

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW HOW DO I APPLY FOR A GRANT?

Applications for Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) grants are accepted once a biennium, usually in the fall/winter after a legislative session. The application forms are found on our website. The county's previously approved Courthouse Preservation Master Plan contains information about the courthouse and the proposed grant project. This information is used to fill out the application.

Applications are scored on 21 well-established THCPP scoring criteria by a committee of THC staff and Commissioners. The highest scoring applications are awarded planning grants, or full restoration grants, as program funding permits. Emergency grants are awarded on a limited basis to repair damage caused by a catastrophic event, an imminent threat or severe condition, or accelerating damage from long-term deferred maintenance.

A new scoring criterion means that counties with low revenue based on taxable values will be awarded extra points. Also, "shovel-ready" projects receive extra points, after architectural plans and specifications are completed, so that they are likely to receive another grant for a full restoration in the next funding cycle.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL FINANCIAL COMMITMENT?

The THCPP was established in 1999 to help counties undertake preservation projects that would not otherwise be done due to financial constraints. A statutory requirement of the grant program is that the county provide a minimum 15% match of the total project cost. Up to half of that match can be provided through previous master planning costs and/or prior capital expenditures. A bid and construction contingency is included in the budget and supplemental grant funding can be provided if unforeseen costs arise.

A statutory cap on the THCPP program limits the total state contribution to \$6 million per county. Any project whose total cost is more than \$7 million will entail a higher contribution by the county.

Planning grants and/or emergency grants are matched at 30% by the county. A planning grant typically precedes a major grant award to undertake the project and is for preparation of the

plans and specification for the project. Architects usually charge about 8-12% of the total project cost to prepare these plans.

WHAT IS A FULL RESTORATION?

Our mutual goal is a fully functional courthouse that retains its historic integrity and unique design. Establishing its integrity may require removal of features and reconstruction of missing features. Generally courthouses are restored to their original appearance but a significant addition that is compatible may be justified. A Courthouse Advisory Committee recently reaffirmed this approach.

Each courthouse will continue to serve the county with better working conditions for the public, county staff and officials. Upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work (such as elevators, improvements for energy-efficiency and security) are included in the scope of each project. Each county determines the use of each space although retaining county judge, commissioner's court, county court and other judicial functions within the building is preferred.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE GRANT IS RECEIVED?

An award for a planning grant means the county will work with their architect and THC to develop architectural plans and specifications for the project. This usually takes a year or more of planning and meetings in consultation with THC.

When major funding is awarded for the full restoration itself, the county prepares for a 2 to 3 year construction project, usually by vacating the building. Contracts are established between the county, a general contractor and their architect. THC staff monitors the work. Payments to the contractor and architect are reimbursed to the county on a monthly basis. A completion report is submitted to THC and the building is rededicated as the county's restored historic courthouse.

Contact the Texas Historical Commission for more information:

Division of Architecture 512-463-6094

Visit www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/texas-historic-courthouse-preservation.