New Jersey Cultural Trust

Institutional and Financial Stabilization Grants for History & Humanities Organizations

Fiscal Year 2026 Grant Program Guidelines

Declaration of Intent to Apply Deadline: June 11, 2025 at 3 p.m. ET
Application Deadline: July 17, 2025 at 3 p.m. ET

New Jersey Cultural Trust	New Jersey Historical Commission
NJ Department of State	NJ Department of State
P.O. Box 305	P.O. Box 305
Trenton, New Jersey 08625	Trenton, New Jersey 08625
609-292-6403	609-292-6062
nj.gov/state/culturaltrust/	nj.gov/state/historical/

Key Dates for FY 2026 Cultural Trust Grants	
March 17, 2025	Grant guidelines released
April 30, 2025	Declaration of Intent to Apply available in SAGE
June 11, 2025 at 3 p.m.	Declaration of Intent due in SAGE
June 11, 2025 at 3 p.m.	Online applications for qualification due
July 16, 2025	Cultural Trust Board meeting to approve qualifications
July 17, 2025 at 3 p.m.	Full grant applications due in SAGE
July-October 2025	Historical Commission convenes independent review panels and crafts recommendations
November 2025	Cultural Trust takes action on recommendations and announces grants
January 1-December 31, 2026	Grant period for funded projects

ABOUT THE CULTURAL TRUST

The New Jersey Cultural Trust is a public-private partnership established by law in July 2000 to develop a permanent source of additional funding for arts, history, and humanities organizations. The Trust seeks to help cultural organizations achieve greater financial and operational stability in order to improve their service to the public. To this end, the Cultural Trust awards grants to support capital projects and institutional and financial stabilization projects at qualified organizations. Cultural Trust funds are intended to be supplemental to the operating and program support provided by other State and county cultural agencies; while other agencies may provide ongoing annual support, the Cultural Trust is designed to make significant one-time investments in organizations' stability and capacity. The Cultural Trust Act directs the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the New Jersey Historical Commission, and the New Jersey Historic Trust to design and administer programs that recommend projects to the Cultural Trust for such grants.

HOW CULTURAL TRUST GRANTS ARE FUNDED

Funding for Cultural Trust grants comes from interest earned on the Cultural Trust Fund, which is a permanent investment fund. The invested principal of the Cultural Trust Fund grows through annual legislative appropriations, leveraged by private donations to the endowments of cultural nonprofits as well as by private donations directly to the Fund. Each year, the State of New Jersey appropriates a dedicated portion of the revenue generated by the hotel/motel occupancy fee to the Cultural Trust Fund. To learn more about the Cultural Trust's funding, go to https://nj.gov/state/culturaltrust/ct-trust-information.shtml.

THIS GRANT ROUND

For Fiscal Year 2026, the New Jersey Historical Commission is accepting applications from **history and humanities organizations** for Institutional and Financial Stabilization Grants to recommend to the Cultural Trust for funding.

GRANT FUNDS

Organizations may apply for grant funds **up to $40,000**. While there is no minimum award amount, requests typically range from $10,000 to $40,000. Please note that final grant awards are subject to and pending available funds.

GRANT PERIOD

The grant period for successful projects is January 1 to December 31, 2026. All project activities must occur and all grant funds must be expended during the grant period. The Cultural Trust will not fund projects that have started prior to January 1, 2026.

NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

A qualified organization may submit only **one application** for Cultural Trust funding in this grant round. Each application must be for a single, discrete project within a single primary project category.

MATCH AND FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

There is no matching requirement. However, if an organization's proposed project costs more than is being requested, the proposal must clearly demonstrate the organization's ability to provide the remaining necessary funds. Grant funds may not be used to match any other State of New Jersey grant. Indirect and other administrative costs not directly related to the project may not be charged against the grant.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for funds in this grant round, an organization must:

- Be a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization that has been **qualified** by the New Jersey Cultural Trust (see details below).
- Be registered as a charity in New Jersey with the Division of Consumer Affairs and have a Charities Registration number.

- Have a primary **history- and/or humanities-focused** mission. (Organizations with a primary arts-focused mission are eligible to apply for Institutional and Financial Stabilization Grants for Arts Organizations, which the Cultural Trust expects will next be offered in FY27.)
- Not have another *active* Institutional and Financial Stabilization grant from the Cultural Trust. **NOTE:** If an organization has an active Historical Commission grant or CHPP re-grant, the organization is still eligible to apply for a Cultural Trust grant. If an organization has an active Cultural Trust Capital Historic Preservation grant, that organization is also still eligible to apply.

QUALIFICATION

In order to be eligible to apply for funds from this program, organizations must be designated qualified by the Cultural Trust. The online qualification application is available on the [Cultural Trust website](#). In order to become qualified, an organization must demonstrate that it:

- Is a New Jersey-based tax-exempt nonprofit organization (no colleges, universities, or units of government).
- Fulfills a primary arts, history, or humanities mission in New Jersey through active programs and services.
- Has been incorporated for a minimum of four years and has been in operation for a minimum of four years.
- Has a functioning board that provides financial oversight to the standards set by the Cultural Trust.
- Is current with Charities Registration and Division of Revenue filings.
- Is able to submit the required support material as described in the qualification application.

Organizations that are *not* currently designated qualified by the Cultural Trust must submit an online qualification application to the Cultural Trust **no later than June 11, 2025 at 3 p.m.** in order to be eligible for this grant round. Please note that the Cultural Trust no longer accepts paper qualification applications; all qualification applications must be completed online.

If an organization is deemed ineligible through the Cultural Trust's qualification process, its grant application will not advance to the panel process.

INSTITUTIONAL/FINANCIAL STABILIZATION PROJECT CATEGORIES

The purpose of Cultural Trust funding is to provide financial support to assist qualified organizations in addressing the financial and institutional challenges that threaten their stability and to help build greater operational capacity to manage and advance their work. Awards may support a wide variety of expenses, including immediate response activities, costs associated with planning or assessment, and investment strategies that reimagine work and build resiliency.

Below are broad categories of eligible institutional/financial stabilization projects. Applicants must clearly identify a stabilization challenge or capacity issue and articulate a specific, appropriate strategy *primarily within one of the below categories* to address the challenge or issue. Applicants must explain how that strategy will produce significant and sustainable results.

Institutional/financial stabilization projects are limited to the following categories (see details about each project category and category-specific requirements below):
- Establishing or growing a working capital fund/cash reserve
- Debt/deficit reduction
- Strategic planning/assessment
- Technology upgrade
- Capital equipment purchase
- Staff/board development
- New staff position

Please note that, in order to be eligible, an application must propose a *single, discrete project*. In order to be considered a single, discrete project, a project must be a targeted, cohesive set of activities that provide a solution to a specific stability/capacity challenge. Even if all project activities are within a single project category, the project may not be considered a single, discrete project. Please contact Cultural Trust or Historical Commission staff if you are unsure whether your proposal meets this requirement.

A wide array of projects are eligible for funding, and the Historical Commission and Cultural Trust look forward to receiving applications for all eligible projects. For this round, applications for DEAI training and audience evaluation are encouraged. All eligible applications will be reviewed in accordance with the published evaluation criteria.

Institutional and Financial Stabilization Project Categories

Establishing or Growing a Working Capital Fund/Cash Reserve: A working capital fund or cash reserve increases an organization's financial stability by increasing its liquid, unrestricted capital. Both working capital funds and cash reserves are specific kinds of designated funds separate from an organization's operating budget. A working capital fund addresses cash flow issues, while a cash reserve addresses unplanned short-term expenses. Where an organization might otherwise address these challenges using bridge loans or external lines of credit, a working capital fund or cash reserve can help the organization avoid interest payments and even yield interest.

- **Create a Working Capital Fund:** A working capital fund, a revolving fund which is replenished regularly, reduces operating risk and better secures an organization's other income and assets. For example, organizations may sometimes need to pay significant amounts of cash upfront for a year's expenses (such as licensing fees or subscriptions) while revenue comes in more incrementally throughout the year (such as tuition or ticket sales). In this case, organizations can use a working capital fund as an internal line of credit to support upfront costs, and replenish the fund with revenue as it is earned. Applicants must show that the board has instituted a policy and plan to replenish the fund to the level described and outlined the organization's policies for managing the fund.
- **Create a Cash Reserve:** Cash reserves are funds that are set aside to ensure stability when unplanned costs arise or revenue unexpectedly falls. A cash reserve may assist an organization with avoiding debt if unexpected circumstances arise. Reserves may also be established to address other specific challenges. A common reserve of this type is a facilities reserve, which can help an organization budget for expenses related to physical property and assets, such as repairing and replacing plumbing, A/C units, and roofs. In all cases, the money is typically placed in a separate account, designated as the cash reserve account. Applicants must show that the board has instituted a policy and plan to replenish the reserve to the level described and has outlined the organization's policies for managing the fund.
- **Grow an Existing Working Capital Fund or Cash Reserve:** If an organization's working capital fund or cash reserve is not sufficiently capitalized to address the organization's needs, the organization may apply for funds to grow it. Applicants must detail the history of the fund/reserve's use and management, explain how a Cultural Trust grant would improve the efficacy of the fund/reserve and its impact on the organization, and outline the organization's plans to replenish the fund/reserve in the future, in accordance with the board's established policies for managing the fund.

Applicants should specify in their grant narrative whether their proposed fund will function as a working capital fund, a cash reserve, or both. While all are eligible, applicants must clearly articulate the intended purpose and uses of the fund.

NOTE: Any applicant receiving a grant in this category will be required to submit reports about the status of the fund to the Cultural Trust every year for four years after receiving the grant.

For more information about Cash Reserve/Working Capital Fund projects, please see the [Additional Guidance for Cash Reserve/Working Capital Fund and Debt/Deficit Reduction Projects](#).

Debt/Deficit Reduction: Cultural Trust funds may be used to reduce or eliminate a debt or deficit that poses a threat to an organization's stability. Funds may NOT be used to address a recurring operating deficit. If funding to reduce or eliminate a debt/deficit is requested, the applicant must provide a detailed explanation of how the debt/deficit was incurred; demonstrate that the debt/deficit was incurred as the result of a one-time event or specific, discrete challenge; and outline how the organization will avoid a recurring deficit and build organizational sustainability. The repayment of government loans is NOT eligible.

For more information about Debt/Deficit Reduction projects, please see the Additional Guidance for Cash Reserve/Working Capital Fund and Debt/Deficit Reduction Projects.

Strategic Planning/Assessment: Sound planning is a key step in building resiliency, and assessments can yield key information for decision-making and provide roadmaps for future planning. The Cultural Trust defines strategic planning broadly as an umbrella that covers a wide range of important planning activities. Examples of eligible planning projects may include:
- General organizational strategic plans
- Marketing and communications plans, including rebranding
- DEAI plans
- Fundraising plans
- Board development plans
- Succession plans/executive transition planning
- Facilities plans
- Campus master plans
- Interpretive plans
- Membership and outreach plans
- Emergency preparedness, disaster, or continuity of operations plans
- Financial policies and procedures, including development of chart of accounts

Examples of eligible assessment projects may include:
- Technology assessments
- Accessibility assessments
- Climate vulnerability assessments
- Emergency preparedness assessments
- Feasibility studies for capital campaigns
- Market research
- Research exploring potential mergers
- Economic impact studies

A successful planning and/or assessment project will outline a process, including: identification of any professionals or consultants who will be engaged, including their qualifications; who will be involved in the process; how public input will be obtained; the steps of the process and its timeline; and benchmarks for how and when the plan will be revisited and progress measured.

If a consultant is being engaged to lead the planning and/or assessment work, the consultant must already be identified by the applicant at the time of application.

Technology Upgrade: Effective use of technology can increase an organization's capacity and enable it to connect its programs and services to the public, leading to greater financial and operational stability. Examples of eligible technology upgrade projects may include:
- Creating a new or upgraded website, including enhancements for accessibility

- Purchasing and implementing software, such as customer relationship management or donor management (CRM) software, point of sale systems, online payment systems, and accounting programs
- Upgrading or building databases
- Purchasing computers, tablets, servers, phones, or other hardware for organizational use
- Search engine optimization
- Installation of cybersecurity systems and protocols, including incident response planning
- Technology to enhance accessibility (e.g., hearing loops, captioning, etc.)

Related costs, such as technology needs assessments by IT professionals or staff training on new software, may be included within this project category. Costs for software and professional services are eligible only if they are one-time costs; recurring costs such as monthly/annual subscription fees or service contracts are considered operating costs and are NOT eligible.

Capital Equipment Purchase: Capital equipment purchases can also stabilize an organization and increase its capacity. Eligible projects in this category are non-routine purchases of durable goods that are capitalized and depreciated on an organization's balance sheet. Construction projects are NOT eligible. Labor and installation costs for equipment are also NOT eligible.

Staff/Board Development: Board members and/or staff may require a new skill in order to perform essential or new business functions. This idea may extend to business systems and services as well as skills that help organizations reduce costs, improve accountability, or increase productivity. Examples of eligible staff/board development projects may include:
- DEAI training
- Executive coaching
- Technical skills training
- Board education
- Leadership training programs
- Engagement of a recruitment firm

New Staff Position: While support for staff resources is possible under this program, Cultural Trust funds will only support a *new* staff position. To be eligible, a new staff position must directly address the operational or financial challenge identified by the applicant and must be a long-term, permanent addition to the organization's team. Most importantly, the applicant must provide a detailed, specific plan for fully sustaining the cost of the position beyond the grant period.

Converting an existing unpaid, volunteer position to a permanent paid position is eligible. Maintaining or expanding an existing paid staff position is NOT eligible. Filling an existing vacancy is NOT eligible. Only one, individual staff position may be supported with this grant. The new staff position must be based in New Jersey.

A detailed job description and a resume of the candidate (if identified) must accompany applications seeking support for a staff position. *The new role must be scheduled to start after the grant period begins*. The applicant may request funds to cover one-time ancillary costs related to onboarding the new staff member, such as training or technology purchases. These costs may not exceed 10% of the total project costs.

NOTE: Applicants receiving funding for a new staff position will be required to submit reports about the status of the position to the Cultural Trust every year for four years after receiving the grant.

TRAINING COSTS

While staff/board development is enumerated as a separate category, training may also be an element of projects that fall primarily into other categories. For example, a technology upgrade project that proposes

onboarding a new customer relationship management system might include training for staff on the new system; or, a strategic planning project for a development plan may include training for board or staff on how to execute the plan. These training costs are eligible expenses in any category as long as they are closely related to the other project activities.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND EXPENSES

Institutional and Financial Stabilization grants are intended to make projects and activities possible that otherwise would not be feasible at this time. They may not replace other funds and must be *in addition to* funds originally and normally budgeted for or associated with the routine operations of an organization. The following types of projects and expenses are NOT eligible:

- General operating expenses
- Salaries, costs, and time of *existing* staff and board members dedicated to the project
- Applying to support more than one discrete project
- Capital construction projects
- Fundraising events (e.g., galas, receptions, etc.)
- Scholarships, fellowships, and internships

- Contributions to endowments
- Education in a matriculating course of study
- Acquisition of collections
- International travel
- Ongoing or new public programs, projects, and services
- Catering and hospitality
- Projects involving a consultant or contractor for which a specific consultant or contractor has not been identified

HISTORIC PROPERTIES

For organizations with properties on the New Jersey and/or National Register of Historic Places: **Projects that relate to or propose the alteration of the physical structure or property are NOT eligible and will not proceed to panel review.** These may include (but are not limited to) capital equipment purchases, technology upgrades, capital campaign feasibility studies, reuse feasibility studies, accessibility plans, historic structure/landscape reports, facilities plans, and campus master plans.

- If you are unsure whether your project would be considered to relate to the physical structure or property, please contact Cultural Trust or Historical Commission staff to inquire about project eligibility (contact information is on page 8 in the "Application Assistance Available" section).
- To determine your property's register status, visit https://dep.nj.gov/hpo/tools/lucy/ and contact the State Historic Preservation Office by phone (609-940-4312) or email (njhpo@dep.nj.gov).

For information on other funding opportunities for historic properties, go to https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Review and reference the Evaluation Criteria before and during the preparation of your application. Independent review panels evaluate applications in accordance with the following uniform criteria:

1. Stability/Capacity Challenge:

- The applicant articulates a specific, real, and significant challenge to the organization's stability/capacity.

2. Project Plan:

- The proposed project is sufficiently detailed and specific, demonstrating a firm understanding of the mechanics of the project in order to successfully complete it.
- The intended project outcomes are clear and follow logically from the project activities.

3. Project Suitability:

- The proposed project is an appropriate solution to the identified stability/capacity challenge.

- The proposed project aligns with the organization's overall strategic planning and financial health as a logical next step.

4. Project Feasibility:

- The proposed project budget and quotes are reasonable, realistic, and sufficient to complete the project.
- The identified expenditures are appropriate to the project.
    - For projects involving **consultants**: The identified consultant is appropriate and suitable to the project.
    - For projects involving **equipment/software purchase**: The proposed purchases are appropriate and suitable to the project.
    - For projects requesting support for **staff/board development**: The enrollment costs are appropriate and the training curriculum is suitable to the project.
    - For projects adding a **new staff position**: The job description is appropriate and suitable to the project.
    - For projects requesting **cash reserve/working capital funds**: The board policies for managing and replenishment of the fund are appropriate and reasonable.
    - For project requesting **debt/deficit reduction**: The plan to avoid a recurring deficit is appropriate and sufficient.
- The applicant has the necessary infrastructure, capacity, and organizational commitment in place to support the project or provides a reasonable plan for obtaining the needed resources.

5. Project Impact and Sustainability:

- The project as proposed will result in significant improvement to the long-term stability or capacity of the organization.
- The applicant provides a sufficient plan for how the gains from the project will be sustained after the grant period.

HOW TO APPLY

All applicants to the FY26 IFS History/Humanities grant program must submit a Declaration of Intent to Apply (DOI) in SAGE by **June 11, 2025 at 3 p.m**. Applicants that do not submit a DOI by June 11, 2025 will not be eligible to submit an application. DOIs will be reviewed by Historical Commission staff for eligibility. Once the DOI is approved, you will be granted access to the grant application.

In order to access and submit the DOI form, an applicant must first be registered in the System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE), the State of New Jersey's grant management system. This system requires authorization for access. If you do not have a username and password, please click the New User link to request access to the site. **NOTE:** Registration is not automatic. You must wait for an email message confirming your account has been validated before you can log in to SAGE. This could take up to 72 hours.

How to access the DOI: Once you have logged into SAGE, go to the "View Available Opportunities" section on the main landing page. Click "View Opportunities." Under the Cultural Trust section, you will find the IFS DOI, called, "Cultural Trust IFS History/Humanities 2026 DOI."

You may contact Cultural Trust staff for SAGE technical assistance at cultural.trust@sos.nj.gov or 609-292-6403.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The following assistance is available to help you compose and submit your DOI and application:

1. **Staff Support:** Cultural Trust staff (Isabel Kasdin and Avery Wehrs) and Historical Commission staff (Niquole Primiani) are available to help with questions specific to your DOI and application by telephone and email. You may also schedule an appointment for in-depth application questions. Applicants seeking assistance are advised to do so well in advance of the DOI and application deadlines.

2. **ZOOM Office Hours:** Applicants can participate in a Cultural Trust Office Hour to ask questions pertaining to the DOI and application. Participation is free; however, registration is required. Please check the Cultural Trust website for dates and times.

3. **Workshops:** Virtual workshops are planned for March through May. Workshops will address various aspects of the application process. Participation is free. Please check the Cultural Trust website for dates, times, and details.

Prior to contacting Cultural Trust or Historical Commission staff, applicants should read the guidelines thoroughly.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

SAGE Forms

The following items must be completed in SAGE:

1. **Organizational Profile Form:** This form provides the essential information about the organization, including contact information.

2. **Project Summary:** This form provides basic information about the project:
   o Project Type: Select one of the project categories listed above; the project must fall within a single primary project category.
   o Total project costs and total grant funds requested.
   o Estimated project start date and length of time to complete.
   o Purpose of Funding statement: A statement limited to approximately 50 words or 300 characters. It will be used in press releases and for other public inquiries. It should contain the basic "who, what, where, and when" information. It should begin with, "This Cultural Trust grant will…"

   > Sample Statement: "This Cultural Trust grant will support the creation of a cash reserve for Sample Historical Society, which will ensure the continuity of operations in the case of emergencies that place unexpected strains on the Historical Society's finances."

3. **Grant Narratives:** This form includes two parts:
   o Organization Impact Summary: This statement is limited to 3,000 characters. It should include a brief summary of the organization's mission, major programs and services, and audience.
   o Project Narrative: This statement is limited to 12,500 characters, or approximately 3 pages. It should clearly and concisely communicate your project to the panel, and provide context for the other materials in the application. The narrative should directly respond to each of the questions in the Narrative Topics, keeping in mind the Evaluation Criteria for each topic (details below). It is a good idea to craft the narrative in a Word document and then copy and paste it into the SAGE narrative screen.

4. **Board Chart:** This chart identifies who is on the organization's current board and advisory board.

5. **Staff Chart:** This chart identifies the organization's key staff and volunteers.
   o Include paid staff, volunteers, and independent contractors.
   o The total staff costs in this chart should correspond to your organizational budget chart.

6. **Organizational Budget Charts:** Complete the Organizational Budget Chart: Operating Expenses and the Organizational Budget Chart: Operating Income. Use the Budget Notes section to detail line items for each chart. The panel expects accompanying notes to provide clear information about the

organization's financial picture. The organizational budget charts should be completed according to the applicant's own fiscal year.

7. **Project Budget Charts:** Use the Project Expense Chart and Project Funding Chart to fully enumerate your project expenses and funding sources. Use the Budget Notes section to detail line items.
   o Please include all related project costs, not only those that comprise your requested Cultural Trust funds.

Required Support Materials

Support materials play a significant part in the evaluation process by reinforcing what is presented in the narrative. They are important tools that provide the panel with a complete picture and basis for evaluation. These materials must be uploaded in the **Support Materials** form in SAGE. The maximum file size is 13 MB.

- Link to the organization's website.

- Organization's **two** most recently completed audits/Form 990s/independent financial reviews.
   o Please provide two separate audits, 990 documents, or financial reviews.
   o The two documents should be of the same type (NOT one audit and one 990).
   o **IMPORTANT:** For organizations uploading 990Ns (also known as 990 postcards), also upload an internal balance sheet for each year corresponding to the 990s. A balance sheet, or statement of financial position, summarizes the organization's assets and liabilities. Profit and loss statements (P&Ls) will NOT fulfill this requirement.
   o **NOTE**: Documents must be from FY22 or later in order to satisfy the requirement.

- Brief biographies or resumes of the key individuals (staff/board) participating in the project, not to exceed 1 page per person. Be sure the information provided is relative to their role in the project.

- Brief background on all outside organizations, agencies, or institutions that are projected to provide services in support of this project.

- **For projects requesting funds for a consultant:** Credentials and copy of the actual proposal of any consultant including detailed costs, timelines, action steps and deliverables. It is important to include the Request for Proposal and/or the process used to select any consultants so that the panel fully understands the process and/or the decision for selection of a proposed consultant.

- **For projects requesting funds for technology/equipment:** Vendor quotes and documentation of proposed expenses. PDFs of online retail listings will also be accepted.

- **For projects requesting funds for staff/board development:** Documentation of enrollment costs and training curriculum. If a consultant is being engaged to conduct staff/board development, the requirements for consultants apply (see above).

- **For projects requesting funds for a staff position:** Detailed job description for the proposed position and resume of candidate (if available), as well as a clear plan for how the position will be sustained after the single year of Cultural Trust funding.

- **For projects requesting funds for a cash reserve or working capital fund:** Board-adopted organizational policies for managing and replenishing the reserve/fund.

- **For projects requesting funds to address a debt/deficit:** A plan to avoid a recurring deficit.

NOTE: ALL proposed project costs must be supported by documentation. For cash reserve/working capital fund and debt/deficit reduction projects, this requirement does not apply.

Optional Support Materials: In addition to the required support materials, applicants may provide up to three additional items of support material. Support material should strengthen the application by further illustrating the organization's mission and activities, stabilization/capacity challenge, and/or proposed solution. Examples of support material include strategic plans, assessments, letters of support, programs, photographs, and publicity materials. Each item is counted as one piece of support material. For example, a multi-page program, a photograph, and an article would *each* be considered one piece. These materials may be uploaded in the **Support Materials** form in SAGE.

IMPORTANT NOTES:
- Be sure to include *all* relevant and required information about your organization and project in your application materials in SAGE. Reviewers will NOT see any other documents previously submitted to the Cultural Trust or to the Historical Commission, including your qualification application.
- Please make sure that you do not upload password-protected, corrupted, or otherwise inaccessible files. Do not use special characters when naming your files, as they are not functional in SAGE. Panelists can only evaluate the materials that are accessible.

NARRATIVE TOPICS

The Narrative Topics are the framework for writing the narrative, and they correspond with the Evaluation Criteria above. Please arrange your narrative to clearly address each of these topics either through the use of headings or numbers. Successful narratives are clear, convincing, and supported by budgets and other application materials. Compose a narrative that will allow a panelist who does not know your organization to understand it in relation to the Evaluation Criteria. Use the required and optional support materials to reinforce specific narrative topics. A chart showing the narrative topics alongside their corresponding evaluation criteria is available on the Cultural Trust's website.

1. Detail the organization's major challenge to institutional or financial stability or future operational capacity, including any self-assessment behind identifying the challenge. Explain why its resolution is a high priority for the organization.

2. Fully articulate the proposed stabilization/capacity project and its expected outcomes.

3. Discuss why the project is the best available solution to the stabilization/capacity challenge, and how it fits into your organization's overall strategic planning and financial health.

4. Explain the major expenditures and the human resources that will be used to complete the project, including (if applicable) how consultants, vendors, and materials were selected. If the project will cost more than the funds requested, explain how and when the additional resources will be obtained.

5. Explain how the project will result in significant improvement to the long-term stability or capacity of the organization, and how the gains made through the project will be sustained, independent of future Cultural Trust funds. **NOTE:** If the project is the addition of a new staff position, explain specifically how the position will be sustained after the grant period.

APPLICATION CERTIFICATION

After completing all required forms and uploading all required support materials, the application must be certified by both an organization official (e.g., executive director) and a member of the organization's board or governing body. Certification involves entering the individuals' names and titles into the Application Certification form in SAGE, with their consent. The authorizing official and board member must be two different people.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The application must be submitted by the deadline by changing the application's status in SAGE to "Application Submitted." You will receive an e-mail confirmation from SAGE when your Cultural Trust application is successfully submitted.

GRANT DISBURSEMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND REPORTING

The grant period for this round is January 1 to December 31, 2026. All grant project activities must occur during this period, and all expenses must be incurred and paid during this timeframe, unless you have received an extension.

Cultural Trust grants are distributed on a partial reimbursement basis. Grantees will receive 75 percent of their grant award upon signing the grant contract, and 25 percent as a reimbursement after all the project costs have been incurred and/or project activities completed and the final grant report has been submitted and approved.

There is no written interim report required for this grant. Rather, Cultural Trust staff will arrange an Interim Conversation with each grantee to learn about their progress and discuss any necessary modifications. These will be held in the summer of 2026. Minimal preparation will be required.

A final written report **is required**. Required components include audience numbers for the organization as a whole, a written narrative reflecting on the project activities and outcomes, photographs documenting project activities or the organization as a whole, a financial report documenting the actual expenses as compared to the approved project budget, and copies of all invoices and cancelled checks for expenses related to the grant-funded project. Final reports are due within 30 days of the close of the grant period or completion of the grant project.

As stated above, recipients of grants supporting working capital funds/cash reserves and new staff positions will be required to submit reports on the status of the fund or staff position for four years following the receipt of the grant.

DOI AND APPLICATION DEADLINES

The Declaration of Intent to Apply is due in SAGE on **June 11, 2025 at 3 p.m.** Applicants that do not submit a DOI by June 11, 2025 will not be eligible to submit an application. The application deadline is **July 17, 2025 at 3 p.m. ET.** Late submissions will not be accepted for any reason, including technical/human error. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications well before the deadline.

IMPORTANT: Applications for ineligible projects and applications from ineligible organizations will not advance to the panel process.