



2026 Capital Grants

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

DECLARATION OF INTENT DUE:

August 19, 2025

APPLICATION DUE:

September 16, 2025

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Introduction

The Arts Institute of Middlesex County (AIMC) is committed to the vision that all residents of Middlesex County can access and participate in the arts, history, folklife and culture that enrich their lives. One of the many ways it advances and revitalizes this mission is by developing and funding art, history, folklife and cultural programs that serve the residents of Middlesex County. By working in conjunction with municipalities and local nonprofit art and history organizations, AIMC delivers quality programming to the residents of Middlesex County.

Funding for these grants is made possible by the Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners. These guidelines are for Capital Grants. Middlesex County also offers Historic Preservation Grants, General Operating Support Grants, and Program Support I & II Grants.

Grant Application Website: www.middlesex.smapply.io

CAPITAL GRANTS DESCRIPTION

These annual or two year grants support the development of new facilities or improvements that fortify Middlesex County's rich legacy and future. Capital grants support specific planning documents, "bricks and mortar" projects, or investments in capital equipment that enhance the community and connect residents to arts, history, folklife and culture.

General Information

GRANT REQUEST SIZE	CASH MATCH
\$5,000 - \$35,000	25% of total cost of project

Key Dates

GRANT PERIOD	January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2026 (up to two years)
GRANT WRITING WORKSHOPS	June 24; July 10; July 22; August 7
DECLARATION OF INTENT DUE	August 19, 2025
APPLICATION DUE	September 16, 2025
GRANTS AWARDED	January 2026
FINAL REPORTS DUE	Will Be Specified in Grant Contract

Applicant Eligibility

Am I Eligible?

To be considered eligible for Capital Grants, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Property/site must NOT be on the National Register, State Register, a contributing component of a historic district, and /or have a certificate of eligibility or designation as a local landmark.
- Must be a municipal agency or a non-profit entity based in Middlesex County and recognized by the State of New Jersey, with IRS tax exemption as a 501c3 or 501c4 organization.
- Must be at least five years old, since the incorporation date, with a history of active arts, history, or folklife programming in the last two years.
- Nonprofit organizations must have an arts or history primary purpose (mission).
- Facility and grant-funded activities must take place within Middlesex County.
- Must be able to show proof of ownership or lease of the property (with approval letter from property owner).
- Facility must be open to the public once capital projects are completed
- All programming must be open to the public and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- Previous grantees must be in “good standing” with AIMC, complying with all contractual requirements of the grant contract.

Funding Priorities

Applicants should show strong initiative in one or more of the following:

- Increase participation in arts, culture, folklife, and history by eliminating/reducing barriers such as cost, awareness, and accessibility for populations who disproportionately face these barriers, including seniors, residents of color, low-income residents, people with disabilities, and students who lack robust cultural programming in their schools.
- Engage neighborhood and community partners to specifically target outreach and services.
- Advance the role that high-quality arts, culture, folklife, and history resources play as essential pillars for healthy communities by demonstrating positive community outcomes in areas such as wellness, economic development, education, career preparedness, and pride of place.



Available Grant Tracks

Capital Grants are available in three separate grant tracks. You may select only one grant track for your proposal.

Applicants may choose from the following: planning and construction documents; “bricks and mortar” projects (noted in the chart as construction/repair/expansion of facilities or features); or capital equipment. All projects must enhance the community and connect residents to arts, history, folklife, and culture.

Please be sure to read the guidelines below for each grant track before applying. Requirements vary based on whether your application is for planning a capital project or executing a capital project.

ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION
Planning and Construction Documents	<p>Grants are available for developing plans and documents for a future capital project. Applicants submitting proposals for research and planning projects not related to a future bricks & mortar project should instead apply for a Program or Technical Assistance Grant.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Architectural plans, designs, specifications, cost estimates, and other construction planning administration services• Feasibility Studies• Master Plans• Soil, Foundation and Structure Reports• Engineering Reports
Construction, Repair, or Expansion of Facilities or Features	<p>Grants are available for the construction of new facilities or the repair or expansion of existing facilities and features. This track is for the execution of a capital project. All planning documents should be completed for your capital project prior to the start date of the granting period. If the applicant requires additional planning time and documents, applicant should instead apply for the Planning and Construction Documents track.</p> <p>Construction of new facilities, including barrier-free access.</p> <p>Repair or expansion of facilities and features, including barrier-free access.</p>
Capital Equipment	<p>An article of non-expendable, tangible property that is integrated, mounted, or installed at a facility with a useful life of more than three years and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. The \$5,000 value threshold includes: the item itself; ancillary charges such as taxes, duty, in-transit insurance, and installation costs.</p>

General Restrictions - Capital Grants

- Grants Funds cannot be used for project expenses outside of the scope of work including: overruns, administrative or operational costs of the agency, or charges for overdrafts.
- Proposals should not be primarily centered around landscaping.
- Project must comply with local, state, and federal laws, including state contract laws, public contract law, and Uniform Construction Code UCC.
- Capital Grants cannot fund projects for buildings or sites that are on the National Register or State Register; a contributing component of a historic district; or have a certificate of eligibility or designated as a local landmark.
- If you are awarded a grant, Middlesex County may require an easement.

Additional Restrictions

Grant money may not be used for any of the following:

- Payment to board members
- Deficits or losses from other events or projects
- Fundraisers
- Paying individuals under age 18
- Food and hospitality
- Transportation vehicles
- Proposals for a building or property for which your organization's lease will expire within three years.



Organizations may apply for only one **Historic Preservation** or **Capital Grant** during each cycle. **Historic Preservation Grants** and **Capital Grants** are combinable with a **General Operating Support or Program Grant**, but an applicant may not apply for more than two grants in one cycle.

Grant Application Process

- 01** Organization Submits Declaration of Intent
- 02** Division Staff Determine Eligibility
- 03** Organization Submits Application
- 04** Division Staff Review Applications/Completeness Check
- 05** Independent Panel Review
- 06** Arts & History Committee Review
- 07** Board of County Commissioners Approve
- 08** Grant Contracts Signed
- 09** On-Site Evaluation
- 10** Grantee Submits Final Report

Declaration of Intent (DOI) - Due on August 19, 2025

Before completing a full application, each organization must fill out a *Declaration of Intent* (DOI) through the online grant portal, [Survey Monkey Apply](#). A DOI provides the AIMC with basic information about your organization and a brief description of why you are requesting funding.

Before filling out a DOI, please have essential information about your organization on hand, including contact information, federal ID number, IRS Letter of Determination, Certificate of Incorporation, NJ Charities Registration number and status, independently certified financial audit/reviews for the last two fiscal years, the most recent Form 990, budgetary information, and a brief description of why you are requesting grant funding.

Supporting Materials (Construction/Planning Documents and Reports, Deed or Lease, Consultant Proposals, Estimates and Sustainability Plans) are essential for submission. Capital projects can be complex with multiple contractors to perform the work. Clear planning and construction documents convey the required project goals, objectives, and activities. These documents provide project readiness and capacity to complete the project, as well as strengthen the application. Each document is defined in the table below.

CONSTRUCTION/ PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS	Construction documents are drawings, plans, and specifications relating to the project's construction. They are prepared by professionals in the field to their level of standards and legality. Any major bricks and mortar project should have construction documents. Other planning documents and reports may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Architectural Plans/Designs/Specs• Master Plans• Soil/Foundation Reports• Engineering Reports
DEED OR LEASE	Applicant must submit proof of ownership or lease of the property, along with an approval letter from the property owner.
CONSULTANT PROPOSALS AND ESTIMATES	All proposals for planning or executing a capital project must be accompanied by consultant proposals for the scope of work along with an estimate. Good estimates are imperative to understanding a project's budget and keeping it within cost. Any estimates and proposals that are submitted should be accurate and inclusive of all costs and the full scope of work. For larger scale capital projects, it is important that a professional estimator be used to better reflect potential costs.
SUSTAINABILITY	Whether it's a new development, or repair or expansion of existing facilities, the long-term sustainability of the resource beyond the grant period is imperative. We encourage you to submit a plan that addresses how ongoing sustainability will be supported. What are the revenue generating opportunities or other creative thinking that will help to sustain a site?

AIMC DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY

You may be contacted by staff at this point to go over the project and discuss eligibility issues.

Organization Submits Application - Due on September 16, 2025

After your DOI is approved, your organization will have access to the full application through the grant portal. Basic general information will be pre-filled according to the information you provided on your DOI.

A general application contains the following:

- Organization Contact Information
- Organization History & Mission Statement
- Budget Information
- Audience Statistics
- Narrative Questions
 - ◆ Include detailed project description and goals, programmatic history, professional team engaged, community benefit, and sustainability of project
- Board Governance List
- ADA Plan
- Strategic Plan
- Independently certified financial audit for the most recently completed two fiscal years
- Additional Supporting Materials (see previous page for examples)

Supporting Material

During the DOI and Application stages, you will be asked to attach supporting materials. Supporting materials may include:

- Project Team with Resumes
- Additional Planning Documents and Reports/ Consultant Proposal/ Construction Documents/ Estimates/Sustainability Plan, etc.
- Proof of ownership or lease of the property (with approval letter from property owner)
- Certificate of Incorporation
- IRS Nonprofit status letter
- IRS Form 990

Ready to Get Started?

Gather your organizational documents, project information, and supporting materials and begin filling out your Declaration of Intent at: www.middlesex.smapply.io

The completed DOI is due by **August 19, 2025 at 11:59 PM**. No DOI's submitted after this date will be considered for grant funding.

NO hard copies of the application will be accepted.

If you are a returning applicant, please maintain the same account and login. If you are a new applicant, click "sign-up" to register. Check your e-mail and confirm registration before beginning a new application. If your organization is determined eligible for the grant application, you will receive an email and the full application will open up for you.

The full application is due **September 16, 2025 at 11:59 PM**.

Review Process

Division Staff Review Applications For Completeness

AIMC will begin reviewing grant applications on **September 17, 2025**.

Independent Peer Review

Independent professionals with expertise in the fields of arts, history, and other qualified fields relevant to the proposed project will evaluate your organization's proposal. The panelists will rank applications with the following criteria in mind:

- Public benefit of the project - fulfills a need in the community
- Artistic and/or historical merit and excellence
- Organizational capacity to complete the project: budgetary and administrative
- Professional project planning and supporting materials
- ADA Compliance
- Evidence of strong past performance
- A record of "Good Standing" if a previous grantee
- Leveraging of County initiatives

Arts & History Committee Review

The Arts & History Committee will review panel recommendations and forward the recommendations to the Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners for their final approval.

Board of County Commissioners Grant Approval

Grants are approved at a scheduled meeting of the Board of County Commissioners.

- Grant awards are announced in January/February 2026.

Middlesex County and Grantee Sign Grant Contracts

- Award letters will be emailed to organizations with a copy of the panel's comments/stipulations, which will be incorporated into the grant contract.
- Contracts will be e-mailed to organizations and must be signed electronically through DocuSign.
- Organizations whose grant award varies more than 50% from the grant request will be required to fill out a Budget Revision form
- Any facility which is subject of a Capital Grant shall be required to remain as a cultural facility and shall remain open to the public including all residents of the County. A Deed of Covenants and Restrictions shall be recorded as an encumbrance on the facilities for so long as they shall remain a public cultural facility. Any cultural facility which shall no longer be used for cultural purposes shall be subject to the refunding of the original principal Grant amount to the County, the terms and conditions of which shall be set forth in the Grant Agreement.
- Capital equipment with a minimum of 5 years useful life shall be subject to a covenant and restriction in favor of the County.
- After contracts are fully authorized by the Commissioner Director, payment vouchers will be e-mailed to your organization through DocuSign.
- Payment schedule will be provided with the contract.

No final payments will be issued without the completion of a Final Report.

Grant Evaluation

On-Site Evaluation

An on-site evaluation will be conducted by a member of our staff, by our Arts & History Committee members, or by an evaluator hired for this purpose. This evaluation will serve to assess quality, public response, and ADA compliance.

Grantee Submits Final Reports

A final report is required for all grant recipients and must be filed by **the date specified in the grant recipient's contract**. Final payment will not be issued until a final report is approved. Copies of proofs of purchase are required with the final report. AIMC may require proof of safety and permitting compliance as written statements from the municipality and architect/general contractor confirming the project is in compliance with all safety and permitting regulations once the project is complete and before a final payment is issued. Groups planning to apply for an upcoming grant cycle must be in good standing with regards to compliance.

What if I have been denied funding?

If you have been denied funding, you will receive a letter explaining why. You may appeal, but only if you can demonstrate that the panel misinterpreted your application. You cannot submit new information. Neither grant awards nor grant award amounts are subject to appeal. Appeals must be in writing. You will be notified of the outcome.



Legal Notice

Applicable Law

Grantees must comply with all applicable state and federal laws and will be required to agree to the same in their grantee contract. Grantees shall remain in good standing with all state and federal filings, as required by law. Appropriate contract stipulations will be established in each individual grant recipient's contract.

ADA Compliance

Grantees must be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and as amended. Additionally, the grantee agrees to hold Middlesex County harmless from any and all violations of said ADA.

Note: Grant funding can be used to enhance your program's accessibility, such as open and closed captioning, sign language interpreters, and wheelchair ramp rentals.

Liability

Middlesex County and the Arts Institute of Middlesex County shall not be held liable for funded work that has been plagiarized, is fraudulent, or which contains inaccurate historical content. Middlesex County and its staff shall not be held liable for the safety, security, or comfort of persons participating in funded events. A grant award does not constitute the endorsement of the final product by Middlesex County. Grantees and their boards shall be held liable for any and all of the aforementioned. Grantees and their boards must carry proper insurance that names the County of Middlesex as an "additional insured."

Credit Disclosures and Additional Instructions

The required credits will be established in each individual grant recipient's contract.

Recognition of Middlesex County funding should be included in all marketing materials (media announcements and printed/digital materials – including but not limited to websites, newsletters, program booklets, brochures, posters, invitations, monographs, books, press releases, flyers, podcasts, social media, video, television broadcast or cable and radio PSAs). Credit must read exactly as follows and be no less than 10-point type:

"Grant funding has been provided by the Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners through a grant award from the Middlesex County Cultural and Arts Trust Fund."

Additional Instructions:

- All spoken credits by representatives of the Grantee appearing on radio and television for promotional purposes longer than 30 seconds must credit Middlesex County.
- Under no circumstances may the Grantee state or imply that their programs and/or activities are "sponsored" or "co-sponsored" by the County of Middlesex.
- While the proper funding credit must be used for all funded projects and programming, the funding credit statement may not be used for any programming which has not been grant funded.
- Additional credits may be specified in your contract agreement. Appropriate credit requirements will be established in each individual grant recipient's contract.

Resources

Technical Assistance Workshops

Open to all, these seminars are given by recognized experts to help staff, boards, and volunteers learn more about arts, history, and cultural management, administration, fundraising, and more. Most sessions are free of charge but require advance registration.

ADA workshops are offered by the AIMC or the Cultural Access Network (CAN NJ). Organizations with compliance issues are required to attend an ADA workshop during the grant cycle.

Staff Assistance

AIMC has staff available to assist organizations with problems, grant proposals, networking, and other concerns that may arise during the year. Organizations need not be grant recipients to receive assistance.

Contact: artsandhistory@co.middlesex.nj.us or call 732-745-3052

Middlesex County History Archives and Library

Middlesex County has a great history, and we are creating a place to tell that story. This online history hub connects people to our past using photographs, documents, objects, and reference books on Middlesex County history.

<https://ejotv.catalogaccess.com>

Stay Connected and Promote Your Events!

The Arts Institute of Middlesex County will **require** grantees to create an organizational profile and submit programs for listing on the **MiddlesexCountyCulture.com**. This website is a comprehensive guide to Arts, Culture, Folklife, and History in Middlesex County.

Visitors can also access publications and resources by visiting www.middlesexcountynj.gov

To stay connected on programs and events presented by the Division of History and Historic Preservation, simply text **“culture”** to **56512** from a smart phone or tablet to start receiving text notifications.

For Persons with Disabilities

For all workshops, events, and meetings, assistive listening services are available. Grantees may borrow assistive listening devices for their programs at no cost. Additionally, the services of a sign language interpreter or CART services are available upon request, provided two weeks advance notice is given. Guidelines and brochures are available upon request in large print and Braille. For translation requests for the grant guidelines, please contact 732-745-4030. AIMC will gladly assist persons with disabilities in grant application preparation. The use of a computer can also be arranged at AIMC or municipal libraries.

Frequently Asked Questions

I'm a new applicant. What are my chances of receiving funding?

New applicants and previous grantees have an equal chance of receiving funding. Since the intent of each grant is to encourage organizations to promote art, history, and culture to the community, any applicant showing initiative in this area will receive equal consideration.

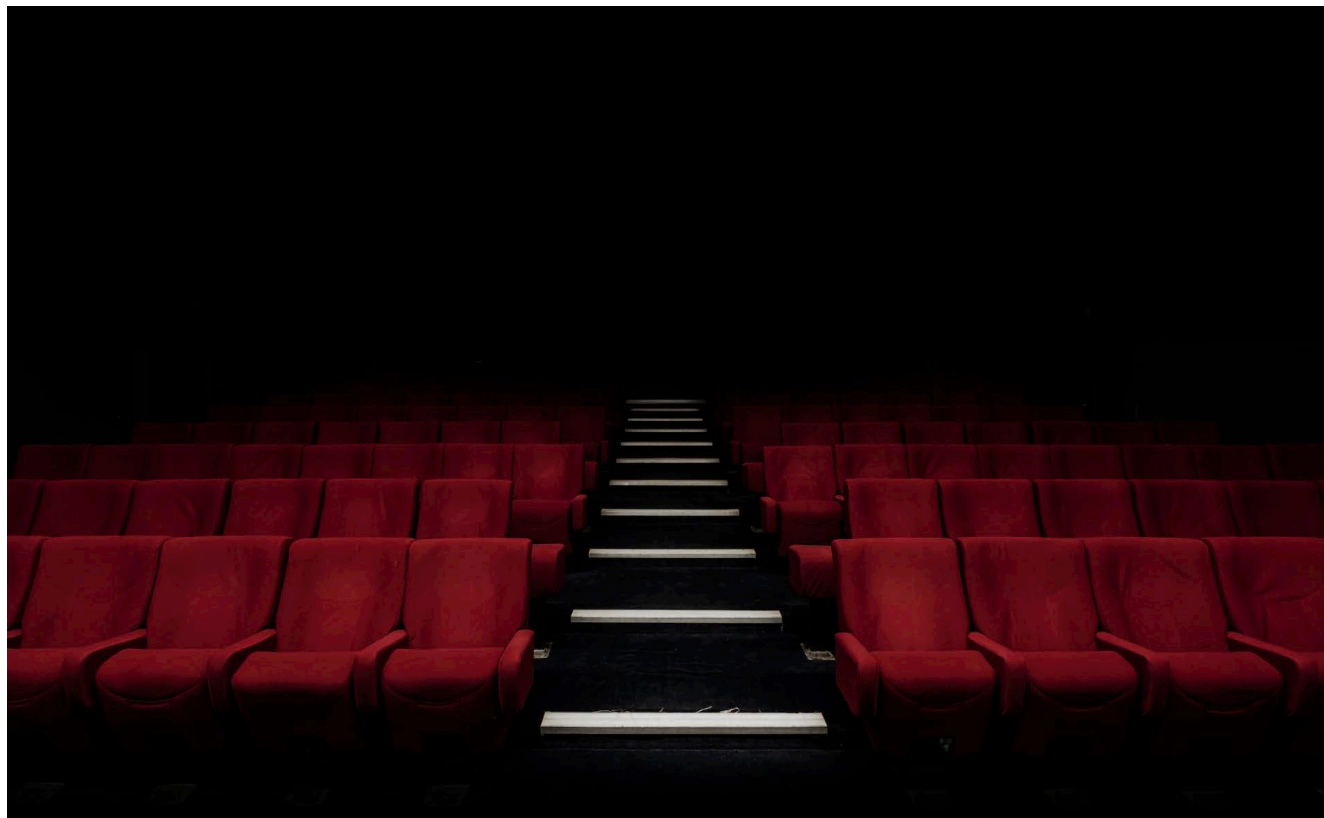
Can I use my board member as a consultant?

No. No organization or municipal group may pay a member of its board, committee, or commission for any service, even when these services are provided as a component of a program. No exceptions will be made, as this is a conflict of interest.

When does the AIMC deny funding?

Funding will be denied when a proposed project does not meet our funding priorities and/or meet the evaluation criteria. The written evaluation produced by the peer review panel usually provides the most direct explanation for a denial of funds. The panel comments indicate that all members of the panel agreed upon a variety of weaknesses found within a project, program, or organization.

If the applicant believes the panel has misinterpreted an application, applicants may appeal the panel's decision. Applicants must mark the panel comments they believe are in error and cite the contents of their original application as evidence to the contrary. **No new information can be introduced in the appeals process.**





Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners

Ronald G. Rios, *Director*

Shanti Narra, *Deputy Director*

Claribel A. Azcona-Barber

Charles Kenny

Leslie Koppel

Chanelle Scott McCullum

Charles E. Tomaro

Chanelle Scott McCullum, Chairperson, Department of Economic Development

John A. Pulomena, County Administrator

Sandy Castor, Department Head, Economic Development

Lindsay Erben, Director, Arts Institute of Middlesex County

Funding

Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners

Arts Institute of Middlesex County

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732.745.4489, TTY: 732.745.3888

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