

Competitive Federal Grant Awards | Active

FEBRUARY 2026

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Save America's Treasures - Mendota Canoes Project

- **Award Amount:** \$113,912
- **Period of Performance:** 09/19/2025-4/30/2029
- **Purpose:** Grant funds will support the conservation process for two canoes recovered from Lake Mendota (Tee Waksikhominak in the Ho-Chunk language) in Madison, Wisconsin. Canoe #1 is a 15-foot dugout canoe made from White Oak. Recovered on November 2, 2021, it is the oldest, fully intact vessel ever to be extracted from Wisconsin waters, dated at 800 A.D. (1200 years old). Canoe #2 is a 14.5-foot dugout canoe made from Ash. Recovered on September 22, 2022, it is three-quarters complete with some portions missing where the canoe was struck and damaged by boat anchors. Dated at 1,000 B.C. (3,000 years old), it is believed to be the earliest direct evidence of water transportation used by Native Nations from the Great Lakes region to be recovered. The Mendota Canoes are two of eleven canoes found in a section of the Mendota lakebed in the ancestral territory of the Ho-Chunk Nation. Conservation will be completed on the Mendota Canoes and all required mounts and installation of the canoes into the Wisconsin History Center will be completed as well.

Save America's Treasures - Ringling Brother Circus 1901 Animal House

- **Award Amount:** \$500,000
- **Period of Performance:** 10/01/2022 - 12/31/2026
- **Purpose:** Grant funds will restore the 1901 Animal House at Circus World to the 1915 era. Historically, exotic animals were a central element in American circuses, and when circuses were not on the road, the animals were housed in purpose-built structures, designed to meet the needs of specific animal types. The 1901 Animal House was a critical piece of the Ringling brothers' circus empire, but the structure was sold out of Ringling ownership in 1918 and re-purposed over decades to fulfill different business interests. Some of the modifications made to the building over time adversely impacted its soundness, and today, the 1901 Animal House has critical stabilization and repair needs that must be addressed to ensure the long-term survival of the structure.

Save America's Treasures - Ringling Brothers Circus Business Office

- **Award Amount:** \$500,000
- **Period of Performance:** 09/30/2021 - 04/30/2026 (In Final Reporting)

- **Purpose:** Grant funds will restore the Ringling Brothers Business Office, one of nine buildings in the Ringling Brothers Circus Winter Quarters National Historic Landmark district in Baraboo, WI. This unassuming Queen Anne-style building is the location from which the Ringling brothers ran the greatest circus operation in the world until 1918, coordinating the activities of painters, gilders, wagon makers, blacksmiths, saddlers, harness makers, wardrobe designers, railroad car repairmen, carpenters, machinists, engineers, and metal workers. They planned the next year's touring route, contracted domestic and foreign acts, created advertising materials, and managed the mammoth enterprise of daily financials. A restored, interpreted and publicly accessible Business Office will allow visitors to explore the broader operations, diversity, and off-season preparations that made this massive circus so successful.

Maritime Heritage Grant (in partnership with Wisconsin Maritime Museum)

- **Award Amount:** \$200,000
- **Period of Performance:** 10/01/2023 - 09/30/2026
- **Purpose:** The project is a cooperative partnership between the State Historic Preservation Office, Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Wisconsin Maritime Museum to catalog and stabilize a collection of archaeological resources recovered from Lake Michigan shipwrecks. The archaeological resources are a collection of artifacts known as the Klopp Collection which is 10,352 artifacts recovered prior to the 1987 Abandoned Shipwreck Act by Allan Klopp and kept in inadequate and damaging storage conditions for decades before the family transferred them to the state via the WMM in 2021. The threat to the resource is urgent due to the years of poor storage practices and the need for comprehensive assessment and care of these before their history is lost to object deterioration.

Underrepresented Communities Grant

- **Award Amount:** \$50,000
- **Period of Performance:** 04/01/2023 - 03/31/2027
- **Purpose:** The purpose of the project is to research and complete a historic context study of Latino history in Wisconsin for the purpose of identifying and evaluating historic places that are significant to Wisconsin's Latino heritage and maybe be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The historic context study is a planning document that will recommend steps for the future preservation of these historic properties. The project will also nominate two properties to the National Register of Historic Places that represent the history and contributions of Wisconsin's Latino communities. The project will include community education and outreach to the Latino community as well as the participation of partners in academic institutions, private historic preservation consultants, local governments, and other preservation stakeholders. This project will benefit Wisconsin's Latino communities and all Wisconsinites who appreciate and seek to preserve Wisconsin's historic places.

Save America's Treasures - Preservation - Baggage Horse Barn

- **Award Amount:** \$729,153
- **Period of Performance:** 10/01/2024 - 09/30/2027

- **Purpose:** The winter headquarters of the Ringling Brothers Circus is a National Historical Landmark district. Nine buildings, seven of which are maintained by Circus World, represent the largest and most complete historic winter quarters in existence. The Baggage Horse Barn, built in 1904, once housed heavy draft horses, the backbone of the circus, during winter off-seasons. Today this structure experiences a critical threat from structural damage, including rotting of wood framing, corrosion of sidings, compromised joists, and foundation damage. This project will correct this damage by repairing masonry, windows, siding, and doors. These preservation efforts will ensure this building can be opened for interpretation to the public so that visitors may better explore the broader operations of the circus.

Repatriation Grant - Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

- **Award Amount:** \$74,527
- **Period of Performance:** 09/01/2024 - 12/31/2026
- **Purpose:** Grant funds will support a week-long consultation meeting with WHS staff and tribal representatives from the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, as well as supporting pre- and post-consultation work. The one-week consultation will be held at WHS' collections storage facilities in Madison, Wisconsin - WHS' Headquarters Building and the State Archive Preservation Facility. Activities will center on cultural items currently in WHS holdings directly attributed to the Bad River Band, items attributed to the Ojibwe with no specific band, and cultural items attributed generally to a Great Lakes tribe. The project will also include consultation on WHS holdings of human remains originating from lands of interest to the Bad River Band for repatriation purposes and their associated funerary objects.

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Save America's Treasures Grant - Civil Rights Collection (in partnership with National Park Service)

- **Award Amount:** \$750,000
- **Period of Performance:** 10/01/2023 - 9/30/2026
- **Purpose:** The Wisconsin Historical Society will preserve and provide access to at-risk materials in 26 collections documenting the modern American Civil Rights movement. For the project, staff selected materials for conservation and digitization that are most frequently requested for research purposes, including approximately 490 cubic feet of archives which include 2,412 audio recordings, 445 moving images, 101 microfilm reels, and more than 22 cubic ft of graphic materials, such as photographs, posters, and ephemera. WHS will stabilize, rehouse, and perform conservation treatments on at-risk physical items. Staff will digitize collection items and make them accessible online for public use.

Museums Empowered - Evaluating for Change (in partnership with National Park Service)

- **Award Amount:** \$177,480
- **Period of Performance:** 09/01/2024 - 08/31/2027
- **Purpose:** The Wisconsin Historical Society will create a professional development project to cultivate a staff culture centered around visitors and to strengthen the ability of staff to embed evaluation in program planning and execution. Project activities include hiring a museum evaluation expert to train and coach public programming staff on visitor-centered design and implementation, within a framework of culture change and skill development. This consultant will also work with the IT team to create a data repository and reporting system

that supports evaluation data informing future decision-making and programming. As a result of this project, a permanent evaluation-related position will be created, as well as a resource library of evaluation training materials and tools, and an evaluation plan to be implemented across programs and services. In the long term, staff will have the skills to conduct effective evaluation and continuously improve visitor-centered programming

Museums for America Grant – A Museum Without Walls

- **Award Amount:** \$249,618
- **Period of Performance:** 09/01/2023 - 08/31/2026
- **Purpose:** *A Museum without Walls* is a three-year state-wide public history project that will prototype strategies for designing and delivering localized programming in collaboration with community partners. The project will bring community-based programming into all 72 Wisconsin counties to: 1) expand access to Society collections and resources – both within and beyond population centers, and 2) strength relationships with local partners across the state so that mutually-beneficial collaboration continues long-term. Public programming will happen in collaboration with approx. 120 community partners and will include artifact- and image-based installations, banner exhibits, speaker's bureau presentations, and signature events tailored to individual communities. As a result, project partners will have an increased knowledge and sense of ownership of Society resources and greater trust in the Society for future collaborations, contributing to the Society's long-term goals for community engagement.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

American Rescue Plan Act Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Grant

- **Award Amount:** \$2,750,000
- **Period of Performance:** 08/17/2022 - 05/31/2027
- **Purpose:** Grant funds will allow the Wisconsin Historical Society to construct a new Guest Services Center at Old World Wisconsin, a 600-acre open-air history museum in Eagle, Wisconsin. The Guest Services Center will provide essential infrastructure to grow the site from 50,000 annual visitors to 100,000 annual visitors and help more people benefit from the educational, cultural, and historical programs at Old World Wisconsin. Investments in Old World Wisconsin will support the recovery of regional tourism in Eagle and the surrounding area by supporting it as a unique and popular cultural destination.

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDS COMMISSION

State Board Advisory Grant

- **Award Amount:** \$37,846
- **Period of Performance:** 03/01/2024 - 10/31/2026
- **Purpose:** This grant program funds the work of the Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board. The grant project will support the hiring of an LTE WHRAB Program Asst., the

Governor's Archives Awards, Professional Development scholarships for archivists and students in WI, archive-related workshops at the LHP Conference, and a "landscape mapping" activity that will identify and document collecting institutions and collection scopes across Wisconsin.

PARTNERSHIPS

National Park Services – Aztalan Repatriation

- **Sub-Award Amount:** \$9,500
- **Period of Performance:** 10/01/2025 - 08/31/2027
- **Purpose:** The Wisconsin Historical Society is a subaward on a grant led by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Public Museum. This grant supports ongoing joint efforts to move forward with Aztalan repatriations of which the Society assisting with. The project will fund faunal analysis staffing, documentation, and digitization.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Little Harbor Launch & The Jennibel

- **Sub-Award Amount:** \$109,429
- **Period of Performance:** 02/01/2024 - 01/31/2027
- **Purpose:** The Wisconsin Historical Society is a subaward on a grant led by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Sea Grant Institute. Investigators will conduct two Phase II underwater archaeological surveys of shipwrecks located in waters of the bay of Green Bay in Door County. The first year will focus on an intact but yet unidentified historic steam-launch that was discovered during a NOAA bathymetric survey of the bay of Green Bay near Little Harbor. The shipwreck is in pristine condition, only visited once by archaeologists in 2022. In the second year, a survey will be conducted on the Civil War-era schooner "Jennibel", a popular recreational dive site located south of Chambers Island. Both surveys will provide opportunity for volunteer divers and avocational archaeologists to update skills for documenting and evaluating sites according to National Register of Historical Places guidance for listing shipwreck sites.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Milwaukee Fireboats

- **Sub-Award Amount:** \$15,786
- **Period of Performance:** 07/01/2025 - 12/30/2026
- **Purpose:** The Wisconsin Historical Society is a subaward on a grant led by the Wisconsin Department of Administration's Coastal Management Program. This sub-award provides funding for documentation of Wisconsin's maritime resources by locating, investigating, mapping, and evaluating the submerged and associated shoreline cultural resources associated with commercial piers in on Washington and Detroit Islands in Door County. Examination of these island piers will allow comparisons with other pier communities along the western Lake Michigan shore that were established for lumbering and other commercial purposes, painting a fuller picture of how maritime commerce, changing technology, and environmental conditions affected Euro-American settlement and Wisconsin's economy.

Wisconsin Public Service Commission – Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Assistance

- **Sub-Award Amount:** \$511,458.30
- **Period of Performance:** 09/01/2025 - 08/31/2028
- **Purpose:** The goal of this scope of work is for the Wisconsin Historical Society to support the effectuation of the BEAD Program or Internet for All Wisconsin, specifically related to the completion of historic property reviews and consultations as described in 36 CFR Part 800 (National Historic Preservation Act), Wis. Stat. 44.40, the Program Comment for Federal Communications Projects, and/or additional guidance related to historic preservation from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration related to the BEAD Program.