

**VIRGINIA HISTORICAL AFRICAN AMERICAN
CEMETERIES AND GRAVES FUND
2026-2027 Program Manual and Grant Guidelines
Fiscal Year 2027**

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PART I

1. Authority and Purpose

Authority

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) was established under Chapter 22 of Title 10.1 of the Code of Virginia to support the identification, preservation, protection, and stewardship of the Commonwealth's significant historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources.

Section §10.1-2202 of the Code of Virginia authorizes the Director of DHR to administer the Historical African American Cemeteries and Graves Fund (AACGF) in accordance with §10.1-2211.3.

Section §10.1-2211.3 establishes the Historical African American Cemeteries and Graves Fund as a non-reverting fund and directs that monies deposited into the fund be used exclusively for the purposes identified in §10.1-2211.2.

Pursuant to §10.1-2211.2, DHR is authorized to distribute funding to eligible applicants for the care, maintenance, documentation, preservation, and stewardship of eligible historic African American cemeteries and graves throughout the Commonwealth.

Purpose

The purpose of the AACGF is to provide financial assistance to qualified organizations, localities, property owners, and other eligible applicants responsible for the care and preservation of historic African American cemeteries.

The fund supports activities that promote the long-term maintenance, documentation, protection, and stewardship of these important cultural resources and assists communities in preserving places that reflect Virginia's African American history and heritage.

Funding is provided to support routine maintenance activities, preservation planning, cemetery documentation, and other approved preservation-related projects consistent with the purposes of the fund.

DHR has established the policies, procedures, and eligibility criteria contained within this manual to facilitate the administration and disbursement of funds appropriated by the General Assembly.

2. Program Overview

The AACGF provides financial assistance to eligible applicants responsible for the care, maintenance, documentation, preservation, and stewardship of historic African American cemeteries.

The program offers two funding opportunities:

- Basic Maintenance Grants, which support routine and recurring cemetery maintenance activities; and
- Extraordinary Block Grants, which support larger preservation, documentation, planning, and rehabilitation projects that extend beyond routine maintenance.

Funding is distributed in accordance with the Code of Virginia, available appropriations, and the requirements established in this manual.

Applicants are encouraged to document and record eligible cemeteries, maintain accurate records, develop preservation and maintenance strategies, and work collaboratively with DHR to ensure the long-term stewardship of historic African American cemetery resources.

Technical assistance is available to assist applicants with documentation, recordation, project development, eligibility determinations, and application requirements.

NOTE: The AACGF does not require matching funds. Applicants are not required to provide a financial contribution as a condition of receiving funding.

3. Funding Formula

Funding appropriated to the AACGF is distributed based upon the number of eligible graves documented within qualifying historic African American cemeteries.

For purposes of the Basic Maintenance Grant, funding is awarded at a rate of **\$5 per eligible grave**.

Eligible grave counts are determined using documentation maintained by DHR and may be verified through cemetery recordation, archival documentation, field documentation, approved surveys, or other information deemed acceptable by the Department.

The funding formula is intended to provide an equitable method for distributing available appropriations while supporting the ongoing care, maintenance, and preservation of eligible historic African American cemeteries throughout the Commonwealth.

Funding awards remain subject to available appropriations, applicant eligibility, cemetery eligibility, and compliance with program requirements.

4. Eligible Organizations

Funding through the AACGF is available to organizations and entities that demonstrate responsibility for the care, maintenance, preservation, or stewardship of an eligible historic African American cemetery. Applicants must be able to document their relationship to the cemetery and provide all required documentation necessary to establish eligibility.

Eligible applicants include:

1. **Charitable and Non-profit organizations** whose primary organizational purpose includes the preservation, maintenance, documentation, or stewardship of historic African American cemeteries and graves, are eligible to apply and must provide the following documentation:
 - a. Proof of valid, current tax-exempt status under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
 - b. Documentation demonstrating that the preservation, maintenance, documentation, or stewardship of historic cemeteries and graves is a primary organizational purpose. Acceptable documentation may include the organization's mission statement, work plan, policies, bylaws, or other formal organizational records;
 - c. Proof of current registration with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) pursuant to Virginia's Charitable Solicitation of Contributions Law (§§ 57-48 through 57-69 of the Code of Virginia) (Form 102), or documentation confirming exemption from the registration requirements of § 57-49 (Form 100-C); **and**
 - d. If the organization does not own the cemetery property, written concurrence or a signed letter of support from the property owner.
2. A **“Person”** meeting the definition found in § 1-230 of the *Code of Virginia* (“any “individual, corporation, partnership, association, cooperative, limited liability company, trust, joint venture, government, political subdivision, or any other legal or commercial entity and any successor, representative, agent, agency, or instrumentality thereof”) and must provide the following documentation:
 - a. A copy of the deed confirming ownership of the cemetery; **and**
 - b. Proof of current registration with VDACS or proof of exemption from such requirements when applicable under current state law (see note above). Please note that churches are exempt from registration.

3. Any **Virginia locality** (county, city or town) applying for funds to support the maintenance of a neglected historic African American cemetery, or portion thereof, must provide the following documentation:
 - a. Written confirmation that the cemetery is located within the locality's jurisdictional boundaries and that the locality will assume custodial responsibility for the care and maintenance of the cemetery during the period of the grant award; **and**
 - b. Documentation to include property ownership records, resolutions, ordinances, maintenance agreements or other documentation deemed acceptable by DHR.

To be eligible for funding, a cemetery must be documented and recorded in DHR's cultural resources database, VCRIS. Documentation may require submission of supporting information by the applicant and in some cases, verification through a site visit conducted by DHR staff or a qualified representative.

5. Eligible Graves Criteria

Funding distributed through the AACGF is based upon the number of eligible graves documented within an eligible historic African American cemetery.

Eligible graves include:

- Individuals born prior to January 1, 1900, regardless of date of death; and
- Individuals born on or after January 1, 1900, **and** interred prior to January 1, 1948

Applicants may be required to provide supporting documentation necessary to verify grave counts and eligibility.

Eligible graves must be documented in DHR's cultural resources database or otherwise verified through documentation acceptable to DHR.

DHR reserves the right to review and adjust grave counts based on available documentation, field verification, or updates to cemetery records.

Inclusion of a cemetery in the AACGF does not automatically establish the eligibility of all graves within that cemetery. DHR may determine the eligibility of individual marked and unmarked graves based on available documentation, cemetery records, burial inventories, approved Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey, and other evidence deemed acceptable by DHR.

PART II

6. Grant Opportunities

The AACGF offers two funding opportunities to support the care, documentation, preservation, and stewardship of historic African American cemeteries.

- **Basic Maintenance Grant**

The Basic Maintenance Grant (BMG) supports routine cemetery care and maintenance. This funding is distributed using the **\$5 per eligible grave formula** and is intended to assist with ongoing maintenance activities that help prevent deterioration of cemetery landscapes and grave markers.

Eligible activities include:

- Vegetation Management
- Basic cleaning of markers, memorials or monuments

- **Extraordinary Block Grant**

The Extraordinary Block Grant (EBG) provides funding for preservation, documentation, planning and rehabilitation projects that extend beyond routine cemetery maintenance. These grants are intended to address significant preservation needs, support long-term stewardship efforts, and assist with projects requiring specialized expertise, planning or professional services.

Applicants new to the AACGF must first receive funding through the Basic Maintenance Grant before becoming eligible for Extraordinary Block Grant funding.

- **Eligible projects include:**

- Preservation Maintenance Planning
- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey
- Wayfinding and interpretive signage
- Repair, replacement of markers, memorials or monuments
- Maintenance and in-kind repairs of existing mausoleums and other above ground structures
- Maintenance and repair of existing fences, walls and other plot enclosures
- In-kind repairs to existing roads, paths, and parking areas
- Other approved-related activities

- **Scope of Work and Cost Estimate Requirements:**
 - All EBG requests must include a detailed scope of work describing the proposed activities, project objectives, methods, materials and anticipated timeline and outcomes.
 - Applicants must also provide a written estimate, proposal, quote or other cost documentation sufficient to demonstrate the anticipated project expenses. DHR may request additional information or clarification during the application review process.
 - No minimum, no maximum amount.

- **Pre-Approval Requirements:**
 - EBG projects require review and approval by DHR prior to the commencement of work. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with DHR before undertaking preservation projects involving specialized services, conservation treatments, archeological investigations, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey, replacement markers, signage installation, or other activities that may affect historic cemetery resources.
 - Funding approval does not authorize work that requires separate review or approval by DHR or other applicable agencies.

- **Documentation Requirements:**
 - Recipients of EBG funding are required to document project activities and outcomes. All extraordinary maintenance and preservation projects must include photographic and/or written documentation demonstrating the work performed and the results achieved.
 - Documentation should clearly illustrate project conditions before and after completion and may include photographs, reports, plans, assessments, maps, or other materials appropriate to the funding activity.
 - Documentation shall be submitted to DHR as part of the project reporting and closeout process and may be used to verify compliance with grant requirements and support future preservation and stewardship efforts.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with DHR during project development to discuss project eligibility, documentation requirements, scope of work expectations, and any necessary approvals prior to submitting an application.

NOTE: Applicants may receive both a Basic Maintenance Grant and Extraordinary Block Grant funding during the same fiscal year, provided all eligibility requirements are met and sufficient funds are available.

7. Eligible and Appropriate Uses of Funding

Funds provided through the AACGF must be used exclusively for the care, maintenance, documentation, and preservation of eligible historic African American cemeteries.

Funds received under this program are restricted to the following uses:

- Vegetation management (mowing, weed and vine removal, pruning, etc.)
- Caring for existing markers, memorials, and monuments to the memory of African Americans (careful cleaning, repair, resetting)
- Professional preservation and planning services, including but not limited to the installation of replacement markers, memorials, or monuments; preservation planning; Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) surveys; wayfinding and interpretive signage; and other approved preservation-related activities. Requests for these activities must include a detailed scope of work and cost estimate and must be performed by qualified professionals. All such activities require prior review and approval by DHR before work begins

Vegetation Management

Carefully monitoring and managing trees and other vegetation is an integral part of a cemetery preventive conservation program. Mature trees and ornamental shrubs can add character, shade, and seasonal color to historic cemeteries, and many may be historic features worthy of preservation. If not properly maintained, however, they can damage grave markers, fencing, and other historic features.

Overgrown vegetation creates wet, shaded areas and fosters biological growth that can accelerate deterioration of stone, iron, and wood objects. Pruning trees and shrubs and trimming or removing other growth adjacent to grave markers allows air circulation and light penetration. A treatment plan for cemetery vegetation should address trees, shrubs, vines, and unwanted or “volunteer” growth.

The following common maintenance activities should be considered when planning projects that will use state funds:

Mowing is one of the most time-consuming and costly maintenance tasks for cemetery owners and caretakers and is also one of the most potentially destructive. Historic cemeteries were not designed for today's large riding lawn mowers, and mowing between tight spots with a large mower deck is destined to cause damage. When at all possible, DHR recommends using a smaller push mower between particularly sensitive features and outfitting riding mower decks with protective bumpers (these can be anything from pipe insulation to foam pool noodles). Additional damage can be caused by riding over low stones or coping. If rolling over these features is unavoidable, the mower blade height should be adjusted to avoid them.

String trimming is also potentially destructive, especially when the line comes into contact with softer materials such as marble, limestone, and wood. Using the lightest trim line and angling the trimmer head towards the ground will help reduce damage if the trimmer hits unintended targets. Whenever possible, hand trimming should be considered around the most significant, fragile features.

Herbicide use in cemeteries is not generally recommended, as salts within the herbicide can wick into the stone and cause deterioration. The die-back of vegetation also exposes soil around the bases of grave markers which can result in soil splashing, staining, and additional biological growth. When the use of herbicides is necessary DHR recommends applying by hand to unwanted growth and avoiding broadcast spray or application whenever possible.

If **fertilizer** is applied to grass or ornamental plants, DHR recommends choosing a natural organic fertilizer to minimize salt content for the reasons stated above. Following any chemical application, rinsing away residue from grave markers, etc., with water using a low-pressure hose or pump-spray bottle is important.

Ongoing maintenance of cemetery vegetation is essential to conserve grave markers and fencing. Periodic inspections may warrant trimming or removing trees, trimming shrubs and vines, and removing unwanted vegetation. Annual inspections are necessary to assess the condition of plantings and to identify volunteer growth for removal.

Caring for Grave Markers, Memorials, and Monuments

DHR strongly recommends that all applicants review the National Park Service's Preservation Brief 48: *Preserving Grave Markers in Historic Cemeteries*. Besides describing grave marker materials and the risk factors that contribute to their decay, the Preservation Brief provides guidance for assessing their conditions and discusses maintenance programs and various preservation treatments. The document also provides several

excellent references that address both general and specific issues associated with care and preservation of grave markers. The brief may be found online at:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-48-grave-markers.pdf>

Please contact DHR whenever grave marker preservation projects are undertaken. Our staff have decades of experience in conservation, materials identification, cemetery maintenance, and archaeology, and can provide technical advice on best practices. *DHR does not promote or encourage the use of chemicals, bleaches, commercially available cleaners, or power-washing when caring for funerary markers, and will not approve funding for such applications.*

Installation of Replacement Markers, Memorials, and Monuments

Funds may be used to purchase and site replacements for existing markers that are damaged beyond repair, as well as memorials for currently unmarked graves. The size and material type of the preferred marker should dictate whether professional installation is necessary. Metal stake markers and wooden crosses require very little ground disturbance and can be installed by caretakers. Small modern markers that lie flat on the ground weigh around 130-150 pounds and may be relatively easily installed by cemetery caretakers as well. Professional assistance should be obtained before attempting to remove an existing marker or installing large upright markers. *Please note that the average upright headstone weighs anywhere from 250-300 pounds.* The Department recommends that larger or upright monuments be installed by a qualified monument company to avoid damage to the stone and injury to personnel. Care should be taken to avoid excavation of more than a few inches as historic graves may be as shallow as 1.5 feet below modern ground surface.

Ground Penetrating Radar

Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and other remote sensing technologies may be used to support cemetery documentation and the identification of unmarked graves. Applicants seeking funding for these activities must obtain prior written approval from DHR. **See Appendix A: Notice Regarding Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)** for additional guidance and requirements.

Preservation Maintenance Planning

Organizations responsible for the long-term stewardship of historic African American cemeteries are encouraged to develop a preservation plan to assist with documentation, condition assessment, maintenance priorities, and future preservation efforts.

See Appendix B: Preservation Maintenance Planning Guidelines for additional guidance. Reviewing the [National Park Service's Preservation Brief 48](#) is encouraged.

Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage

Wayfinding and interpretive signage may be used to identify cemetery features, improve visitor navigation, and communicate the history and significance of historic African American cemeteries. **See Appendix C: Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Guidelines** for additional guidance and requirements.

NOTE: The activities described in this section are intended to provide examples of common maintenance, preservation, documentation, and stewardship activities eligible for support through the AACGF. Other preservation-related activities that are consistent with the purposes of the fund and promote the care, maintenance, protection, or long-term stewardship of eligible historic African American cemeteries and graves may be considered for funding upon review and approval by DHR.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with DHR regarding proposed activities not specifically identified in this manual. Additional maintenance standards, approved practices, and stewardship guidance are provided in **Appendix D**, which contains a sample Cemetery Routine Maintenance Agreement for reference purposes.

8. Ineligible and Inappropriate Uses of Funding

Funding may **not** be used for activities that fall outside the scope of routine maintenance, documentation, and preservation or that may result in damage to historic cemetery resources.

Ineligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Removal of standing trees;
- New construction;
- Installation of new fencing that is not an in-kind replacement;
- Excavation or ground disturbance not approved by DHR;
- Purchase of equipment;
- Employee salaries or internal labor costs;
- Drainage or erosion mitigation projects;
- Major grading or landscape alteration;

- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) activities that have not received prior DHR approval;
- Chemical cleaning, bleaching, or power washing of markers and monuments; and
- Any activity determined by DHR to be inconsistent with the purposes of the program.

All applicants are strongly encouraged to contact DHR prior to beginning any project to ensure that it complies with these funding restrictions. Funding requests for ineligible projects may be denied at DHR's sole discretion.

PART III

9. Documentation and Recordation

Documentation is a critical component of the preservation, stewardship, and long-term care of historic African American cemeteries. Before funding eligibility can be determined, cemeteries should be properly identified, documented, and recorded in the Virginia Cultural Resource Information System (VCRIS), the Commonwealth's cultural resources database.

Recordation helps establish the historic significance of a cemetery, supports the identification of eligible graves, and provides a permanent record that can assist future preservation, planning, and stewardship efforts. Documentation may include historical research, mapping, photographs, burial inventories, site descriptions, and other information necessary to accurately record the resource.

Organizations and individuals seeking funding are strongly encouraged to verify whether a cemetery has been recorded in VCRIS prior to submitting an application. Cemeteries that have not been previously documented may require recordation or updates to existing records before eligibility can be fully evaluated.

10. Application Process

Organizations seeking funding through the AACGF must complete and submit the official application and all required supporting documentation as prescribed by DHR.

The AACGF operates on the Commonwealth's fiscal year, which begins on **July 1** and ends on **June 30**. Applications may be submitted throughout the funding cycle; however, to be

considered for funding during the current fiscal year, completed applications and all required supporting documentation must be received by **May 30**.

Applications received after May 30 may be considered during the next fiscal year, subject to available funding and program requirements.

Application materials, program guidance, and related resources are available through DHR and on the Department's website at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/grant-funding/african-american-cemetery-graves-fund/>.

Applicants are encouraged to contact DHR prior to submission to discuss project eligibility, documentation requirements, and funding availability.

Applications are reviewed and evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

11. Application Checklist

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required forms and supporting documentation are submitted at the time of application. Incomplete applications may delay review and funding determinations.

Applicants proposing activities on property they do not own will be required to provide written permission or concurrence from the property owner as part of the application process.

Required for All Applicants

Applicants must submit:

- Completed AACGF Application Form
- Commonwealth of Virginia (COV) W9 Form
- Documentation demonstrating ownership or custodial responsibility for the cemetery
- Documentation supporting cemetery eligibility
- Documentation supporting the number of eligible graves, if applicable
- Photographs or other supporting documentation requested by DHR
- Any additional information necessary to verify eligibility

Additional Requirements for Charitable and Nonprofit Organizations

Charitable and nonprofit organizations must also submit:

- Documentation demonstrating that cemetery preservation, maintenance, documentation, or stewardship is a primary organizational purpose;
- IRS Determination Letter, IRS Group Exemption Letter, or other acceptable documentation of tax-exempt status;
- Documentation demonstrating current VDACS registration or exemption, when applicable; **and**
- Written concurrence from the property owner, such as a signed letter of support, demonstrating the owner's awareness of and support for the proposed project activities.

Additional Requirements for Extraordinary Block Grant Requests

Applicants requesting Extraordinary Block Grant funding must also provide:

- Detailed Scope of Work;
- Itemized Cost Estimate, Proposal, or Quote;
- Documentation of professional qualifications, when applicable;
- Documentation required for DHR review and approval of proposed activities; **and**
- Any additional supporting materials requested by DHR.

Additional Property Owner Documentation

Applicants who do not own the cemetery property must provide written permission, written concurrence, or other documentation acceptable to DHR demonstrating the property owner's awareness of and support for the proposed project activities.

12. Request for Funds

All requests for funding appropriated for the care, documentation, and preservation of historic African American cemeteries and graves shall be submitted to DHR using the prescribed application forms and supporting documentation found on [DHR's website](#).

Funding determinations are contingent upon available appropriations, applicant eligibility, cemetery eligibility, and compliance with program requirements.

Application Review and Funding Determinations

The AACGF is a non-competitive grant program. Applications are reviewed for completeness, applicant eligibility, cemetery eligibility, compliance with program requirements, and the availability of appropriated funds.

Complete applications that meet program requirements and include adequate supporting documentation will be considered for funding on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to the availability of funds.

DHR reserves the right to request additional information, documentation, clarification, or site visits necessary to evaluate a funding request. Incomplete applications may be delayed, returned for correction, or deemed ineligible for consideration until all required information has been received.

Submission of an application does not guarantee funding. Funding determinations are made at the discretion of DHR and are contingent upon available appropriations, applicant eligibility, cemetery eligibility, and compliance with all applicable program requirements.

PART IV

13. Disbursement Requirements

Prior to the disbursement of funds, applicants must satisfy all program requirements and provide any documentation requested by DHR.

Recipients must submit the following:

- Signed Cemetery Routine Maintenance Agreement;
- Signed Acknowledgement of Reporting Requirements;
- Current Virginia W-9 Form; **and**
- Any additional documentation required by DHR.

No funds shall be disbursed until all required documentation has been received and approved.

14. Reporting Requirements

Recipients are responsible for maintaining records demonstrating the appropriate use of AACGF funds and complying with all reporting requirements established by DHR.

Beginning July 1 of each year, all funding recipients shall submit a certified statement to DHR confirming that funds awarded during the preceding fiscal year have been, or will be, expended in accordance with §10.1-2211.2 of the Code of Virginia, this Program Manual, and any applicable grant requirements.

Funds awarded through the AACGF are nonrevocable and may be carried forward into subsequent fiscal years until expended for approved purposes.

Reconciliation of Expenditures Form

Recipients shall complete and submit the **Reconciliation of Expenditures Form (Appendix E)** to account for the expenditure of AACGF funds during the applicable state fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). The form must include:

- Payees;
- Dates of expenditure;
- Amounts expended; **and**
- Descriptions of work completed or services provided.

The form serves as the primary reporting document for AACGF funding and shall be completed using the format prescribed by DHR.

A sample Reconciliation of Expenditures Form is provided in Appendix E for reference purposes.

Attestation of Accuracy

A signed, dated, and attested statement from the funding recipient certifying the accuracy and completeness of the information provided. This requirement may be satisfied through execution of the certification statement included on the Reconciliation of Expenditures Form or through submission of a separate signed and dated certification statement.

Extraordinary Block Grant Documentation

Documentation of projects funded through an Extraordinary Block Grant must include photographic and/or written documentation demonstrating the work performed and the results achieved.

Documentation should clearly illustrate project conditions before and after completion and may include photographs, reports, assessments, maps, plans, or other materials appropriate to the funded activity.

Documentation shall be submitted as part of the reporting and closeout process and may be used to verify compliance with grant requirements and support future preservation efforts.

Reporting Deadlines

For organizations that receive AACGF funding during a state fiscal year (July 1 through June 30), the reporting period begins on July 1 following receipt of funds.

Certified statements and all required supporting documentation shall be submitted **no earlier than July 1 and no later than September 30 of each reporting year** unless otherwise directed by DHR.

Additional Documentation

DHR reserves the right to request additional documentation, clarification, or supporting materials necessary to verify expenditures, evaluate project outcomes, or ensure compliance with program requirements.

Recipients shall provide requested information within the timeframe established by DHR.

Record Retention

Funding recipients shall retain copies of all records related to the receipt and expenditure of AACGF funds, including applications, agreements, contracts, invoices, receipts, photographs, reports, correspondence, Reconciliation of Expenditures Forms, and other supporting documentation.

Records shall be maintained for a minimum of **three (3) years following the final expenditure of awarded funds**, or longer if required by law, audit, litigation, or other administrative action.

Upon request, recipients shall make such records available to DHR for review, verification, or audit purposes.

15. Compliance and Future Eligibility

Recipients are responsible for ensuring that all funds are used in accordance with applicable laws, program requirements, approved project activities, and the Cemetery Routine Maintenance Agreement.

Failure to comply with program requirements may result in:

- Delay or withholding of future funding
- Ineligibility for future AACGF funding opportunities
- Additional corrective actions deemed necessary by DHR

DHR reserves the right to review funded activities, request additional documentation, conduct site visits, and verify compliance with approved project activities.

Applicants with outstanding reporting requirements, unresolved compliance issues, or previously awarded funds that have not been appropriately reconciled may be deemed ineligible for additional funding until such issues have been resolved.

PART V

16. Appendices

The appendices accompanying this Program Manual provide supplemental guidance, forms, agreements, and technical resources intended to assist applicants and funding recipients in complying with AACGF requirements and implementing eligible preservation and maintenance activities.

Where referenced within this manual, appendix materials shall be considered part of the program's administrative guidance and requirements.

Appendix A-Notice Regarding Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)

Provides guidance on the use of GPR survey, including approval requirements, project documentation, funding eligibility, and reporting standards.

Appendix B-Preservation Maintenance Planning Guidelines

Provides guidance for the preparation of preservation and maintenance plans, including recommended components, documentation standards, and treatment priorities.

Appendix C-Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Guidelines

Provides guidance regarding the planning, design, placement, and installation of wayfinding and interpretive signage within historic cemetery settings.

Appendix D-Cemetery Routine Maintenance Agreement (sample)

The agreement outlines approved maintenance practices, prohibited activities, and recipient obligations intended to promote responsible stewardship of cemetery resources.

Appendix E-Reconciliation of Expenditures Form (sample)

Documents the expenditure of AACGF funds by recording payees, dates, amounts, and descriptions of funded activities, and serves as the primary annual reporting form for grant recipients.

APPENDIX A

NOTICE REGARDING GROUND PENETRATING RADAR

The professional use of ground penetrating radar (GPR) and other remote sensing technologies in surveying unmarked or inconsistently marked cemeteries can be an effective way to identify the locations of otherwise hidden graves.

This information may then be used to increase the number of grave eligible for funding through the Historic African American Cemetery and Graves Fund grant program. Please note, however, that we cannot accept the results of GPR unless work has received prior approval. To obtain this approval, the applicant should provide a scope of work and quote for services from a qualified technician with documented experience in the identification of historic graves.

A Technical report detailing the results of the survey will be required as part of the overall project. This report must contain, at minimum:

- A statement of methodology for both data gathering and post-processing;
- A discussion of the author's interpretation of recovered data, and conclusions based on that interpretation;
- Plan map(s) indicating the presence of all anomalies and the probability of each representing an interment feature;
- Documentation and mapping of all extant grave markers present within the survey area, when total survey coverage is conducted;
- Depth slice images confirming the persistence of features through the soil column;
- Radargram profiles and digital images documenting current field conditions, surface features, and other relevant discoveries; **and**
- A copy of the author/s curriculum vita/e

Funding Eligibility

Property owners and other qualified entities that have received a Basic Maintenance Grant (BMG) from DHR may apply for additional funding to support Ground Penetrating Radar survey work. All work should be carried out by qualified professionals in accordance with accepted preservation standards. Funding is provided for advance planning purposes only and is not available for work completed prior to approval.

APPENDIX B

PRESERVATION MAINTENANCE PLANNING GUIDELINES

Cemeteries are sacred burial grounds and important cultural landscapes. Their long-term care requires thoughtful planning that considers both natural and manmade features. A formal preservation plan helps ensure these sites are responsibly maintained and sustained for future generations.

Purpose of a Preservation Plan

A preservation plan establishes a clear framework for cemetery stewardship by:

- Defining preservation goals and priorities
- Guiding maintenance and conservation decisions
- Supporting both immediate needs and long-term planning

Core Components

Preservation plans should be developed by qualified professionals and, at a minimum, include:

- **Mission Statement** – Defines the vision and purpose of preservation efforts
- **Inventory & Documentation** – Records gravestones, markers, landscape features, and site elements
- **Condition Assessment** – Evaluates the current state of the cemetery and its features
- **Maintenance & Treatment Plan** – Prioritizes work based on condition, urgency, and available resources

Maintenance Planning

A maintenance plan supports the preservation plan by outlining routine care, including:

- Vegetation and landscape management
- Cleaning and minor repair of grave markers
- Ongoing maintenance aligned with long-term preservation goals

Funding Eligibility

Property owners and other qualified entities that have received a Basic Maintenance Grant from DHR may apply for additional funding to support preservation maintenance planning. All work should be carried out by qualified professionals in accordance with accepted preservation standards. Funding is provided for advance planning purposes only and is not available for work completed prior to approval.

APPENDIX C

WAYFINDING AND INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE GUIDELINES

Placement of signage in historic cemeteries can serve many useful purposes, from increasing the safety of visitors to enhancing their experience and understanding of a sacred space.

The AACGF provides funding for two types of cemetery signage:

- **Wayfinding:** signage designed to assist visitors in navigating through the cemetery and locating individual gravesites or other points of interest, and to provide directions for both pedestrian and vehicular visitation.
- **Interpretive:** signage designed to provide visitors with information about the history and significance of the cemetery as well as specific elements within the cemetery.

An application for funding to support signage meeting these criteria should include the proposed number of signs, how they will be fabricated and by whom, and where/how they will be installed. DHR does not specify the size, composition, or content of signs that may be funded through the AACGF. We do offer the following recommendations and are glad to discuss signage plans with applicants at any time.

- To avoid inadvertent damage to graves, consider installing signage on existing fences, trees, maintenance buildings, or other nonfunerary structures.
- If posts must be used, use the smallest diameter possible, place them in or immediately adjacent to existing roads/parking areas whenever you can, and try not to sink them any more than 8 – 10 inches below the ground surface.
- Do not attach signs to gravestones, curbing, or other grave furniture. If signage specific to individual graves is desired, consider using movable structures that rest on the ground surface.

Funding Eligibility

Property owners and other qualified entities that have received a Basic Maintenance Grant from DHR may apply for additional funding to support wayfinding and interpretive signage projects. All work should be carried out by qualified professionals in accordance with accepted preservation standards. Funding is provided for advance planning purposes only and is not available for work completed prior to approval.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE CEMETERY ROUTINE MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT

CEMETERY ROUTINE MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT

ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDING PROVIDED UNDER §10.1- 2211.1 & 2211.2

ACCEPTABLE:

- Vegetation management
 - Mowing or trimming grass
 - Trimming or pruning trees and shrubs
 - Removal of climbing vines and invasives and fallen trees/limbs
- Care of existing markers and monuments
 - Conditions assessments
 - Basic cleaning
 - Professional repairs or resetting
- Installation of replacement markers (NOTE: original markers must be documented, if present, as part of funding request – DHR must provide prior written approval for replacement marker installation)
- Maintenance and repair of existing fences, walls, and other plot enclosures
 - Conditions assessments
 - Treatment of rust/corrosion in iron fencing
 - In-kind repairs to stone, brick, and concrete walls and enclosures
 - In-kind repairs to wood and woven wire fencing
- Maintenance and in-kind repair of existing mausoleums and other aboveground structures
 - Conditions assessments
 - Professional repairs
- Installation of interpretive or wayfinding signage
- In-kind repairs to existing roads, paths, and parking areas
- Preservation Planning, including pre-approved Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey

NOT ACCEPTABLE (INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO):

- Removal of standing trees
- New markers and monuments (other than memorials installed on currently unmarked graves with prior DHR approval)
- Chemical cleaning, bleaching, or power washing of existing markers and monuments
- New construction
- New fencing
- Excavation/ground disturbance (other than that required for installation of DHR-approved replacement markers, resetting of existing monuments, and replacement of fencing)
- Employee salaries
- Equipment purchase
- Drainage/erosion mitigation
- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) not pre-approved by DHR

I acknowledge and understand the eligible uses of these state funds. If these funds are passed to another entity/organization/group/person that will perform the work, I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the terms of this agreement are understood by all parties involved.

Funding Recipient/Responsible Party Signature: _____ Date: _____
Cemetery Name: _____

SAMPLE RECONCILIATION OF EXPENDITURES FORM

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17. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following glossary contains definitions of terms commonly used throughout the AACGF Program Manual and Grant Guidelines. These definitions are intended to provide clarity and support a consistent understanding of program requirements, funding opportunities, preservation activities, and administrative processes.

African American Cemetery

A cemetery established prior to January 1, 1948, for the interment of African Americans, as defined by the Code of Virginia.

Attestation

A signed statement certifying that information submitted to DHR is accurate, complete, and truthful.

Basic Maintenance Grant

Funding provided through the AACGF to support routine and recurring cemetery maintenance activities based on the number of eligible graves documented within a qualifying cemetery.

Burial Ground

A location where human remains are interred, including cemeteries, churchyards, family plots, and informal or historic burial places.

Cemetery Recordation

The process of documenting and recording a cemetery in the Virginia Cultural Resource Information System (VCRIS) through the collection and submission of information regarding its location, resources, condition, and significance.

Certified Statement

A signed and dated statement submitted by a funding recipient certifying that AACGF funds have been, or will be, expended in accordance with applicable laws, program requirements, and approved purposes.

Condition Assessment

An evaluation of the physical condition of cemetery resources, including grave markers, monuments, fences, walls, vegetation, and other features.

Conservation (Grave Marker Conservation)

The professional treatment of historic materials to stabilize, preserve, and protect them from further deterioration.

Custodial Responsibility

Responsibility for the care, maintenance, and stewardship of a cemetery, whether through ownership, legal authority, or other documented arrangement.

DHR

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Documentation

The process of recording and maintaining information about a cemetery's resources, condition, maintenance activities, and preservation needs. Documentation may include photographs, maps, inventories, condition assessments, plans, reports, and other materials used to support stewardship, preservation planning, funding eligibility, and reporting requirements.

Eligible Grave

A grave meeting the eligibility requirements established by the Code of Virginia and DHR for purposes of determining AACGF funding eligibility and distribution.

Extraordinary Block Grant

Funding provided through the AACGF to support approved preservation, documentation, planning, rehabilitation, and other extraordinary cemetery projects beyond routine maintenance activities.

Fence

A constructed barrier intended to define, protect, or secure a cemetery boundary.

Fiscal Year

The Commonwealth of Virginia's annual budget period beginning July 1 and ending June 30.

Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)

A non-invasive remote sensing technology used to identify potential subsurface burial locations and other cemetery features.

Historic Resource

A building, structure, object, site, district, landscape, cemetery, or other resource possessing historical, cultural, archaeological, architectural, or community significance.

In-Kind Repair

Repair work that preserves and maintains an existing historic feature using compatible materials and methods without substantially altering its historic character.

Interpretive Signage

Signs, panels, displays, or other materials designed to communicate the history, significance, and stories associated with a cemetery.

IRS Determination Letter

An official document issued by the Internal Revenue Service that formally recognizes an organization's tax-exempt status or confirms that a retirement plan meets Internal Revenue Code requirements.

Locality

A county, city, or town recognized as a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Marker

A gravestone, headstone, footstone, plaque, or other object used to identify or memorialize a burial.

Marker Stabilization

Actions taken to prevent gravestone or markers from tipping, collapsing, or shifting.

Monument

A memorial structure or object erected to commemorate an individual, family, group, event, or burial location.

Neglected Cemetery

A cemetery that lacks regular care, maintenance, or stewardship and may be experiencing deterioration, overgrowth, damage, or other threats.

Non-Competitive Grant Program

A funding program in which applications are reviewed for eligibility, completeness, and compliance with program requirements rather than ranked against one another for scoring purposes.

Preservation

Actions taken to sustain and protect the existing form, integrity, and condition of a historic resource.

Preservation Maintenance Plan

A planning document that provides recommendations for the care, maintenance, treatment, and long-term stewardship of a cemetery and its resources.

Property Owner Concurrence

Written acknowledgement or permission from a property owner indicating awareness of and support for proposed project activities.

Qualified Organization (Code of Virginia)

A charitable corporation, charitable association, or charitable trust that has been granted tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and whose primary purpose is the preservation of historical cemeteries and graves; a person or locality that owns a historical African American cemetery; or any locality whose purpose for applying for funding pursuant to this section is to maintain a neglected historical Africans buried in the qualifying cemetery, multiplied by the rate of \$5.

Reconciliation of Expenditures Form

The primary reporting document used to account for the expenditure of AACGF funds, including payees, dates, amounts, and descriptions of funded activities.

Record Retention

The maintenance and preservation of records and supporting documentation for a specified period following the receipt and expenditure of grant funds.

Remote Sensing

The use of non-invasive technologies, including GPR, to identify and document cemetery features without ground disturbance.

Routine Maintenance

Ongoing care activities such as mowing, vegetation management, and careful marker cleaning.

Scope of Work

A written description of the proposed project, including activities, methods, deliverables, and anticipated outcomes.

Stewardship

The responsible care, management, protection, and preservation of cemetery resources for present and future generations.

Survey

The systematic documentation and recording of cemetery resources, conditions, and features.

Tax-Exempt Status

Recognition by the Internal Revenue Service that an organization qualifies for exemption from federal income taxation under applicable provisions of the Internal Revenue Code.

VCRIS

The Virginia Cultural Resource Information System maintained by DHR for documenting and managing information about historic, archaeological, and cultural resources throughout the Commonwealth.

VDACS

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which oversees charitable registration requirements for eligible non-profit applicants.

Vegetation Management

The selective maintenance, removal, trimming, or control of vegetation to protect cemetery resources and improve access while minimizing impacts to historic features.

Wayfinding Signage

Signs or markers intended to assist visitors in locating cemetery entrances, features, pathways, and points of interest.

Written Permission

A document demonstrating a property owner's authorization for proposed activities on property owned by another party.

18. ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE AND RESOURCES

Historic African American cemeteries are important cultural resources that preserve community history, honor those interred, and contribute to Virginia's historic landscape. DHR is committed to supporting local stewardship efforts through technical assistance, documentation, and funding opportunities.

DHR Can Assist With:

- Cemetery eligibility
- Documentation and recordation
- Grant opportunities
- Eligible uses of funding
- Preservation planning
- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)
- Application requirements
- Reporting requirements
- Other program-related questions

Getting Started:

1. Determine whether the cemetery may be eligible for AACGF funding.
2. Check whether the cemetery has been documented and recorded. If not, contact DHR to discuss documentation and scheduling a site visit.
3. Discuss your project and funding needs with DHR staff.
4. Assemble the required application materials and supporting documentation.
5. Submit a complete application before May 30.

Contact Information:

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