



Guidelines for Submitting a Request for a 2026 HEART Grant

Introduction:

The Union County Board of County Commissioners, recognizing the importance of culture, history and the arts, established the HEART Grant Program to encourage a thriving environment for the arts and cultural activities. This program serves as a catalyst to strengthen Union County's non-profit organizations, artists and scholars, enhancing their capacity to provide innovative projects relating to history, the arts and humanities, developing Union County as a center for innovation and excellence in arts and culture.

Projects funded under the HEART Grant Program must directly benefit Union County residents and increase appreciation for Union County history, the arts and humanities, demonstrating that cultural assets are a vital part of community life, education and well-being, economic development and cultural heritage tourism.

The Union County Board of County Commissioners will give paramount consideration to projects that:

- showcase Union County-based arts or historical resources
- engage County residents of all ages
- encourage participation by Union County's diverse populations in all aspects of arts, history and cultural activities within the county
- are submitted by new applicants or that propose new projects

An organization or individual may submit one application for the grant year. As funds are limited, grants are very competitive. It is possible that successful applicants may not receive the full amount of their request. All funding is pending Union County budget approval.

Unless renewed and extended by the Union County Board of County Commissioners, the HEART Grant Program will terminate on December 31, 2026. All funding is pending Union County budget approval.

Deadlines: First time applicants only are required to submit an early draft of the applications narrative and project budget page.

First-time applicants deadline is Thursday, October 23, 2025.

Full Application deadline is Thursday, October 30, 2025.

Applications for 2026 must be completed on-line at the OCH&A Grant portal.

Hard copies will not be accepted. The portal is reached at the link below:

<https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ucnj>

Helpful links for using Foundant and setting up your account can be found here:

<https://support.foundant.com/hc/en-us/articles/4479853059991-GLM-Applicant-Tutorial>

Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicants must be Union County-based non-profit organizations, units of local government, libraries, and individual artists and scholars who live in Union County.
- Programs and projects must occur in Union County.
- Organizations must have tax exemption status under Section 501(c) (3) or (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code or be pending same. One copy of your IRS letter of determination must be included with the application package containing the original signature page.
- Colleges and other educational or religious institutions are eligible if the proposed activity is open to the general public and is separate from religious observance.
- Individuals may apply for funds to support projects that benefit the Union County public. Grant funds exceeding \$600 received by individuals in any one year are taxable and must be reported to the IRS in the year they are received.
- Grants will be awarded to support **specific public programs or projects only** and not for general operating support. Examples of eligible activities are listed below. This is not an inclusive list. If you do not see your project on this list, please call staff of the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs (UCOCHA) to discuss its eligibility.
- **If your organization has applied for funding from the 2026 Union County Local Arts Program (LAP), you are NOT eligible to apply for a 2026 HEART Grant.**
- Past recipients who plan to present the same project must explain why this project should be funded again.

Eligible programs and projects may include, but are not limited to:

- performances, lectures, exhibitions, workshops, demonstrations
- arts- or history-in-education projects
- educational projects that focus on Union County or local history
- programs promoting cultural diversity and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) assistive services: sign or audio interpretation, rental of listening devices, large print programs, etc.
- programs for underserved populations (youth, seniors, special needs)

Funds may be used for artist or speaker fees, coordinators, technical crew and other professional fees, rentals (call in advance about rentals in excess of \$1,000), postage, printing, web subscriptions (such as video conferencing), supplies, etc. that are **related to the project**. Applicants should hire only Union County or New Jersey artists, unless special permission has been granted beforehand. Resumes of artists, speakers or other professionals are mandatory as part of the application. Some equipment purchases may qualify if they are an integral part of the project; please call the UCOCHA to discuss your specific needs.

Grant funds may not be used for:

- general administrative salaries
- scholarships or prizes
- purchase of artwork or artifacts
- capital improvements
- hospitality costs (food and beverages)*

**However, these expenses can be used to fulfill Cash Match requirements*

- reimbursement of deficits
- assembly type programs or fashion shows
- fundraising events for non-arts/history organizations

Match Requirements:

The **cash match** is the amount of money that an organization is required to spend on the project from its own money. It is the organization's share of the total cost of the project. Depending on the amount of the request (see below), **organizations** may need to provide a cash match.

Cash match requirements for organizational applicants only:

- Grant requests of \$1,000 or under have no cash match requirement.
- Grant requests of \$1,001 to \$2,500 must match at least 25% in cash.

The cash match may come from any source except funds from other direct Union County support. County funds may not be used to match other County funds. An organization's cash match may include funds from anticipated admissions, donations, memberships, registrations, other grants, reserve funds, etc. Depending on the total cost of your project, the match may be more than the minimum requirement described above.

Project Budget:

Applicants are required to complete the Project Budget section of the application. This will show expenses and sources of income for your project. It is not necessary to have a figure on each line on the form; complete only what is applicable to your project. Grant funds may be allocated to one category or divided among several.

Note: Organizations must submit their prior year's annual budget summary, (less than 2 pages), in addition to the Project Budget form.

Process:

The 2026 HEART Grant round is for projects taking place between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2026. Staff will review the application for completeness. Members of the Cultural and Heritage Programs Advisory Board will review the applications using the evaluation criteria listed below. The Advisory Board will make funding recommendations to the Union County Board of County Commissioners, which has final responsibility for funding decisions and awards.

Evaluation Criteria:

- high artistic, educational or historical merit
- why or how the project was selected – how does it fill a demonstrated community need
- description of how the project will benefit the Union County community
- details on how the project will be accomplished, by whom, for whom, when and where
- realistic balanced budget
- administrative capabilities of the applicant demonstrated by a well written narrative, appropriate budget, required support material, track record of successful projects

Payment Information:

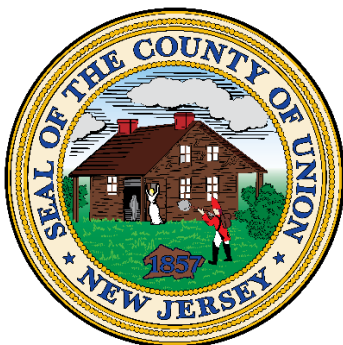
You may not begin your project or spend grant dollars until you have received an official award letter and signed a contract. You will be notified following the County Commissioners meeting at which your proposal is approved. Each organization and individual receiving funds **must** submit a Final Report, which includes financial documentation (Quickbooks printout, paid invoices, and/or canceled checks), attendance figures and a narrative. The Final Report Form will also be made available on Foundant, the UCOCHA grant system. Hard copies will not be accepted.

Grant funds will be disbursed in two payments. The first (50%) is after the contract is signed. The final payment is a **reimbursement** payment. It will be made upon evaluation and approval of the **Final Report**, but may be withheld or reduced if grant funds were not expended as described in the contract. The GRANTEE shall prepare and submit a Final Report within 30 days of completion of said work and services on forms provided by the COUNTY. **All 2026 final reports are due November 14, 2026 or earlier, any changes to this date must be approved in writing.**

Credit Line:

All funded projects must include the following credit line **and** logo on all printed and publicity materials:

This (history or education or arts) program is made possible in part by a 2026 HEART (History, Education, Arts Reaching Thousands) Grant from the Union County Board of County Commissioners.



**FUNDED BY THE UNION COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

UNION COUNTY
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HEART Grant Contact Information:
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Quick Reference Sheet

Grant Period: January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026

Review Process	Deadline Date
Draft Deadline For first time applicants	Thursday, October 23, 2025
Application Deadline	Thursday, October 30, 2025
Successful Applicants Award Letter and Contract signing	Early 2026
Program Timeframe	1/1/26 – 12/31/26
Final Report deadline	As soon as funds & match are spent, or at the latest 11/14/2026

Application Review:

First time applicants are required to apply early to allow time for changes. Staff will review applications up to **Thursday, October 23, 2025.**

Application Deadline: Thursday, October 30, 2025

Maximum Amount to Request:

- Individuals may request a maximum of \$1,000 (no cash match required).
- Organizations may request a maximum of \$2,500.
- Organizations must meet the following **cash match**:

Amount Requested	Cash Match Requirements
\$1,000 or less	No Cash Match Requirement
\$1,001 to \$2,500	Minimum of 25% cash match