



An affiliate of Thomas Edison State University

REV 250: Examining the Semiquincentennial through a Jersey Lens

An opportunity for public libraries to celebrate New Jersey's contributions and place in history.

Grant Application Guidelines **Application due March 21, 2025**

Mission of the New Jersey State Library

The New Jersey State Library (NJSL), an affiliate of Thomas Edison State University, connects people with information through its services to libraries, government, and people with special needs. With a focus on innovation, future trends, exemplary models and technologies, NJSL provides support for New Jersey's public libraries.

Purpose and Outcome of the Grant Opportunity

The United States Semiquincentennial, or 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, will be celebrated on July 4, 2026, and will be marked by a variety of events around the country. Many of the American Revolution's singular events took place in New Jersey, including more battles than in any other colony. New Jersey's first State Constitution predates the U.S. Constitution and was used as a model for it. Many other events, both leading up to this pivotal date and after it, are worthy of commemoration and highlighting. Because libraries are revolutionary places and instrumental in safeguarding community history, they are uniquely positioned to highlight and share information about the semiquincentennial.

NJSL is launching a funding opportunity for public libraries to celebrate the people, places, and accomplishments of New Jersey from its earliest days. The purpose of this grant opportunity is to give libraries across the state a chance to decide what is important to the community and design a grant-funded project to showcase a full range of events, people and places that New Jersey represents.

Funding Available

NJSL estimates that \$250,000 is available to fund approximately 20-30 grants using New Jersey Library Network funds.

Grant Period

The term of the grant period is estimated to be from May 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are public libraries established pursuant to Chapter 33 or Chapter 54 of Title 40 of the New Jersey Revised Statutes, or a library established pursuant to N.J.S.A. 15A:1-1 et. seq., and receive public funds pursuant to N.J.S.A.40:54-35.

Important Dates

Date	Activity
1/31/2025	Release of grant guidelines
	Application Introduction and guidance webinar
2/5/2025	Application portal opens
	Recorded webinar will be posted to the NJSL YouTube site
2/10/2025	First application Q&A document posted to the NJSL website (Updated weekly through 3/17/25)
3/21/2025	Application portal closes at 11:59pm
4/30/2025	Grant awards announced on or around this date
11/30/2025	Progress Reports due
4/30/2026	End of projected project spending
6/30/2026	Final Reports due

Project Partners

NJSL highly encourages partnerships in project design and implementation. Potential partners may include, but are not limited to, nonprofit organizations, schools, institutions of higher education, local historical societies, museums, and other community groups.

Eligible Project Categories

Option One: Digitization

Per grant award available: between \$10,000 and \$25,000

Purpose: Safeguard and provide access to Historic Community Materials

Suggested uses of grant funds include, but are not limited to:

- Scanners, audio recording equipment, and other technology tools
- Software and licenses for 3-5 years
- Online training for library staff
- Technology kit to be lent to community groups
- Outsourcing digitization of materials
- Acquisition and digitization of materials (such as local family or business archives)

Option Two: Public Programming

Per grant award available: between \$2,500 and \$10,000

Purpose: Highlight a cultural, educational, artistic or historic event of local importance

Suggested uses of grant funds include, but are not limited to:

- Host a series of informational programs and/or speakers
- Provide opportunities for community engagement and civic learning
- Collaborate with and help amplify established local events
- Acquire library materials related to or to be used to support this New Jersey history project

Option Three: Special Collections

Per grant award available: between \$2,500 and \$7,500

Purpose: Build Community Knowledge through Collections

Suggested uses of grant funds, not mutually exclusive:

- Acquisition of library materials related to New Jersey history (authors, local residents, biographies, history, etc.)
- Collaboration with local authors or special groups to support and communicate about the history project
- Engage consultant to help curate a grant-funded collection
- Display equipment or furniture to showcase historical and/or grant-funded collection(s)

Application Process

Please keep the following guidelines in mind when developing the proposal:

An applicant may submit applications for different opportunities, but if more than one application is submitted, the applicant should rank them in order of importance. Each opportunity will be evaluated independently but only one award per applicant will be made.

- A webinar will be presented on January 31, 2025, reviewing these guidelines and answering questions live.
- A recording of the webinar will then be available online <https://www.njstatelib.org/rev250grant>
- Applications will only be accepted through the NJSL Foundant platform <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=njsl>
- A facsimile application is available online. <https://www.njstatelib.org/rev250grant>
- Additional questions may be submitted by email to grants@njstatelib.org.

NJSL anticipates awarding between twenty and thirty awards in response to this opportunity.

NJSL expects to award up to \$150,000 for Option 1, up to \$75,000 for Option 2 and \$25,000 for Option 3. Actual amounts may vary based on applications received and at the discretion of the State Librarian.

General Application Criteria

Only complete applications received by the stated due date, March 21, 2025, will be reviewed. Complete applications must be submitted through NJSL Foundant portal.

Application Questions/Technical Assistance

A successful application in Foundant will discuss the rationale for the project, including

- Historical subject or issue and community need or interest
- Project Plan, Activities, Established Timeline
- Organizational Capacity
- Budget with narrative explanations of how costs were derived

Applicants with questions in advance of the due date may email them to grants@njstatelib.org with the subject title "Rev 250 Grant Question." An initial question and answer document will be posted on NJSL's website by February 10, 2025 and will be updated once per week through March 17, 2025.

Budget information

NJSL will provide 90% of the awarded amount when the grant agreement is signed. The remaining 10% will be awarded when the final report is submitted to NJSL.

All expenditures/costs must be allowable, reasonable, allocable, and necessary for the grant.

The final report will include all necessary financial records that document how the funding was spent and a brief narrative describing the project's outcomes.

Allowable and Unallowable Costs

These are not exhaustive lists. Please ask if you are unsure.

Allowable

- Consulting or contractual services
- Accessories and supplies that are necessary to support the project
- Hardware, software, and/or technology necessary to support the project
- Subscriptions and licenses
- Library materials
- Travel and/or training expenses related to the project for library or project staff
- Modest refreshments for grant-funded events
- Other expenses that are reasonable, allocable, and necessary to support the project

Unallowable

- Promotional items and memorabilia including gifts, incentives, and souvenirs
- Construction, pre-construction planning, or renovation of facilities (generally, any activity involving contract labor in the construction trades is not allowable)
- Permanent fixtures (lighting, built-in shelving, etc.)

Application Review

For review purposes, all eligible applications will be reviewed by a three-member evaluation panel. Panelists will abstain from commenting on or evaluating a project if they have a perceived or actual conflict of interest which may include but is not limited to:

- Any recent relationships, financial or otherwise, with the applicant organization or any persons connected with the proposal;
- Residing or working in the applicant's community;
- Having played a meaningful role in the development of the project; or,
- Having previously worked for the applicant.

Application Review Criteria

Applications will be scored on 100 point scale.

1. Historical subject or issue and community need or interest (20 points, maximum)

A complete response will:

- Demonstrate the needs of the community by describing the exact materials to be digitized or acquired, or programming planned.
- Explain the historical significance to the community
- Describe the services and/or resources that this project will provide, touching on how the proposed project addresses identified needs of the community.
- Outline at least one intended goal.
- Address the copyright issues for any materials being digitized.

2. Project Plan, Activities and Timeline (40 points, maximum)

A complete project plan may include the following, as appropriate:

- Describe each major project activity, milestone and/or strategy in sufficient detail.
- Demonstrate how each major project activity will help to achieve your project's intended outcomes.
- Describe the role of partner organization(s) in project activities, if applicable. Partnerships or collaborations with community-based organizations are encouraged, but not required, for this grant opportunity.
- Discuss where project activities will take place and how the community will be engaged, including marketing and outreach to the primary audience.
- Describe how you will ensure your outreach strategies and communications methods are inclusive and culturally appropriate.
- Provide anticipated outputs for each major project activity. If your proposed project involves instruction, for example, your outputs may include the length and number of training sessions, attendance, curriculum developed.
- Project components may include and are not limited to planning, purchasing, hiring and/or contracting, implementation of activities, provision of patron services, programs, evaluation, etc.

A complete timeline will:

- Identify major project components.
- Provide estimated dates of completion.
- Identify responsible parties.

3. Outcomes and Evaluation (10 points, maximum)

A complete response may discuss the following, as applicable:

- Discuss how the project activities are designed to result in changes in participants' behavior, knowledge, skills.
- Describe how participation will be measured during the grant period.
- Describe how information gathered during the grant period will be evaluated to consider the project's effectiveness and areas for improvement.
- Be sustained beyond the grant period, as appropriate.
- Contribute to stronger relationships with community organizations, including project partner(s), if applicable.

4. Budget and Narrative Budget Justification (30 points, maximum):

A complete response will:

- Detail all necessary, reasonable, and allocable expenditures anticipated that align with the project goals.
- Provide a detailed explanation of the intended use of the requested funds, based on the categories listed in the application budget.
- Quotes, estimates, mileage, and other methods of calculating budget items should be detailed in the budget justification.
- Budget estimates for proposed contractor services should correspond with reasonable approximations for the activities to be performed.

Appeal Procedure

Applicants whose projects are not awarded a grant may submit a written request for an informal, fair hearing before the State Librarian. A hearing will be held only if it is alleged that the State Library has violated a statutory or regulatory provision in the awarding of a grant. An appeal that challenges the final evaluation score of the application will not be accepted.

Right to Cancel

This grant opportunity does not obligate NJSL to award a contract and NJSL reserves the right to cancel the solicitation if it is considered in its best interest due to lack of funding, agency priorities or other considerations.

Reporting and Monitoring

Grant recipients must submit mid-year and final reports to NJSL.

The mid-year report will be due on November 30, 2025 and will ask:

- How is your project going?
- Are you running into any unanticipated problems/challenges?
- Are you on track to meet the goals of your grant?

The final report will be due June 30, 2026.

In addition to a brief narrative description, grantees should be prepared to submit the following data, as applicable, in the final performance report form (to be provided) along with a final expenditure report form:

- Project outputs
- Expenses incurred with invoices and proof of payment
- Important findings and outcomes
- Lessons learned that could impact other libraries
- Photographs and samples of program promotion would be appreciated

NJSL staff may call, email, or otherwise correspond with recipients to monitor the progress of a project.

Grant Application Instructions – Applications are available online. Registration for access to the application is <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=njsl>