

**JONAS C., MARIAN D., & ROBERT H. ERB CHARITABLE FUND
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

I. SUMMARY SHEET

Contact Information:

Historical Society of Montgomery County
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Norristown PA 19140
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March 13, 2025

Contact Name: David Young, PhD
Contact Title: Executive Director
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Fax:
Year Incorporated: 1884

Formatted: English (United States)

Has your nonprofit previously applied to the Community Foundation: No
Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture and Humanities Education

Organizational Information:

Geographic Area Served: Founded in 1881, the historical society serves research patrons online and in person from all over the country. People engaging in person come from all over the Mid-Atlantic region, specifically Montgomery, Chester, Delaware, Bucks, and Berks counties as well as Delaware and New Jersey. Publications and social media platforms extend the reach nationwide.

Annual # of Clients & Description of Population Served: We are open to the public 221 days per year. Annual visitation to library and cemetery programs totaled 2,300 last year. Outreach programs engaged another 230 with partners at libraries, schools and senior centers.

Mission Statement: The Historical Society of Montgomery County (HSMC) engages with the public to collect, preserve, and interpret the documents, artifacts, and stories that reflect the evolving mosaic that is our county.

Organization Description: One of the earliest county historical societies in the Mid-Atlantic Region, HSMC collects, preserves and educates people about its profound connections with American history. In 1950, the HSMC moved to its current location in a residential neighborhood in Norristown. Since 1996 it has owned and managed the historic Montgomery Cemetery (founded in 1847) which includes burial plots for over 330 Civil War veterans. The 26-acre cemetery had fallen into disrepair and HSMC's stewardship over the past thirty years has brought life to history with experiential programming, youth education opportunities, and partnerships with veterans and scout groups.

Annual Budget \$ 310,015	2.5	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
72 % of budget for program expenses	15	# of Board Volunteers
18 % of budget for administrative expenses	10	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
10 % of budget for fundraising expenses	1,950	# of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources:

Endowment funds and investment interest, membership dues, public contributions/Annual Fund.

Proposal Information:

Grant Amount Requested: \$ 33,276.00

Summary Description of Grant Purpose: General operating support to strengthen organizational capacity to serve the public with upgrades to equipment and to pilot an internship program with Montgomery County Community College. These steps allow HSMC to advance its Strategic Plan.



Project Funding Request: *Partnerships for Access, Experience, and Impact*
Specific Chester County and/or Montgomery County needs and issues addressed

Citizen focus groups during the 2019 Strategic Planning made clear that HSMC must form more connections with local educational institutions. Partnering with the Montgomery County Community College will allow us to provide hands-on experience to students interested in working in public history, increase access to our collections, and build community impact through the content we generate together. With the upcoming Semiquincentennial, we fear that Montgomery County history is not widely known. Surveys that informed the 2019 Plan showed how few people were aware of HSMC. This request for updated technology to increase access will provide experience to interns who will help us promote awareness of our work. The program, "Partnership for Access, Experience, and Impact," will make history more easily available to the citizens of the county and surrounding areas, while paying student interns and offering them professional mentoring.

Organizational impact (for general operating proposals)

The Covid Pandemic stalled organizational progress on HSMC's Strategic Plan but it brought opportunities to broaden the society's reach. Greater on-line availability to indexed collections and the development of new digital platforms, such as the YouTube channel (now with 349 subscribers) and digital projects like "Mapping Black History" and "Mapping MontCo School Houses," increased access to photographs and archival documents. The results have been encouraging. Through this proposal, we request general operating support and a pilot internship program to help us do more.

Popularity for the on-line programs is matched by requests for off-site presentations and new displays. Currently HSMC lacks the ability to host programs that project on screen, due to outdated equipment and obsolete software. With limited staff and technical capacity, we cannot serve the county as our mission sets forth, nor optimize the demand for digital access that current best practice for archives, family research, and social media demands.

Meanwhile, collections central to the mission of the HSMC have yet to be catalogued and indexed. Collections needing attention include: American Revolution; Centennial Collection; Centennial Association of Montgomery County Collection; Civic Organizations; John F. Hartranft Collection; Winfield S. Hancock Collection; Small Businesses; Norristown State Hospital; Hiram Corson Family (Abolition); and Cleopatra Nelson (local NAACP leader). These records offer opportunities for new information about Montgomery County history and ways to bear witness to the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026. Interns, working together with the Executive Director and the Archivist, will make these collections more accessible by creating finding aids and helping HSMC shape their content for public impact.

Overall strategies to implement the organization's mission (or project)

This proposal supports two vital goals in the organization's mission, and furthers progress made on the 2019 Long Range Plan. For instance:

Goal 3: Make the history of Montgomery County more accessible and relevant to audiences throughout the region:

Develop and implement outreach programs that are accessible, relevant, and engaging; develop strategic partners to promote history education, heritage tourism, and historic preservation in Montgomery County.

Goal 4: Increase Access to HSMC's resources through digital technologies:



Expand online resources; improve services for researchers through digitized collections; implement series of outreach and awareness programs; encourage greater involvement in regional projects (such as USA250); improve collections guides, access to collections and place more digital collections online.”

Why it is important to fund this now

HSMC had been making progress on its Strategic Plan until Covid and leadership turnover stalled institutional momentum. Since January 2024, the organization changed personnel at these critical positions: Board President, Treasurer, Executive Director and Curator. Upon hiring a new Executive Director in December 2024, leadership identified urgent needs for computer and tech upgrades (we were operating Windows 7) and approved a Technology Update Plan in January 2025—a grant from the Erb Charitable Fund will advance this plan, and build on Phase I’s investment from our operating budget that resulted in a new server, improved internet and wi-fi, and four new computers. We request funding for Phase II to support two laptop computers to serve scanning, indexing, and cataloguing functions. These will network with HSMC’s flatbed scanner, allowing interns and volunteers the ability to scan images, documents, and archival materials for library and research use, as well as to create presentations and content for our popular blog and social media platforms.

Currently, HSMC cannot take programs out to the community nor have presentations on site. This means we turn down requests from senior centers, libraries, and schools to learn about Montgomery County and the historical society. We therefore request funds for a projector and portable screen.

Funding will also support a pilot education program, “Partnership for Access, Experience, and Impact,” with the Montgomery County Community College. This internship program can expand access to archival collections, support the museum and library, and provide hands-on experience in skills needed in public history, library and archival service and museum work. This assistance will allow us to support USA250 events with county partners in 2026 and beyond.

Timetable, with anticipated outcomes and their relevance to the nonprofit’s mission

March 2025: Meet with students in the history and anthropology departments of Montgomery County Community College (MCCC). Invite interested students to submit applications over the summer.

Summer 2025: Interviews with students and selection by HSMC staff and MCCC faculty.

September 2025: Upon funding, purchase computers and install connections to HSMC systems.

September-December 2025 work with two MCCC interns to produce content and final projects.

January 2026-May 2026 work with two MCCC interns to produce content and final projects.

How impact and results will be demonstrated

- Phase II of HSMC technology upgrades to purchase two laptops, projector, and screen.
- Four student internships will provide hands-on research and professional experience.
- Intern project results disseminated through social media and presentations on and off site.
- Ability to make 8-10 programs off site per year with program partners: Montgomery County Community College, Jeanes Library, Upper Dublin Public Library, Norristown Public Library, Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center, Historic Trappe, Wissahickon Valley Historical Society, as well as Ann’s Choice and Masonic Village senior centers.

