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Connecting Constituents with Federal Programs for Historic Preservation

Congress has established programs and provided grant funding to assist constituents—including individuals, organizations, and state, tribal, and local governments—with historic preservation efforts. This In Focus lists selected federal programs that may be used to further historic preservation goals such as building restoration, land acquisition, and education.

The National Park Service (NPS) administers most federal historic preservation funding programs. Many federal grants are awarded to state, tribal, and local governments, which in turn may issue sub-awards to other entities. Interested applicants are encouraged to contact federal agencies, state agencies, or tribal agencies for information on eligibility, the application process, award cycles, and availability. Funding levels for the programs listed below vary and may be subject to appropriations.

Since January 2025, President Trump has issued executive orders addressing the use of federal funds in various areas. Several of these orders—aspects of which are subject to litigation—direct relevant agencies to pause certain grant-related and other funding activities and may affect the resources discussed in this CRS In Focus.

For more information about the federal role in historic preservation, see CRS Report R45800, *The Federal Role in Historic Preservation: An Overview*, by Mark K. DeSantis.

Historic Preservation Fund Grant Programs

The NPS's Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) encompasses several different programs. Funding from the HPF is distributed through both formula-based apportionment grants and competitive grants.

Formula Grants

Each year, NPS distributes HPF formula grants to state historic preservation offices (SHPOs) and tribal historic preservation offices (THPOs). Within general parameters established by NPS, these offices have flexibility on how they distribute HPF funds. Grant seekers should contact their SHPOs or THPOs directly to learn more about available funding opportunities. NPS maintains a list of SHPOs, and the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers maintains a THPO directory.

Certified Local Governments

A certified local government is a city, town, or county government entity that has been certified by the NPS and a state SHPO as being committed to national historic preservation standards. By law, SHPOs must devote 10% of

the HPF funding they receive as formula grants to certified local governments.

Competitive Grants

The NPS's State, Tribal, Local, Plans and Grants Division manages several competitive grant programs funded through the HPF. Applicant eligibility varies depending on the program and may change over time. Interested applicants should reach out to the contacts listed on each program's website for more information about eligibility.

African American Civil Rights Grants

The African American Civil Rights grant program offers competitive grants in two categories: preservation and history. Preservation grants fund physical preservation activities or pre-preservation studies of sites connected to African American history. History grants fund historical research or interpretation projects at eligible sites. Grants must be used for properties that are in or are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) either individually or as part of a historic district.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities Grants

The Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) grant program provides funds for the preservation and restoration of historic structures located on HBCU campuses.

History of Equal Rights Grants

The History of Equal Rights grant program funds sites connected to efforts to secure equal rights for all Americans. The program supports preservation work and pre-preservation planning activities. Grants must be used for properties that are in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register either individually or as part of a historic district.

Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants

The Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant program provides preservation funds to rural communities. Applicants, also known as prime grantees, apply for funding, which they then distribute as grants to other organizations, known as subgrantees. Grants must be used for properties in rural areas that are in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register either individually or as part of a historic district.

Save America's Treasures Grants

The Save America's Treasures grant program—co-administered with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services—provides competitive

grants in two categories: preservation and collections. Preservation grants may be used for conservation and preservation work on structures that are listed in the National Register as nationally significant, are part of historic districts designated as nationally significant, or are National Historic Landmarks. Collections grants may fund activities to conserve historically significant museum, archival, and archaeological collections.

Semiquincentennial Grants

The Semiquincentennial grant program provides funds for preservation and pre-preservation activities at sites connected to the founding of the United States. Sites must be listed in the National Register to be eligible for grants.

Tribal Heritage Grants

The Tribal Heritage grant program provides grants to federally recognized Indian Tribes for historic and cultural preservation, identification, and documentation projects.

American Battlefield Protection Program

The American Battlefield Protection program, managed by NPS, provides funding for the preservation and interpretation of battlefields and associated sites. Funds are distributed through four competitive grant programs.

Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants may be used to purchase or conserve parcels of battlefield land. *Battlefield Restoration Grants* may be used to undertake activities that restore park land to day-of-battle conditions. *Battlefield Interpretation Grants* may be used to fund projects that connect visitors to the story of the battlefield. *Preservation Planning Grants* may be used to fund a variety of activities, including but not limited to public programs, signage, planning studies, surveys, and historical documentation. For more information on these grants, see CRS In Focus IF11329, *American Battlefield Protection Program*, by Mark K. DeSantis.

Other Historic Preservation Programs

National Maritime Heritage

NPS and the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration administer the National Maritime Heritage grant program. Grants may be used to preserve historic maritime properties including ships, archaeological sites, and waterfront structures. Grants can also be used to support the conservation of collections relating to maritime history and the teaching of traditional maritime skills. Funds are distributed to SHPOs and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which can then conduct projects directly or distribute the funds to other organizations through subgrant programs that they create and administer.

Japanese American Confinement Sites

The Japanese American Confinement Sites grant program provides grants to preserve, protect, restore, and educate the public on certain sites connected to the United States' incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Community Development Block Grants

The Community Development Block Grant program is managed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development. Grants are distributed to states and qualified localities, which have some flexibility on how they use the funds. Some historic preservation projects may qualify for funding provided that they meet other program goals such as improving the lives of low- and moderate-income individuals, revitalizing neighborhoods, or addressing immediate safety and health risks. More information can be found in CRS Report R43520, *Community Development Block Grants and Related Programs: A Primer*, by Joseph V. Jaroscak

Historic Preservation Tax Incentives

The NPS and the Internal Revenue Service offer a tax credit to support the rehabilitation of historic structures. Property owners may apply for this credit. Both the NPS and the relevant SHPO must review the rehabilitation work to ensure that it complies with federal preservation standards.

Disaster Recovery Grants

In the aftermath of some natural disasters, Congress has, at times, appropriated additional funding from the Historic Preservation Fund to assist impacted communities. Known as Disaster Recovery Grants or the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant program, funds may be used for various recovery projects, including compliance activities, survey and inventory of historic resources in declared disaster areas, recovery and repair of historic properties damaged during the disaster, and other approved activities related to disaster recovery. Funding is at congressional discretion.

Other Resources

CRS In Focus IF12687, *Connecting Constituents with Federal Programs for Public Parks*, by Scott Vierick and Eric P. Nardi

CRS In Focus IF12561, *Connecting Constituents with Federal Assistance for the Arts and Humanities*, by Shannon S. Loane

CRS has other products available related to grants work, many of which are listed on the Grants and Federal Assistance page of the CRS.gov website.

The Federal Assistance page on SAM.gov is the primary source of information on grants and other assistance programs. The listings include information on eligibility, how to apply, and matching requirements. Actual funding of specific grant programs depends on annual congressional budget appropriations.

Grants.gov provides grant seekers with information on competitive federal grant opportunities and how to apply for them.

Scott Vierick, Research Librarian

Mark K. DeSantis, Specialist in Natural Resources Policy

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