1, 2027.

These application guidelines explain how to apply for MHPG funding, as well as the administrative requirements of the program.

Eligible Applicants

In accordance with § 22-3-1305, MCA, eligible applicants for MHPG Program include:

- Person
 - Individuals must apply through a fiscal agent, which is an association, or in coordination with a local government. The fiscal agent or local government will be the recipient of the grant award and becomes the legal applicant of record, manages the disbursement of grant funds in accordance with Commerce directions, and is responsible for all the requirements of the specific grant as outlined in a grant agreement between the applicant and Commerce. Commerce is not able to act as a fiscal agent for an individual applying to the MHPG Program.
 - *Private residences are encouraged to inquire with Commerce staff to ensure eligibility as referenced in § 22-3-1306(3), MCA. MHPG projects must ensure that a significant portion of the facility is open to the public. Projects that confer a limited public benefit are not eligible.
- Association
 - For-profit, nonprofit, or not for profit organizations and businesses.
- Governing unit
 - Incorporated city or town, county, consolidated government, State, and federal agencies;
 - Representative of a governing unit such as a library or school district; or
 - Tribal government
 - A waiver of sovereign immunity will be required for a tribal government if MHPG funds are awarded.

Additional Considerations for Eligible Applicants

- All applicants must have the management capacity to undertake and satisfactorily complete the project and assure proper management of MHPG funds.
 - Grant recipients must be in compliance with applicable auditing and financial reporting requirements and have the capability to specifically ensure proper tracking and recording of funds. Applicants must be a resident or registered business in the State of Montana.
 - Information related to the audit and financial status of a local government applicant is available at any time on the Department of Administration, [Local Government Services website](#).
- If the property is not owned by the applicant, the applicant must submit a letter of approval from the property owner. If awarded, the grantee will be the applicant, not the property owner and a grant assistance agreement will be required to contract with Commerce.
- Applicants can apply for more than one project per cycle. A separate application must be submitted for each eligible project. Applicants are encouraged to prioritize projects and consider both shovel readiness and management capacity before submitting multiple applications per cycle.

Eligible Projects

Eligible applicants, as defined in [§ 22-3-1306, MCA](#), can apply to complete projects or activities for the preservation of:

- Historic Sites, including one of the criteria below:
 - Structure or site is listed on national, state, or local historic registry,
 - Structure or site contributes to a historic district,
 - A structure more than 50 years old and has documented significance to the history of a Montana community or region.

- Historical Societies
- History Museums

Preservation activities may include:

- External repairs or improvements to protect the building envelope, consisting of the structure's walls, roof, doors, windows, and/or foundation.
- Internal improvements to or installation of utility systems, including electricity, plumbing, and heat.
- History museums only: improvements that establish or enhance security, climate control, or fire protection.
- Projects with a total cost over \$50,000 may use up to 10% of grant funding for planning and/or grant administration costs that are directly related to the preservation activities A, B, or C.

Additional Considerations for Eligible Projects

- Per legislative intent, priority will be granted to projects focused on the preservation activities listed above. However, additional preservation activities remain eligible and may be considered as part of a competitive application. Applicants interested in applying for funding for a broader variety of exterior and interior preservation activities are encouraged to consult with Commerce prior to submitting an application.
- Projects should demonstrate a reasonable and achievable budget and implementation schedule.
 - Budgets must be rounded to the nearest whole dollar amount.
 - Applicants will be given preference if they anticipate completion of project activities within two years of the signed contract.
 - The deadline for signing a contract with of Commerce is September 1, 2028.

- The deadline for signing a contract with the contractor is September 30, 2028.
- Previously awarded projects are eligible for MHPG funding in subsequent cycles. However, during the review process, priority will be granted to projects that did not receive MHPG funding during the preceding cycle. Additionally, the previous MHPG grant must be completed before the applicant can re-apply for the same project.
- Project Scope of Work
 - Proposed preservation projects submitted to the MHPG Program for funding must be comprised of “stand-alone” activities. Applicants should be aware of the conditions of a building in relation to the request for funds and prioritize activities accordingly.
- Project Activities
 - Projects may include multiple activities within the scope of work, but applicants must demonstrate that each activity within the scope of work is necessary for a complete stand-alone project. Applicants must include a prioritization of project activities or components with funding amounts requested for each activity. Commerce may decide to recommend awarding funding for all or part of the requested activities. The application narrative should be supported with approximate cost breakdowns by appropriate activity, photographs and other supporting documentation that provides the context or detail of activities.

More substantive preservation activities and projects may require feasibility or planning components (including but not limited to, historic structure assessments or preliminary architectural reports) in combination with brick-and-mortar activities. Planning components may be especially helpful when projects need to determine the architectural soundness of a structure.

- Project Design Considerations
 - Projects should adhere to the [*Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*](#) and the related guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, restoring, and reconstructing historic buildings, historic sites, structures, objects, and community districts. None allow for damaging treatments or adaptations arbitrary to the property's historic integrity. The standards address both exterior and interior historic building work and suggest consistent approaches to treatments and techniques that help maintain the integrity of historical resources. Choosing the most appropriate treatment for a building requires careful decision making about the historical significance of a building and taking into consideration other factors such as level of significance, physical condition, proposed use, and code and other regulations. Please review the standards at the link above and how they relate to your specific project.

Eligible Funding

The amount of eligible funding is derived from the tax collections allocated in [§ 15-68-820\(3\)\(b\) and \(4\)\(c\), MCA](#) and deposited into the Historic Preservation Grant Account. The legislature must approve and award all projects.

Match Requirement for MHPG Projects

Eligible applicants may apply for funding up to \$350,000 per eligible project. A 1:1 match of grant funding received is required for all for-profit entities. A 20% match of the total project cost is required for all other eligible entities.

- Eligible Match:
 - Cash
 - Grants
 - Loans

- In-kind (only 1/3 of the total match can be in-kind).
 - In-kind contributions related to labor or administrative time are considered an eligible match at a rate of \$20 per hour. Grantees must submit a log detailing the work completed.
 - Donated materials are considered an eligible match according to the documented value.
- Previous components
 - Previous expenditures are only eligible as matching funds when:
 - Directly related to the preparation of architectural/engineering studies, reports, and construction of the proposed project.
 - Completed after February 28, 2025.
- Applicants do not need to secure match before applying, but documentation of match will be required Before awardees can contract with Commerce.
 - Applicants will be granted the opportunity to provide updates regarding the status of matching funds prior to Commerce's submission of recommendations.
- Ineligible match:
 - Previous expenditures when not directly related to the proposed project.
 - Previous expenditures completed more than 1 year prior to application deadline.
 - Ongoing or monthly operational costs.
 - Staff salary.

Application Submission

General Requirements

MHPG applications are due to Commerce by February 28, 2026. Eligible applicants must complete and submit the required application information via [Commerce's Grants and Loans portal](#): one electronic copy of the MHPG application, any relevant information (such as photos and National Register of Historic Preservation nominations), and supplementary documents (such as plans or design documents).

If you have questions about accessing the Grants and Loans Portal, please contact the Community MT Division at doccdd@mt.gov or 406-841-2770. Electronic submission is preferred, but you may also submit your application by first-class mail or hand delivery to:

Montana Department of Commerce
Community MT Division
Community Planning Program
301 S. Park Ave
P.O. Box 200523
Helena, MT 59620-0523

Only one application per project is permitted each application cycle. Applications from multiple eligible applicants for the same project in any given application cycle are not permitted.

To apply for any of the funding approved through the legislative process, applicants must provide the following MHPG application information:

- Appendix A: Application eligibility screening checklist.

- Appendix B: MHPG application including responses to statutory review criteria.
- Table A: Sample project budget.
- Table B: Sample implementation schedule.
- Supplementary documents: As applicable, relevant information and associated documents. Please note this information cannot exceed 25 MB in total, except for a formal preliminary architectural report, historic structure assessments, or similar reports.

Award Process and Legislative Session

Commerce has no decision-making authority over any application and only provides advisory recommendations to the legislature. Commerce staff will review applications based on the seven statutory review criteria found in [§ 22-3-1306, MCA](#), and listed below. To facilitate Commerce’s review, applications should be organized according to the appendix format outlined in Section V. “Application Submission”. The applicant may not submit any additional information after the application deadline, unless requested by Commerce staff to clarify information already presented in the application.

Statutory Review Criteria:

- Purpose and need: The degree to which the project activity can demonstrate the purpose and need of the project. This includes the degree to which the project will provide features that address infrastructure, maintenance, or building code issues at historic sites and museums, or establish or enhance security, climate control, or fire protection for museums.
- Economic impact: The degree to which a project supports economic stimulus or economic activity both during the project and as a result of project completion. This includes job creation and work creation for Montana contractors and service workers.

- Shovel readiness: The degree to which timing of the project can be completed without delay, including access to matching funds and approval of permits, if needed.
- Historic importance: The degree to which the project activity contributes historic, or heritage value related to the State of Montana.
- Organization's capacity: The degree to which the applicant demonstrates a successful track record or experience of the organization directing the project.
- Local contributions: The degree to which the project shows local contribution, including but not limited to letters of support from a minimum of three separate entities/organizations, local monies, and public engagement campaigns.
- Public benefit: The degree to which the applicant demonstrates anticipated public benefit, including the extent the site or building will be open to the public and the degree of immediate facility use after project completion.

To prepare the recommendations, Commerce will review all applications in consultation with the Tourism Advisory Council and the State Historic Preservation Office before they are submitted to the legislature. Commerce may take additional information into account based upon Commerce's or another agency's knowledge about a proposed project or community in the scoring of an application.

Commerce will prepare its recommendations and present them to the legislature by the 15th day of the regular legislative session in accordance with [§ 22-3-1305, MCA](#). During the legislative session, MHPG applicants will have the opportunity to testify on behalf of their project. Commerce will communicate the date, time, and details of this process with MHPG applicants as soon as practicable. MHPG applicants are strongly encouraged to testify in person and share an overview of their project, its importance, its impact, and any applicable updates.

Project Administration

Please see the “Project Administration Manual” on the [Commerce website](#) for information on how to administer a MHPG project. Projects must be completed in accordance with the applicable rules or the MHPG award may be revoked.

MHPG grantees should be prepared to provide information to Commerce about how they intend to procure grant administration, professional services, and construction services in accordance with applicable procurement laws.

Appendix A

Application Eligibility Screening Checklist

Please fill out this checklist.

1. Is the applicant an eligible person, association, or governmental unit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2. If the property owner is different than the applicant, does the application include a letter from the property owner?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
3. Is the applicant a resident or registered business in the State of Montana?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4. Is the structure a history museum, historic site, or historical society (can be more than one)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. If your project is a historic site, is it: listed on a national, state, or local historic registry; a contributing structure to a historic district; and/or over 50 years old with a documented significance to local or statewide history?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
6. Is your project a private residence only? Projects that confer a limited public benefit are ineligible.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. Does the application include a prioritized list and cost breakdown of the project components?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. Does the project protect the building envelope, internal utility systems, or building code issues?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
9. What is the total project budget?	\$
10. What is the total project match?	\$

If you have questions or need assistance preparing this form, please contact Commerce at doccdd@mt.gov or 406-841-2770.

Appendix B

MHPG Application and Statutory Review Criteria

The following section lists the seven criteria used to score and recommend proposed projects, along with the criteria that will be considered by Commerce in evaluating each applicant's response. MHPG applicants are required to submit Section I of the application and include a signature of the authorized representative of the applicant. MHPG applicants are required to submit Section 2 of the application and include narrative responses that describe the relationship of their proposed MHPG project to each of the statutory criteria, except where noted otherwise. Each application will be scored based upon the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with each statutory criterion, using the point levels identified within each criterion where a score of zero is the lowest score possible.

To avoid unnecessary duplication, the applicant can reference other pertinent portions of the application or appendices in the narrative responses to the priorities. However, the applicant should not reference another portion of the application, such as the preliminary architectural report, without including a narrative statement that provides at least a summary of what is being referenced. For example, an applicant should not simply state, "See page 4 of the preliminary architectural report" as a response to a statutory criterion.

The following general definitions are applied to all non-technical ranking criteria relative to the overall quality of the applicant's response or situation and relative to the ranking criteria and applicable special requirements. Applicants must score above 650 in total points to be considered for funding.

Level 3: The applicant provides an exemplary/very complete application while considering all questions and addresses all issues deemed important.

Level 2: The applicant provides an adequate application; however, the applicant may not consider some questions or address all issues deemed potentially important.

Level 1: The applicant provides an inadequate application and may not have considered some questions or address all issues deemed important.

Level 0: The applicant provides an incomplete application and did not consider all questions and/or address all issues deemed important.

MHPG Application Part 1: Contact Sheet and Project Summary

1. Applicant (Entity/Organization)	
2. Property owner (if different from applicant)	
3. Primary contact and title	
Address	
City, state, zip code	
Phone number	
E-mail	
4. Secondary contact and title	
Address	
City, state, zip code	
Phone number	
E-mail	
5. Project type (please select the relevant project type(s))	<input type="checkbox"/> Historic Site <input type="checkbox"/> Historical Society <input type="checkbox"/> History Museum

If contact information changes after the application is submitted, it is the responsibility of the applicant to inform Commerce of the new contact information.

6. Grant funding request information	
Amount requested	\$
Total amount of match	\$



COMMERCE

Total project cost	\$
7. Project address (physical)	
City, state, zip code	

8. Funding sources – total funding sources must match with the total project costs. If the funding “pending” you must demonstrate that it will be secured by contract date.

Source	Type of funds	Amount	Status of commitment (confirmed or pending) (provide documentation, i.e., letters of support, financials...)	Rates and terms (if applicable)
MHPG	Grant			

Brief description, 60 words or less, of current project and proposed solution or activity to be completed.

- a. Background and project (please provide narrative response):

- b. Description of proposed solution (please provide narrative response):

Certification to Submit:

The undersigned authorized representative hereby certifies that (a) the information set forth in this application is correct to the best of their knowledge; (b) they have received, read, and understood these guidelines and agrees to comply with all requirements; (c) the elected officials of the local government have formally authorized the submittal of this application, as applicable; (d) they have the authority to act on behalf of the applicant in submitting this application, and (e) agrees to comply with all applicable state or federal laws and statutes associated with carrying out the project.

Signature

Date

Printed Name and Title

MHPG Application Part II: Statutory Criteria

Review Narrative Responses

Statutory criteria below are associated with a maximum number of points per criterion question. To earn the maximum points, reviewers will consider the level at which each question was answered. You may reference associated documents to answer questions but answers that narrate the associated documents' content will score higher than those that simply reference documents.

Statutory Criteria A	up to 250 possible points
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The degree to which the project activity can demonstrate the purpose and need. This includes the degree to which the project will provide features that address infrastructure, maintenance, or building code issues at historic sites and museums, or establish or enhance security, climate control, or fire protection for museums.

1. Describe the current use and condition of the historic resource.
2. Describe the deficiency the proposed project will address and how this has impacted the historic resource including the duration of time the deficiency has existed.
3. Describe how the proposed project will address the identified deficiency including why MHPG funding will enable proper completion of the resource.
4. Describe the financial need for MHPG grant funds to complete the project.
5. Describe how the proposed project was selected and prioritized in relation to plans to preserve and maintain the historic resource.

Statutory Criteria B	up to 100 possible points
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The degree to which the project supports economic stimulus or economic activity both during the project and as a result of project completion. This includes job creation and work creation for Montana contractors and service workers.



1. Describe the economic impact of this project related to job creation for Montana contractors and service workers.
 - a. How many jobs will this project create?
 - b. What types of jobs?
 - c. Explain how this information was gathered.
2. Describe the ongoing economic impact related to facility use or visitation as a result of the proposed project.
3. Describe how your project relates to community goals and previous or concurrent planning efforts (downtown revitalization plan, growth policy, historic preservation plan, economic development strategy, etc.).
4. Please describe your long-term vision for the historic resource and explain how this project fits into organizational plans (strategic, interpretive, business, outreach, etc.).
 - a. Will this project decrease your operating costs, and, if applicable, how will those savings be reinvested?

Statutory Criteria – C

up to 200 possible points

The shovel readiness of the project, including the degree to which timing of the project can be completed without delay, including access to matching funds and approval of permits, if needed.

1. Describe the organization's capacity and ability to complete the proposed project within the proposed timeline.
2. Describe the status and availability of all matching funds needed to complete the proposed project.
3. Describe how receipt of MHPG funding will enable the ability to leverage additional funding such as grants, loans, and Historic Tax Credits.
4. Describe any potential timeline considerations that are related to permits, environmental considerations, or related activities to complete the proposed project.



Statutory Criteria - D

up to 300 possible points

The degree to which the project activity contributes historic or heritage value related to the state of Montana.

1. Describe the historical context and significance of the historic resource associated with the proposed project including:
 - a. Heritage value related to the state of Montana;
 - b. The value of the resource to the local community; and
 - c. Any relevant designations or listings.
2. If the structure is listed on a local, state, or national registry please include relevant documentation.
3. Describe how the proposed project will sustain the character defining features and integrity of the historic resource.
4. Describe how the proposed project will help promote and interpret the heritage value of the historic resource for the public.
5. Describe how the proposed project will adhere to the appropriate Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
6. If the project type is a historic structure, describe any future plans for the structure and continued commitment to preserving its historic integrity. Confirm that there are no intentions of demolishing the structure nor undermining its historic integrity following project completion.

Statutory Criteria - E

up to 100 possible points

The organization's capacity, including the degree to which the applicant demonstrates a successful track record or the experience of the organization managing similar or related projects.



1. Describe the organizational capacity and experience with similar projects of all project partners.
2. Please identify the entity/organization that will administer the grant. If possible, please also identify the primary person(s) responsible for grant management and describe their qualifications and/or experience with grant management.
3. Describe a recent project completed by the entity/organization that will administer the grant, specifically identifying:
 - a. any significant barriers or impediments and how your organization overcame them;
 - b. any project delays; and
 - c. any changes to the budget.
4. If available, please provide a copy of your organization's most recent audit or financial documents. Please discuss any unresolved audit or financial issues.

Statutory Criteria - F

up to 150 possible points

The degree to which the project shows local contribution (for example, monies and letters of support).

Describe your community's commitment to the project according to varying levels/types of contribution.

- a. What degree of local cash has been committed? Please describe amounts and types.
- b. What degree of local in-kind services (time, labor, materials) have been pledged?
- c. If this is a phased project, please describe funds expended through previous phases.
- d. What local organizations support the project? Include letters of support from at least three entities (examples: local businesses, state or local historic preservation officers or organizations, local economic development organizations, city or county officials, etc.).



- e. Describe other efforts to generate public support and awareness of the project.
For example, if you have held a public meeting regarding the proposed project, please describe attendance, questions raised, etc.

Statutory Criteria - G	up to 100 possible points
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The degree to which the applicant demonstrates anticipated public benefit, including the extent the site or building will be open to the public and the degree of immediate facility use after project completion.

Describe the project's anticipated public benefit.

- a. Describe the current level of public access and use of the structure, as well as the anticipated accessibility and use upon project completion.
- b. Describe when the facility will be open to the public after project completion.
- c. What proportion of the building will be open to the public upon project completion?
- d. What efforts will be made to make the building accessible to the public?

Table A

Sample Project Budget

Please adjust the budget rows and columns to accurately reflect the use of MHPG and matching MHPG funding that will contribute to the completion of project activities. It is highly recommended that service and/or project costs are acquired through bids or cost estimates and those documents be attached to the application.

Budget for: (project name)

Date:

	Source: MHPG	Source: (identify)	Source: (identify)	Total
Professional planning or administration activities				
Architectural or engineering activities				
Construction costs				
Other (describe)				
Total project budget	\$	\$	\$	\$

Table B

Sample Implementation Schedule

Task	Month / Year
Administration milestones (Below are examples/ Please change as necessary for the proposed project)	
Procurement process for professional services	
Select firm	
Other (describe)	
Activity Milestones (Below are examples/ Please change as necessary for the proposed project)	
Procurement process for construction	
Select contractor	
Construction	
Other (describe)	
Project closeout	