FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Maine Historic Preservation Commission (Commission)
Historic Community Buildings Grant (HCBG) Program
Updated for Round 2 (July 2026)

IMPORTANT
Automatic disqualification:
- ✓ Incomplete applications (it is the applicant's responsibility to upload all documents with their application even if it was submitted previously to the Commission for review).
- ✓ If the applicant requests an amount above $500,000.
- ✓ If the property is not listed in the National Register of Historic Places (can be a contributing resource within a historic district, does not need to be individually listed) or has not been nominated for listing in the Register by the Commission.
- ✓ Matching share is governmental funds.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Round 1 – the specific questions below reference the HCBG Manual (Manual) where applicable.

- **Question**: Does the 25% match have to be fully raised (in-hand) by the application deadline (Oct. 23rd)?

  Answer: No, but the Application Review Committee does consider the amount of match in hand when the application is submitted.

- **Question**: If a grantee falls short of raising the full 25% matching share, will the grant be terminated or will it be prorated based on how much the grantee has raised?

  Answer: Grantees will only be reimbursed for expenses on which they can show a matching share. Thus, if a grantee does not reach the full amount of the anticipated match, the amount of the grant will be reduced accordingly. The larger question is how will the project be completed if the grantee cannot raise the full amount of matching share to spend the awarded funds? If there is a chance that the project cannot be completed during the term of the grant contract, the application should include a contingency plan for ensuring that the work area and building envelope are protected until the project can resume.

- **Question:** An applicant is finalizing plans for an accessible entrance in a new addition, which will include a lobby area, accessible bathroom, improved stairway, and elevator. Can HCBG funds cover some of the costs of the new addition if another source of funding is used to pay for the elevator? Would the fact that there is an elevator in their architectural plans make them ineligible?

Answer: Any work that is part of or within the envelope of a new addition would not be an allowable expense (See Chapter 2.4.B. of the Manual). Construction of the new addition is considered a Rehabilitation project that would not meet the definitions of Preservation and Restoration. On the other hand, if a project involved the upgrade of an existing bathroom, stairway or elevator within the historic building footprint to make it ADA compliant, that could be considered for funding (see Chapter 2.4.A. of the Manual).

- **Question:** Does the project need to be shovel-ready by the time applicants apply or by the time the funding would be distributed? An applicant's architects are looking at some final cost-saving measures to make plans more attainable. The applicant can request that they expedite the job to finish before December 5th, but the applicant is concerned they may not have the plans 100% complete by then.

  Answer: The project drawings and specifications must be 90-100% complete at the time of the application. This requirement allows the Application Review Committee to understand the final design of the project and how it will be carried out. It also gives the Application Review Committee some assurance that the budget figures are as accurate as possible.

- **Question:** On the resumes for contractors and professionals, the applicant is working with two companies. Are a description and background of the company acceptable, rather than a resume for an individual(s) from the company?

  Answer: Project team qualifications and experience are an important component of the scoring criteria. If the Application Review Committee is uncertain as to the qualifications of the project team, the application will be scored accordingly. Please see Chapter 6.3 of the Manual regarding requirements for project team qualifications and experience.

- **Question:** On elevators, the guidelines (Chapter 7. 2.F.) say that "new" elevators are not eligible. Is the replacement of an existing elevator with a lift eligible?

  Answer: If the elevator is in a non-historic space, then the answer is no. However, if the elevator is located within the footprint of the historic building, this may be an allowable cost. See the Manual Chapter 7.2. Allowable Grant Costs.

- **Question:** In the grant manual, 7.3.F., Administrative costs - contingencies are not allowable. The applicant plans to have a contingency in case of unexpected costs. How should the applicant include this in the total project cost?

  Answer: The contingency should be left out of the calculation of the total project cost and is not reimbursable as an allowed grant cost. Contingencies and overhead should not be included in your budget. The applicant should cover any contingencies or overhead from alternative sources of funding and not the HCBG. See the Manual Chapter 7.3.

- **Question:** Would a town's library staff time be considered donated labor, as they are the ones facilitating the project?

Answer: No, if the library staff are funded by a municipality (governmental funds). The public law that authorized the bond that voters approved expressly stated that the match is to be provided by non-governmental sources. That means no federal, county, state, or local governmental funds. The town's library cannot rely on a town to be the guarantor of the matching share if that means using municipal funds. Library staff time used to prepare the application cannot be counted as matching share because no expenses may be incurred before an award is made, the contract is signed, and the contract is approved by the Office of State Procurement Services (see Chapter 6.12. of the Manual). If the library is privately funded (not governmental funds), then the hours the library staff incur to administer the grant could be included as matching share in the grant budget as long as the time being budgeted is for work that will occur during the term of the grant contract and not prior to the executed contract.

- **Question:** If a contractor provides plans for an HCBG application can that contractor bid on the project during the procurement process?

  Answer: It is acceptable for a contractor that prepared drawings and specifications to bid on a project as long as the drawings and specifications bear the stamp of a licensed architect or engineer and both the drawings and specifications are shared with any other interested contractors that respond to the Request for Proposal. If a contractor's drawings only cover a portion of the necessary work, the architect or engineer must add details to ensure that the entirety of the project is covered. Any information on the documents that identify the contractor should be removed so that the architect or engineer is clearly the "owner" of the drawings and specifications.

  However, if a contractor prepares drawings and specifications for a project that falls under Chapter 6. Exceptions, it is **unallowable** for that contractor to bid on the project. In order for a project to qualify for the Chapter 6. Exceptions, a qualified third party (another qualified contractor, specifier, conservator, specialist, etc.) who is not bidding or does not plan to execute the project work, must specify the project and provide any necessary plans and shop drawings. Please see the Manual Chapter 6.2 and 6.11 for additional details.

- **Question:** If we receive bids that are less than our original estimate does our part of the match need to get lowered too?

  Answer: We will only reimburse up to 75% of the allowable project expenses. Thus, if the total state share ends up being less than the award amount, we will not simply give the balance to the grantee or change the matching share formula. Likewise, if the bid is higher than estimated, we will only reimburse costs up to the award amount even if that turns out to be less than a 75% share.

- **Question:** Regarding the Preservation Agreement, are all the parts of the building under the purview of the Commission even if those parts are not mentioned in the National Register nomination?

Answer: The Preservation Agreement covers the entire property including the site. Thus, changes to later additions will be subject to review and approval even if those later sections are not mentioned in the National Register nomination. This also applies to interiors.

- **Question:** Regarding the public access provision in the Preservation Agreement, does this mean for the duration of the project only or indefinitely? I have a small volunteer board, and we are in a small rural community. As I understand this requirement to be open for 12 days per year, we must advertise open days, correct?

  Answer: The public access requirement is only for the duration of the Stewardship Agreement or Preservation Agreement. If the preservation or restoration work is being done on the exterior of the building and that work is visible to the public, the owner will not be required to open the interior of the building. If the preservation or restoration work is visible on the interior of the building but is not readily visible from the exterior, then the owner will need to provide access to the interior of the building for a minimum of 12 days a year. Public notice as to when the interior will be visible must be provided. It can be via an organization's website, posting on the building or in other public places, or in other ways that the general public has access to.

GENERAL

These general subjects have come up repeatedly and often with regard to the HCBG program. All general questions relating to HCBG subjects have a reference to the section of the HCBG Manual to assist applicants and grantees.

1. Government Match: The requirement that government money cannot be used for the matching share will not change for the duration of the HCBG program. For additional details on when governmental funding is used see Chapter 7. Funding Requirements.

2. Allowable Bond Expenses Covered: expenses incurred prior to a grant award or prior to the HCBG contract being executed cannot be covered by the grant or the matching share of the grant. For additional details on allowable and unallowable costs see Chapter 7.2 and 7.3.
   A. Equipment: Updated 4/10/2026 – State capitalization policy requires equipment to have a useful life greater than one (1) year and a $5,000 per unit cost for equipment (including HVAC) to be considered an allowable expense. For additional details on allowable and unallowable costs see Chapter 7.2 and 7.3.

3. Procurement / Bidding Process: Procurement is mandatory and all projects must go out to bid. Procurement costs are an allowable expense if incurred after the grant contract has been executed. See Chapter 6.11.

4. Qualified Architects/ Engineers/ Contractors: The Commission maintains lists of qualified professionals including architects, engineers, contractors, tradespeople, and

conservators. If you are unsure if one is qualified to work with historic buildings and interpret the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation and Restoration, please reach out to the Commission. See Chapter 6.3.

5. Plans/Drawings/Specifications Requirement: plans/drawings and specifications are almost always required and must be 90-100% complete when an application is submitted. See Chapter 6.1. and 6.2. and Appendix C for details on exceptions.

6. Condition Assessment (CA): A CA needs to be included for most preservation or restoration projects. See the Manual for a definition of CA and Chapter 5.1. If you are unsure if a CA is required, please reach out to the Commission.

7. Project Budget: Submit the grant budget in the Excel format provided. See Chapter 8. for specific details relating to the budget process and Excel worksheet.

8. Application:
    A. Do not submit answers to application questions in separate documents. Each application question has character limitations, and the Commission asks that you keep each answer to the character limit.
    B. If you submitted a document prior to your application, it is still your responsibility to provide that document with your application materials.

9. Photos: Do not submit more than 20 individual photos with your application or grant reports. A Photo Documentation Requirement document is located on the Commission's website.

Questions: please do not hesitate to contact Erika Webb, Historic Community Buildings Grant program administrator by telephone at 207-287-5436 or via email at erika.webb@maine.gov.