



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



W. Milwaukee St., Janesville

PROGRAM MANUAL

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN WISCONSIN

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*State Historic Preservation Office
Certified Local Government Coordinator
816 State St., Rm. 305
Madison, WI, 53706*

Program Manual Certified Local Governments (CLGs) In Wisconsin

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Purpose of the program

The Certified Local Government (CLG) program is a voluntary partnership program between local governments, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the National Park Service (NPS) to identify historically important places, assist in their conservation, and promote their contributions to the community's identity and economy.

Preservation of historically important places became national priority in 1966 with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). That law created state-level offices - State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) - to facilitate preservation policy at the state level.

The CLG program was created in 1980 by an amendment to the NHPA. It is designed to facilitate the sharing of expertise and funding to advance the objectives of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) program. The purpose of Wisconsin's CLG program is to assist local governments with preservation planning through technical and policy expertise and financial assistance that empower local communities to protect important historic resources, while also growing to meet the needs of a 21st-century community.

The NPS establishes the broad regulations and standards, and provides federal funding to administer the program. The SHPO provides guidance and expertise to local units of government in developing preservation programs that fit local objectives for economic and cultural development. Local governments, by meeting the program standards and becoming certified, are eligible for grant funding to implement planning and educational programs focused on the identification, designation, and preservation of historic properties.

The benefits of local historic preservation programs are becoming more widely recognized: tax credit investment in historic downtowns, neighborhoods, and industrial properties, adaptive reuse of unique place-defining properties, cultivation of community identity and pride, recognition of diverse local histories, and increased attractiveness of communities for new businesses, residents, and visitors. The CLG program aims to capitalize on those benefits.



Evansville – CLG since 1985

Who is Eligible for CLG Certification?

Any local unit of government in Wisconsin is eligible to apply for certification under the CLG program: towns, villages, cities and counties.

Benefits of CLG Certification

1. *Grant funding*

Local CLG partners in Wisconsin are eligible to apply annually for no-match grant funding for historic preservation planning projects. Grants can be used for:

- architecture and archaeology surveys to identify and evaluate historic resources,
- nominations of properties and districts to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or to a local list of landmarks,
- educational programs focused on local history and historic places,
- historic preservation plans,
- design guidelines for historic properties, and
- Statewide or regional training events hosted by a CLG for preservation commissioners and staff.

2. *Economic Development with Tax Credits*

Local CLG partners can use grant funding to pursue a strategy of survey and designation. Once listed, historic properties may be eligible for state and/or federal tax credit programs. The survey-designate-educate approach is used by many Wisconsin CLGs as part of a larger economic and community development strategy. Identifying and then designating historic properties and districts in the NRHP allows property owners to leverage state and federal tax credit programs for investment in historic residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. Tax credit financing is routinely used for projects as small as a new roof on a historic home. It is also used for complex industrial or commercial rehabilitation projects. For example, the historic tax credit can be combined with other incentive programs to help finance the conversion of existing buildings to low-cost housing or other uses.

3. *Place-making and Local Identity*

A local historic preservation program helps cultivate a strong local identity and sense of place. At a time when workers are less tethered to physical workplaces, local identity and character is essential to retaining residents and businesses and attracting new ones. Local flavor attracts residents and businesses and keeps them there longer.

4. *Access to Expertise*

Local CLG partners have access to SHPO staff who have expertise in architecture, rehabilitation, archaeology, and state and federal policies on historic properties. We can provide guidance and advice on most questions related to historic properties, archaeological sites, and burial sites.

5. *Validation of Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Activity*

Wisconsin SHPO staff monitor HPC activity for decisions that deviate from local and state laws. This extra review can help keep the commission on track and running properly.

6. *Local review of Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places*

CLGs have an opportunity to comment on nominations of properties in their communities to the National Register of Historic Places. When the SHPO receives a nomination to the NRHP for a property in a CLG community, it is shared with the HPC before it is finalized, allowing local experts to review nominations with local knowledge and affirm that it meets standards for significance.

Requirements of Certified Local Governments

In order to be certified under the CLG program in Wisconsin, a local unit of government must meet the following standards *prior to applying* for certification.

Adopt a standardized ordinance

Adopt a historic preservation ordinance that meets the standards for the CLG program. The CLG program is designed to empower and equip local governments to effectively protect the essential character of historic properties as they adapt to evolving uses or need repair and maintenance. To do that, local ordinances must meet the following nationally recognized standards:

1. The purpose and intent of the ordinance must be clearly articulated.
2. The ordinance must establish criteria for eligibility and a process for designating historic properties within the local government's jurisdiction. The process for designation must provide for engagement with property owners and the public at points of decision-making.
3. The ordinance must provide design standards by which exterior alterations to designated properties are evaluated for appropriateness.
4. The ordinance must create a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with at least five members.
5. The ordinance must empower the HPC to act as a quasi-judicial body in reviewing proposed exterior alterations to designated properties. The HPC must be empowered to certify that alterations meet the design standards in the ordinance, and to issue (or deny) legally binding Certificates of Appropriateness (CoA) to property applicants.
6. The ordinance must not make HPC decisions *advisory* to a higher body but may prescribe an appeal process (state law allows appeals of HPC decisions to the local elected council but does not prescribe a process).
7. The ordinance must empower the HPC to either designate historic properties that meet the criteria or recommend designation to the local elected council.
8. The ordinance must not require the consent of owners prior to designation of properties and must not allow owners of historic properties to opt out of historic designation.

Appoint a qualified Historic Preservation Commission

Once a historic preservation ordinance is adopted, the local government must appoint an HPC of at least five members to administer the ordinance and empower them to interpret the criteria and standards in the ordinance and make quasi-judicial decisions. Members must have professional expertise or avocational interest in architecture, history, architectural history, planning, archeology, cultural anthropology, conservation, landscape architecture or closely related fields.

Facilitate public participation

CLG communities must provide opportunities for the public to participate in designation and review processes. This entails holding properly noticed public hearings and Commission meetings with time allocated for public comment. Successful local preservation programs fully engage the public in preservation activities beyond public meetings, including educational events,

programming for a variety of ages, and publicizing information about the program and about local historic properties on the city’s website or social media platforms.

Enforce Appropriate State and Local Legislation

The and the local government must administer and enforce the provisions of the local ordinance and comply with requirements of state statutes relative to designated historic properties (see p. 6). When a local government applies for CLG status, the application letter must include a commitment to this effect.

Survey and Inventory

A CLG must maintain an ongoing process to identify (through surveys) and maintain an inventory of historic properties in its jurisdiction. The system must be integrated with the statewide database of survey and inventory data maintained by the SHPO – the Wisconsin Historic Properties Database, or WHPD.

Surveys identify and document historic properties and make provisional recommendations about eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places based on the findings. Surveys can be done in phases or all at once, depending on the size of the community, and should be updated after around 25 years. The SHPO assists with this by providing grant funding and a manual of standards for survey projects.



*Wisconsin Pavilion for New York World’s Fair
Neillsville, WI*

The SHPO also assists with public accessibility by maintaining a statewide inventory of properties identified in surveys. Data collected about properties identified during surveys must be entered in the Wisconsin Historic Property Database (WHPD). Data in the WHPD is publicly available at wisconsinhistory.org.

Local designations are not tracked in the WHPD, so local governments must publish a list of historic properties designated under their local ordinance. The published list should be very clear about which properties have been designated under the local ordinance, and which have been designated under the State or National Registers of Historic Places. These designations often overlap, but because they carry different implications, it’s important to clarify the designations.

Local governments must also make survey reports publicly available. Most CLGs publish a copy of the report on their own website as well as the local public library’s website. CLGs should also request, when contracting with a consultant to do a survey, a sufficient number of hard copies of the survey report to distribute to local government agencies and public library branches.

Review and Comment on NRHP nominations

CLGs are active participants in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination process. The federal regulations for the CLG program (54 USC Ch. 3025 [§302504](#)) require the HPC and the chief local elected official to review and provide comments to the SHPO regarding the NRHP eligibility of a nominated property in the municipality. A nomination to the NRHP is submitted by a consultant to SHPO staff who prepare the document for the quarterly meeting of the State Historic Preservation Review Board (Review Board). The Review Board may vote to list the property in the State Register of Historic Places and to submit the property to the National Park Service (NPS) for listing in the NRHP.

When the SHPO receives a draft nomination for a property in a CLG community, the SHPO will send a notification and the draft document (without comments or edits) to the HPC and the chief local elected official. The HPC and the chief local elected official then have 60 days to complete the following requirements:

1. The HPC must provide an opportunity for public comment on the nomination. This can be achieved by putting the nomination on a properly noticed HPC agenda for discussion.
2. The HPC must prepare a report documenting the HPC's opinion on whether the property meets the NRHP criteria. The report may be in the form of a short letter explaining the HPC's opinion and may include documentation of any votes the HPC conducted on the subject.
3. The HPC must transmit the report to the chief local elected official.
4. The chief local elected official must make a recommendation on whether the property meets NRHP criteria and must transmit the HPC's report as well as his or her own recommendation to the SHPO.
5. If the chief local elected official and the HPC concur that the property meets NRHP criteria, the SHPO will move the nomination forward to the Review Board. The CLG's report and recommendation will be transmitted to NPS with the nomination.

Alternatively, if **both the HPC and the chief local elected official** determine that the property does not meet eligibility criteria, the SHPO will take no further action on the nomination unless an appeal to the State is received within 30 days of the CLG's objection requesting that it move forward to the Review Board. The CLG's report and recommendation will be transmitted to NPS with the nomination.

During the 60-day review period, the SHPO will review the draft document and will work closely with the author to make any necessary edits to comply with NRHP standards. During the CLG's review, the CLG coordinator or HPC may send comments regarding the contents of the draft to the SHPO's NRHP coordinator for consideration. When the property is officially listed by NPS in the NRHP, the SHPO will provide the official copy of the nomination to the CLG.

Applying for CLG Certification

Apply to SHPO

Any local unit of government in Wisconsin may apply to the SHPO for CLG certification. The chief elected official may request certification by submitting a formal request to:

*Certified Local Government Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office
Wisconsin Historical Society
816 State St.
Madison, WI 53706*

Application Materials:

A complete CLG application will include:

1. A letter, signed by the chief elected official of the local government, requesting certification under the CLG program, and expressing the local government's commitment to enforce federal, state and local legislation for the designation and protection of historic properties,
2. The current enacted language of the local historic preservation ordinance
3. A list of properties and districts currently designated under the local ordinance,
4. A list of current members, professional and avocational, of the Historic Preservation Commission, including their expertise or interest in architecture, history, architectural history, planning, archeology, cultural anthropology, conservation, landscape architecture or closely related fields. If the HPC does not include professional members, include a brief discussion of efforts made to appoint such members and a proposal for how the HPC will recruit professional expertise,
5. A copy of the local historic preservation plan, if available, or a brief statement describing the general goals and strategies of the local preservation program.

Approval of Application

The SHPO will respond to a request for certification within 30 days and will work with the applicant to rectify deficiencies or missing information. Once the request is complete and meets all requirements, the SHPO will prepare a Certification Agreement that will be signed by the community's chief elected official and the State Historic Preservation Officer.

The CLG application materials, along with the signed Certification Agreement will then be sent to the National Park Service (NPS) for their review and final approval. Once approved, the NPS will notify the SHPO and the applicant.

Duties of a Certified Local Government

After a community has been officially certified under the CLG program, there are a few things that the HPC and city staff must do to maintain certification status.

Administer the Local Historic Preservation Ordinance

A CLG's historic preservation ordinance functions like other local land-use ordinances, and should be administered and enforced the same as other local ordinances related to zoning, development, signage, etc. The CLG's planning department, Historic Preservation Commission, and elected officials can employ the ordinance in a way that advances the purpose and intent articulated in the ordinance itself. There are state statutes that prescribe how a local government must employ their historic preservation ordinance. The application of the ordinance is determined by the community and their locally elected government and should be used toward broadly accepted community goals. However, once a property is designated under the provision of the ordinance, the HPC must apply the standards as diligently as any other land-use ordinance.

Enforce and Comply with State Statutes

Local units of government in Wisconsin are subject to several state statutes relating to designated historic properties, archaeological sites, and burial sites. The most commonly applicable are:

- [44.40](#) prescribes a review process any time a state agency proposes to undertake a project that would affect a designated historic property.
- [59.69\(4m\)](#), [60.64](#), and [62.23\(7\)\(em\)](#) enable counties, towns and cities respectively to designate and regulate historic properties. Cities are required (by 62.23(7)(em)) to adopt a local historic preservation ordinance if there is an NRHP-listed property within their jurisdiction. All of these statutes require a public hearing prior to designation of a property under the local ordinance. They also contain parameters for using replacement materials on historic buildings and allows the appeal of decisions made by a Historic Preservation Commission to the local elected council.
- [66.0413\(3\)](#) requires a review process any time a municipality proposes to raze a building it owns with a local, state, or national historic designation.
- [66.1111](#) prescribes a review process any time a political subdivision proposes to undertake a project that would affect a property with a local, state, or national historic designation.
- [60.64\(3\)](#) provides for the appeal of decisions made by a local Historic Preservation Commission, but does not prescribe a process for the appeal.
- [120.12\(21\)](#) requires school boards to notify the SHPO when they propose actions that would affect a property with a local, state, or national historic designation.
- [943.014](#) makes it a Class A misdemeanor to demolish a property with a local, state, or national historic designation without a permit from the local government.
- [157.70](#) provides protections for all burial sites statewide.

Maintain a Qualified and Empowered Historic Preservation Commission

A local CLG partner must maintain a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) of at least five members with professional expertise or avocational interest in architecture, history, architectural history, planning, archeology, cultural anthropology, landscape architecture or closely related fields.

When the disciplines of architecture, history, architectural history or archaeology are not represented on the commission, the commission shall seek expertise to fill the missing discipline.

The commission shall report to the SHPO any request for a demolition permit for a property listed in the National Register of Historic Places as required in WI statute 66.0413(3)(c).

The commission must meet at least four times per year and share the minutes of each meeting with the CLG Coordinator at the SHPO. If there are no applications for design review, the commission can discuss projects for potential grant funding, review demolition permits, etc.

The Commission or planning staff must complete and submit a CLG Annual Report each year by April 1. The Annual Report form is available online. CLGs will be reminded in January of this responsibility and sent a link to the online report form.

The local government should provide sufficient support for training, necessary travel, and meeting logistics for the commission to do its job.

It is critical that HPC members understand the criteria for designation of historic properties, the standards by which they review proposed alterations, and their role as an agency of the local government administering a local ordinance. There are several organizations in Wisconsin and around the country that provide training webinars, online courses, and in-person sessions designed to improve the proficiency of preservation commissioners and staff.

- The Wisconsin SHPO offers a self-guided [online training module](#) for HPC commissioners.
- The Wisconsin Historical Society coordinates the [Local history and Historic Preservation Conference](#) in the fall of each year.
- The [Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation](#) occasionally hosts conferences designed for lay people and professionals, and focused on a single issue or property type.
- The [Wisconsin Association of Preservation Commission](#) (WAHPC) holds an annual conference offering presentations from professionals in preservation.
- The [National Alliance of Preservation Commissions](#) partners with the SHPO and local governments to provide specialized training called CAMP (Commissioner Assistance and Mentoring Program) for historic preservation commissioners and staff.
- The National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual [PastForward conference](#) focuses on issues facing historic preservation advocates, professionals, and volunteers.
- The [National Preservation Institute](#) provides training on a variety of legal and technical issues.
- The [National Center for Preservation Technology and Training](#) provides research and training on technical subjects related to historic buildings, landscapes and archaeology.

Maintain a System of Survey and Inventory for Historic Properties

A local CLG partner must have a strategy for surveying their community to identify properties that appear to meet eligibility criteria for the National Register of Historic Places or that are important to their local history. The Wisconsin CLG program assists with this by providing no-match grant funding for local surveys. Once eligible properties are identified, and when properties are designated under the local historic preservation ordinance, the local government must maintain and make publicly available a list of designated properties. The SHPO assists with this by keeping the definitive statewide list of properties designated under the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Local Governments are responsible for maintaining and publishing the inventory of properties designated under their own local ordinance.

Provide Adequate Opportunities for Public Participation

Local historic preservation ordinances must provide for public participation, especially at points of decision-making. State enabling statutes for counties ([59.69\(4m\)](#)), cities, ([62.23\(7\)\(em\)](#)), and towns ([60.64](#)) require a public hearing prior to designation of a property under the local ordinance. As a branch of the local government, all HPC meetings must be scheduled and properly noticed in compliance with Wisconsin’s “open meetings” law (state statute [19.81](#)) so as to provide stakeholders sufficient opportunity to comment.

Hold regular HPC meetings

The HPC must meet on a regular basis – often enough to respond adequately to the applications for review. Cities with historic districts and many individually designated properties typically meet every two weeks. Smaller communities with fewer designated properties may meet monthly or even bi-monthly. At minimum, an HPC should meet quarterly to review their processes and the provisions of their ordinance and discuss opportunities for grant-funded projects. HPCs meeting quarterly may need to call occasional special meetings to review applications submitted between regular meetings.

Share Agendas and Minutes with SHPO

The HPC must share agendas and minutes of all meetings with the SHPO’s CLG Coordinator. The simplest way to do this is to add the CLG Coordinator’s email address to any distribution list for HPC documents.

Submit an Annual Report

Local CLG partners must submit an annual report to the SHPO each year. The annual report is submitted using an online form that collects data on the current makeup of the commission, the activities of the commission over the past year, and is an opportunity to report difficulties the commission has in the administration of your ordinance. The SHPO’s CLG Coordinator will send a reminder of the Annual Report requirement each January, and a link to the online report form. The CLG Annual Report is due by March 1 of each year.

Review and Comment on NRHP nominations

CLGs are active participants in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination process. The federal regulations for the CLG program (54 USC Ch. 3025 [§302504](#)) require the HPC and the chief local elected official to review and provide comments to the SHPO regarding the NRHP eligibility of a nominated property in the municipality. A nomination to the NRHP is submitted by a consultant to SHPO staff who prepare the document for the quarterly meeting of the State Historic Preservation Review Board (Review Board). The Review Board may vote to list the property in the State Register of Historic Places and to submit the property to the National Park Service (NPS) for listing in the NRHP.

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1. The HPC must provide an opportunity for public comment on the nomination. This can be achieved by putting the nomination on a properly noticed HPC agenda for discussion.
2. The HPC must prepare a report documenting the HPC's opinion on whether the property meets the NRHP criteria. The report may be in the form of a short letter explaining the HPC's opinion and may include documentation of any votes the HPC conducted on the subject.
3. The HPC must transmit the report to the chief local elected official.
4. The chief local elected official must make a recommendation on whether the property meets NRHP criteria and must transmit the HPC's report as well as his or her own recommendation to the SHPO.
5. If the chief local elected official and the HPC concur that the property meets NRHP criteria, the SHPO will move the nomination forward to the Review Board. The CLG's report and recommendation will be transmitted to NPS with the nomination.

Alternatively, if **both the HPC and the chief local elected official** determine that the property does not meet eligibility criteria, the SHPO will take no further action on the nomination unless an appeal to the State is received within 30 days of the CLG's objection requesting that it move forward to the Review Board. The CLG's report and recommendation will be transmitted to NPS with the nomination.

During the 60-day review period, the SHPO will review the draft document and will work closely with the author to make any necessary edits to comply with NRHP standards. During the CLG's review, the CLG coordinator or HPC may send comments regarding the contents of the draft to the SHPO's NRHP coordinator for consideration. When the property is officially listed by NPS in the NRHP, the SHPO will provide the official copy of the nomination to the CLG.

Four-year check-in

The Certified Local Government Coordinator at the SHPO will conduct an evaluation of each CLG at least every four years to make sure that the local government is still meeting the requirements of the program. We will verify that the following requirements are being met:

- the historic preservation ordinance meets the standards for the CLG program,
- the HPC is meeting on a regular basis and recording minutes of meetings,
- the HPC is properly administering the local historic preservation ordinance,
- minutes of HPC meetings are being submitted to the CLG Coordinator at the SHPO,
- a CLG Annual Report has been submitted consistently,
- the CLG partner is complying with state statutes that relate to historic sites and properties,
- the CLG partner has a strategy for maintaining current survey data of historic properties in its jurisdiction, and
- the CLG partner maintains a publicly accessible list of properties designated under its historic preservation ordinance.

Local governments that do not meet the requirements for the CLG program will enter the decertification protocol and will have ample opportunity to correct deficiencies with the assistance of the SHPO and the CLG Coordinator. A CLG that is in the decertification protocol is not eligible to apply for CLG grant funding until the non-compliant issue is resolved.

Decertification

Certification of a local government under Wisconsin's CLG program will remain in effect until the local government is officially decertified by the National Park Service (NPS) on the recommendation of the Wisconsin SHPO.

Voluntary Decertification

A Certified Local Government may petition the SHPO to be decertified voluntarily. A formal request for decertification must be submitted in writing and must include:

1. a formal request for decertification signed by the government's chief elected official,
2. documentation (e.g. meeting minutes) of the decision to request decertification, and
3. copies of memos notifying the Chair of the HPC and the director of the CLG's planning department of the decision to request decertification.

Within 30 days, the SHPO will submit to the NPS a recommendation for decertification of the local government, and notify local government officials when the decertification is finalized.

Decertification for Non-Compliance

If, at any time, the SHPO finds that a CLG is not meeting all requirements of the program as stipulated in the Certification Agreement or this manual, the SHPO may initiate the following decertification protocol.

1. The CLG Coordinator will notify the chief elected official, the chair of the HPC, and the staff person assigned to the HPC (if applicable) of the non-compliance. The notification will specify the requirements that are not being met, advise the local government on how to correct the problem, and offer collaboration with the local government to correct the problem.

The SHPO may find a CLG in non-compliance for any of the following reasons:

- failure of the HPC to appropriately administer the local historic preservation ordinance,
 - failure to appoint a qualified HPC for two consecutive years,
 - failure of the HPC to meet for 1 year,
 - failure to provide for adequate public participation in local historic preservation processes,
 - failure to submit HPC Agendas/Minutes to SHPO for 6 consecutive months,
 - failure to submit an Annual Report in any given year,
 - failure of the CLG to consistently comply with state statutes relating to historic properties,
 - failure to participate in a quadrennial audit process, or
 - amendment of the local historic preservation ordinance in a way that does not meet the requirements of the CLG program.
2. The SHPO will establish a timeframe, not to exceed *1 year*, in which the non-compliant circumstances shall be corrected. Every 30 days during this period, either the chair of the HPC or the city staff person assigned to the HPC shall submit a brief report of the progress that the local government is making toward correcting the non-compliant circumstances.



Mt. Horeb Opera Block – Mt. Horeb, WI, CLG since 2024

3. If the deficiencies are not corrected in that timeframe, the SHPO will notify the local government of the persistent non-compliance, establish a second timeframe, not to exceed *6 months*, in which the problem must be corrected, and again work with the local government to correct the problem. Every 30 days during this period, either the chair of the HPC or the city staff person assigned to the HPC shall submit a brief report of the progress that the local government is making toward correcting the non-compliant circumstances.
4. If, after the second timeframe, the non-compliant circumstances have not been corrected, the SHPO will issue a final warning to the local government, articulating the non-compliant circumstances and what must be done to come into compliance with the CLG program, and establish a third timeframe, not to exceed *6 months*, in which the issue must be corrected. Every 30 days during this period, either the chair of the HPC or the city staff person assigned to the HPC shall submit a brief report of the progress that the local government is making toward correcting the non-compliant circumstances.
5. If, after a third timeframe, inadequate progress is being made to correct the no-compliant circumstances, the CLG Coordinator will submit a formal request to the National Park Service, attaching records of all attempts to notify and assist the CLG, to decertify the local government and remove it from the CLG program.

Process for Sharing Federal Funds with CLGs

The Wisconsin SHPO receives annual funding from National Park Service's *Historic Preservation Fund* (HPF). The SHPO is required by federal regulations to share at least 10% of that funding with CLG partner communities. To do that, the Wisconsin SHPO administers the CLG Grant program to distribute funding to CLGs in the form of no-match grants.

Any local government in Wisconsin certified under the CLG program is eligible to apply for this funding. The program operates on an annual cycle. *Letters of Intent* are typically due in August, and full applications in December of each year. Grant awards are announced in February.

The SHPO produces and distributes the *Wisconsin CLG Grant Program Manual* that describes the application process and priorities for funding. The *Manual* includes everything a CLG needs to know to apply for federal funding: project eligibility and priorities, application timeline, materials, and process, scoring criteria, what to expect when applying and receiving a CLG grant, and all conditions for using federal funding.

Eligible project areas for grant funding to CLGs include:

1. [Historic preservation planning](#)
2. Surveys to identify significant properties or archaeology sites
3. Nomination documents for designation on local, state, and federal registers of historic places.
4. Design guidelines to assist the HPC in administering the design standards in the local ordinance
5. Education – programs offered publicly that are focused on local history and historic places.
6. Specialized training for local historic preservation commissioners and staff ([CAMP](#))

Proposals are scored by SHPO staff on published criteria. High scoring proposals are recommended for funding and presented to the State Historic Preservation Review Board at their quarterly meeting in February. Final funding awards are announced shortly thereafter.

Best Practices for an Effective Local Historic Preservation Program:

Know your ordinance

Historic Preservation Commissioners should be very familiar with the section of the local code that they are charged with administering. The Historic Preservation Commission is an agency of the local government, created by the local code and empowered to make decisions and approve proposals on behalf of the city. Those decisions and approvals must be based only on the Commissioners' interpretation of the criteria and standards in the code, and not personal opinions about aesthetics or appropriateness. The language of the local historic preservation ordinance should always be readily available at every meeting of the HPC.

Be Consistent

Always refer to the language, criteria, and standards in your ordinance when making decisions – it is the law that commissioners are charged with administering. Apply the same standards and rigor to all nominations and applications for alterations. Do not be uniquely soft or hard on any applicant or project for any reason. Inconsistent evaluations will quickly erode confidence and trust in the HPC. Do not make decision that you would not want to be considered precedents.

Make Defensible Decisions

Always expect HPC decisions to be appealed, because by state law, any HPC decision may be appealed to your Board or Council. Make sure that the decisions you make are based on language in your ordinance and would be legally defensible by your city or village attorney.

Talk About Your Work

Without hearing directly from the HPC, people will make assumptions about your work. Myths and misconceptions about historic preservation programs are common. With different levels of designation, each with its own combination of benefits and regulations, it's easy to conflate and generalize.

Public education and outreach are two of the HPC's most important jobs. In order to convey the benefits of historic preservation to the whole community, a commission must go beyond its regulatory role. Broad public awareness of the community's history and the places that bear witness to that history promote a greater appreciation of policies intended to protect and promote those places. Community support often translates to political support. It's up to experts who fully understand the implications of local HP policies to make those connections.

Seek Guidance

One of the benefits of being a CLG is the network of assistance available to partner communities. CLGs have direct connections to the expertise at the Wisconsin SHPO and the experience of other CLG communities.

Reach out to the SHPO. We have experts in architecture, history, historic architecture, nomination processes, archaeology, and local, state, and federal policies. It's our job to help our local partners.

Join the [National Alliance of Preservation Commissions](#) (NAPC) and subscribe to their email support network. The NAPC's email list is a community of historic preservation commissioners and staff all over the country. Subscribers ask questions and share their experiences with local preservation issues every day. Whatever situation your HPC is dealing with, the group has probably discussed it. The archive is searchable.

Join the [Wisconsin Alliance of Historic Preservation Commissions](#) (WAHPC). WAHPC supports historic preservation commissioners with a quarterly newsletter on current issues in local preservation, and an annual conference on issues facing local HPCs.

Reach out to commissioners or planners in other CLG communities. They likely have common struggles. Finding another HPC who has dealt with your complicated situation can clarify things and provide a path toward a simple resolution.

Get Training for HP Commissioners

HPCs are sometimes required to make difficult decisions based on subjective standards. Training can help clarify the standards and the decision-making process. Take advantage of training opportunities offered by the sources listed on page 8.

Apply for CLG Grant Funding from the Wisconsin SHPO.

The CLG Grant program is designed to facilitate the survey-designate-educate approach (described on p. 2) to leveraging historic places for economic development and place-making. Consider where your community is in that strategy and what you need to follow through. Apply for grant funding to conduct a survey, nominate eligible properties, develop an educational program, or prepare design guidelines or a historic preservation plan for your community.

Think of Grant-Funded Project Ideas Well Before the Application Period

Keep the survey-designate-educate approach in mind each spring when the CLG grant cycle opens. If your local government has a need for a survey, nomination, design guidelines, or education program, talk with the CLG Coordinator early in the grant cycle (April-June) to define the scope of the project. The first step in the grant application – the *Letter of Intent* – is due in mid-August.

Create an Annual Report for Your City Council

Summarize the activities of the HPC each year to give local government and elected officials a clear understanding of what you do. Emphasize that the intent of the program is to help protect historic places while allowing them to be adapted to new uses. Include data on:

- the frequency of HPC meetings,
- the number of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness (CoA) your HPC reviewed, and how many of those projects were approved,
- the average time it took for your HPC to review CoA applications over the past year, and
- success stories – properties or projects that had a mutually beneficial outcome for the owner and the community

Build Good Relationships with Owners of Historic Properties

Reach out to owners of locally designated properties at least once every year. Remind them that their property is important to the history of the community, and that the local government has made a commitment to assist the owner in making decisions that retain the historic character of the property. Remind property owners that exterior alterations require an extra permit (CoA) from the HPC.

Manage their expectations and let them know what to expect from the CoA process. Make the review process simple and transparent. The design standards, CoA application, and review process should be very clear and easy to find on the local government's website.

Welcome new owners with a letter from the commission. Explain the benefits and responsibilities of owning a property associated with the community's history. Include information on where to find the design standards and CoA application process.

Don't ambush them. When a property owner comes to an HPC meeting, make them feel welcome and supported. If their plans don't conform to the standards in the ordinance, offer advice from the expertise on the HPC to help them modify the design to fit the standards.

Build Good Relationships with Realtors in Your Community.

Realtors, who are often the primary source of information for buyers of historic properties, need to be well-versed in the differences between local and national designation. Unfortunately, many are not, and buyers often get misinformation about the benefits and encumbrances of historic designations.

Develop a training program for realtors that draws clear distinctions between your local historic preservation ordinance and the National Register of Historic Places program. Promote a page on the city's website designed to train realtors in the differences. Publish a map clearly showing locally designated properties and NRHP properties (the SHPO can assist with data on NRHP-listed properties). Include the basics of the state and federal tax credit programs. Summarize the CoA process and design standards to which local landmarks are subject.

Follow Through with Promotion of Historic Places

Designating historic properties under a local ordinance is often founded on purposes like fostering civic pride, strengthening the local economy, and stimulating tourism. The third step in the survey-designate-educate approach entails promotion of a community's historic and cultural resources. Work with local and regional economic development and tourism agencies to showcase your local historic landmarks and districts. Share your expertise in local history to make your community attractive to new residents, new businesses, and new visitors.

Consider developing a historic marker program for designated properties and providing an annual budget for the production and installation of markers at historic properties and at entry points to historic districts. The Wisconsin Historical Society's [Historical Markers program](#) can be a part of a local marker effort. The CLG Coordinator can advise local governments on developing a local program.

Consider developing a walking tour of historic places and offering it as a paper pamphlet or a smart phone app. The CLG Grant program may be used for this kind of educational program, however, it is prioritized below other types of programs

Help property owners find technical expertise for their projects. Create and share a list of contractors who have experience working on historic properties. Create a listing of materials that have been approved under your local design standards.