



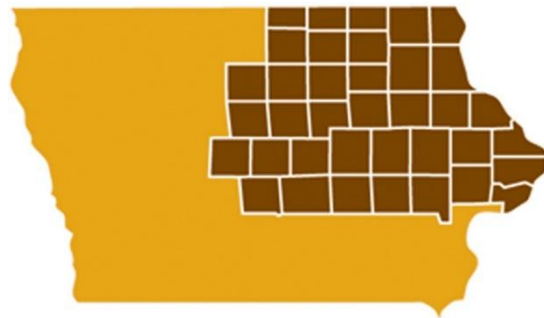
2026 SSNHA AGRICULTURAL STORYTELLING PROGRAM AWARDS SMALL AND LARGE PROJECT GUIDELINES

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PROGRAM AWARDS

The Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area (SSNHA) was designated by Congress in 1996 in recognition of northeast Iowa's nationally significant resources and heritage related to American agriculture. Within the 37-county area, much of the heritage of America's agricultural revolution still exists and needs preservation and interpretation. Iowans and visitors desire opportunities to learn about the farms, the industries, and the people who strive to maintain a safe and wholesome food supply.

SSNHA's Partnership Management Plan calls to preserve and tell the story of American agriculture and its global significance through partnerships and activities that celebrate the land, people, and communities. The agricultural stories of the area are being explored through interpretation of six themes:

- The Fertile Land;
- Farmers and Families;
- The Changing Farm;
- Higher Yields: The Science and Technology of Agriculture;
- Farm to Factory: Agribusiness in Iowa; and
- Organizing for Agriculture: Policies and Politics.



Each theme embodies different features of the area's heritage. Taken together the themes allow visitors to interpret and experience the story in many ways: in small towns and larger cities; along trails and country roads; and on farms, natural areas, local museums, and historical buildings.

To help accomplish the goals and objectives of the Management Plan, Silos & Smokestacks, a 501(c) 3 nonprofit, offers matching program awards to provide and leverage funding for new projects across the region that preserves, interprets, and develops heritage resources within these thematic areas and expand visitor experience opportunities, elevating the quality of the heritage area individually and collectively.

Funds for the SSNHA's program awards are federal dollars provided by federal appropriations and administered through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service.

INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE

Staff are available to assist you with your questions and to discuss your application in advance of its submission. You are encouraged to call early in your proposal development to produce a thorough application. For more information or questions regarding these program awards, please contact Laura Elfers, Director of Programs, at elfers@silosandsmokestacks.org or 319.234.4567.

- **SSNHA Agricultural Storytelling Program Award Applications for Small & Large Projects are available online** at <https://www.silosandsmokestacks.org/partner/funding-opportunities/>
- **Staff consultation is required for Large Project applications and encouraged for Small Project applications.** See Project Application Requirements.

GOALS OF THE SSNHA AGRICULTURAL STORYTELLING PROGRAM AWARDS FOR SMALL AND LARGE PROJECTS

SSNHA established the Agricultural Storytelling Program Awards for Small and Large Projects to support sites, attractions and events of educational value that focus on America's agricultural stories as it relates to the 37 counties of northeastern Iowa. The following are the goals of the program awards:

- Preserve and interpret America's agricultural and agricultural industrial stories and its significance to the nation and the world consistent with the SSNHA Interpretive Plan.
- Enhance the site's agricultural connection.
- Elevate the quality of the heritage area sites and attractions.
- Elevate the quality of the heritage area individually and collectively.
- Develop positive visitor experiences consistent with the SSNHA Interpretive Plan.
- Build the capacity of the Heritage Area region to further develop and sustain agricultural and agricultural industrial heritage tourism through new and existing heritage area sites, attractions and events.

Small Project - Provide SSNHA Sites with financial support including planning assistance, educational programs, interpretation, marketing, exhibit displays, interpretive signage and other special projects.

Large Project - To leverage larger and varied local support for planning assistance, educational programs, interpretation, marketing, exhibit displays, interpretive signage and other special projects.

If you need a copy of the SSNHA Interpretive Plan visit the "[Partner Resources](#)" section on our website to download a copy or email elfers@silosandsmokestacks.org to request a copy.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Must be a designated SSNHA Site or Emerging Site in good standing.
- Must be able to meet matching requirements outlined below.
- May submit no more than one application per award cycle.
- Cannot have an open SSNHA Small or Large Projects Program Award agreement at the time of application.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects must be physically located in at least one of the 37 designated Iowa counties within the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area: Allamakee, Benton, Black Hawk, Boone, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler,

Cedar, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Clayton, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Grundy, Hamilton, Hardin, Howard, Iowa, Jackson, Jasper, Johnson, Jones, Linn, Marshall, Mitchell, Polk, Poweshiek, Scott, Story, Tama, Winneshiek, Worth and Wright.

Projects must demonstrate how they help preserve and interpret America's agricultural and agricultural industrial stories and its significance to the nation and the world. Applicants must demonstrate how their project will develop, enhance, or expand an agricultural story.

Funds for both Small and Large Projects may be used for planning assistance, educational programs, interpretation, marketing, exhibit displays, event programs, and interpretive signage. Support will be considered for cultural, ethnic, arts and recreation programs to the extent that they highlight agricultural or agricultural industrial themes.

Funds may NOT be used for historic preservation infrastructure projects. *Check with SSNHA office if you have questions whether your project is eligible.*

Additional consideration will be given to projects:

- Involving active partnerships between sites and organizations.
- Supporting meaningful efforts toward the untold stories especially as it relates to interpretation and visitor experiences.

AWARD RANGE

Small Project Awards will be below \$3,000.

Anticipated awards no less than \$500.

Large Project Awards will be \$3,000 or above.

Anticipated awards no more than \$10,000.

At least 30% of the budgeted allocations for the two programs will be set aside for Small Projects. More may be spent on the Small Project Award Program, but this is the minimum.

APPLICANT MATCH REQUIREMENT

Projects funded through the SSNHA Small or Large Project Program must document the ability to provide matching funds at the time of application. *Please provide a letter signed by the applicant's financial officer or authorized representative, documenting the amount of match funding being contributed to the proposed budget.* This match must come from a source other than federal funds, such as state, local, and/or private funds. Collaboration between organizations is encouraged.

Cash matches require that actual money change hands and must be documented with copies of invoices and cancelled checks. In-kind matches must be directly attributable to the project. Personnel time for employees, volunteers, and consultants as well as contributions of services, materials and supplies are considered in-kind match and must be documented. Applicant match must come from a source other than federal funds, such as state, local, and/or private funds.

Other Project Costs ("Over Match"): If the total project budget is expected to cost more than the total grant request and required match combined, those additional costs should be listed on the

application budget as “Other Project Costs.” This type of “over match” is encouraged and will be considered as award decisions are made.

All project funds must be expended within the award period. *Under no circumstances should the recipient begin work on the project until the agreement has been signed by both a SSNHA representative and the awardee recipient. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in the revocation of your award.*

Small Project Applicant Match Requirement:

1:1 Non-federal Match minimum; Match must be 50% Cash minimum and up to 50% In-Kind. Applicants must provide 1-1 non-federal match minimum to the funding request. At least half of the applicant's contribution must be in cash. An additional match above the 1:1 is allowed and encouraged.

For Small Projects, the award will not fund more than 50% of the total project cost.

Example Small Project Budget (with minimum match requirement):

\$2,500	Small Project Award	\$2,500	Small Project Award
\$1,250	Applicant Cash Match	\$1,250	Applicant Cash Match
\$1,250	Applicant In-Kind Match	\$1,250	Applicant In-Kind Match
\$0	Other Project Costs	<u>\$1,000</u>	<u>Other Project Costs</u>
\$5,000	Total Project Cost	\$6,000	Total Project Cost

Large Project Applicant Match Requirement:

4:1 Non-federal Match minimum; Match must be 50% Cash minimum and up to 50% In-Kind.

4:1 non-federal match minimum is required. For every \$1 requested, applicants must provide a \$4 match in cash and in-kind. That match must be a minimum of \$2 in cash. An additional match above 4:1 is allowed and encouraged.

For Large Projects, the award will not fund more than 20% of the total project cost.

Examples of Large Project Budget (with minimum match requirement):

\$10,000	Large Project Award	\$10,000	Large Project Award
\$20,000	Applicant Cash Match	\$20,000	Applicant Cash Match
\$20,000	Applicant In-Kind Match	\$20,000	Applicant In-Kind Match
\$0	Other Project Costs	<u>\$15,000</u>	<u>Other Project Costs</u>
\$50,000	Total Project Cost	\$65,000	Total Project Cost

AWARD CYCLE

January 7 – March 3, 2026. Application cycle open.

January – February 2026. Staff consultation is required for Large Project applications. See Project Application Requirements.

March 3, 2026, by Noon CST. All applications must be submitted online.

End of March 2026. Program awards announced.

September 1, 2026. All Small Project Program Award work completed and Final Reports are due no later than 90 days after project completion or no later than September 1, 2026, whichever comes first.

September 1, 2026. All Large Project Program Award work completed and Final Reports are due no later than 90 days after project completion or no later than September 1, 2026, whichever comes first.

AWARDEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Before submitting your application, the authorizing official of the applicant site should review the following awardee responsibilities to determine if the site is able to comply with these requirements.

The awardee is required to:

- Be subject to the provisions of Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirement for Federal Awards (2CFR 200), as applicable.
- Allow inspection of program award records by Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area and authorized federal agencies during the funding period and up to three years following completion of the program award.
- Provide fiscal and final performance reports as requested, including photographs of project and program activities.
- Comply with all applicable laws including but not limited to the following, as applicable:
 - [Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act](#)
 - Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act ([NAGPRA](#))
 - National Environmental Policy Act ([NEPA](#))
 - Americans with Disabilities Act ([ADA](#))
- [Comply with the Davis-Bacon Act](#) for construction contracts over \$2,000.
- Provide certificate of General Liability Insurance (\$1,000,000 per occurrence).
- Provide IRS Letter of Determination of Non-profit Status (if applicable).
- Follow the SSNHA Sign Guidelines, if applicable to project. (Contact the SSNHA office for a copy).
- Acknowledge SSNHA funding in all printed materials, exhibits, signage, social media or other projects supported by this award by including the Silos & Smokestacks logo and/or "This project is funded in-part by the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area." When possible, the use of the logo is preferred.

PROJECT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All applicants must fill out the online application form and answer all questions in the space provided. **All applications must be submitted online by Noon CST on March 3, 2026.**

I. Application Form (must be filled out electronically)

[Small Project Application Form](#)

[Large Project Application Form](#)

Application forms can also be found at <https://www.silosandsmokestacks.org/partner/funding-opportunities/program-awards/>. On this page you will find the link to fill out the online application form.

To save and return to the application later, the applicant must complete the first page. At the top of the consecutive pages will be a gray bar that reads "Save & Continue Survey Later." Click to fill in your email address twice. Applicants will be emailed a personalized link to your application. **Email will come from Alchemer.**

Once the application is complete you will be prompted to review all your answers and download a PDF version for your records.

The signature of the legal representative or highest elected official of the applicant organization is required. By signing the application, the applicant certifies that to the best of their knowledge and belief, data in the application is true and correct, including commitment of local resources; the document has been duly authorized by the governing body of the applicant; and the applicant will comply with all applicable federal and state requirements, including the above if assistance is approved.

II. Budget Form

The budget should include the project costs that will be charged to the program award funds as well as those supported by applicant or third-party cash and in-kind contributions. Your budget must be specific to your project. Please be detailed in your explanation of each budget expense. This can be done by itemizing/listing within budget form and/or attaching a Budget Explanation.

[Small Project Budget Form](#)

[Large Project Budget Form](#)

Download and save the Budget Form to your computer. Then upload the completed Budget Form to the application.

III. Staff Consultation

Large Project Applicants are required to submit their preliminary project idea for staff consultation NO LATER than one week before the application is due. Small Project applicants are also encouraged to consult with staff at least one week before the application is due. Early in the application process, email preliminary project idea to Laura Elfers at lelfers@silosandsmokestacks.org. She will then set up a phone call or online meeting to discuss.

IV. Support for the Project (Large Project applications only)

Illustrate the support for the project. Include letters of commitment or support, press clippings, supporting evidence of feasibility, etc.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All items below should be addressed in the application. Program Award applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Small Project Criteria:

- Develops, enhances, or expands an accurate and compelling story of American agriculture. Ties to the SSNHA interpretive themes consistent with SSNHA Interpretive Plan.
- Develops positive visitor experiences consistent with the SSNHA Interpretive Plan.
- Elevates the quality of the heritage area individually and collectively.
- Fulfills a demonstrated area of need within your site or organization.
- Evidence of exhibit, sign and/or interpretive design plan.
- Matching funds.
- Reasonable timeline.

Large Project Criteria:

- Develops, enhances, or expands an accurate and compelling story of American agriculture. Ties to the SSNHA interpretive themes consistent with SSNHA Interpretive Plan.
- Develops positive visitor experiences consistent with the SSNHA Interpretive Plan.
- Elevates the quality of the heritage area individually and collectively.
- Fulfills a demonstrated area of need within your site or organization.
- Evidence of exhibit, sign and/or interpretive design plan.
- Matching funds.
- Reasonable timeline.
- Feasible project.
- Plan for project sustainability beyond program award.
- Evaluation plan.

Additional consideration will be given to Small and Large Project applications involving active partnerships between sites and organizations, as well as project applications supporting meaningful efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion especially as it relates to interpretation and visitor experiences. Projects demonstrating a quality strategic plan will be given additional consideration.

SILOS & SMOKESTACKS REVIEW PANEL AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

To maintain the highest standards of fairness in the competition for funding, Silos & Smokestacks operates to avoid any possible conflict of interest. Any member of the Program Award Review Committee, Partnership Panel and Board of Trustees will abstain from deliberating or voting on any project in which he/she is connected as an employee, officer or representative, unpaid consultant, or volunteer.