

2014 Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area General Grant Application

1. Applicant Information

Applications are due June 18, 2014, by noon CST.

The form is split into 8 pages. To save and return to the application later, the applicant must complete the first page. At the top of the consecutive pages will be a gray bar that reads "Save & Continue Survey Later." Click to fill in your email address twice. Applicants will be emailed a personalized link to your application. Once the application is complete you will be prompted to review all your answers & download a PDF version for your records.

1. Applicant Name (Name of non-profit organization, local government, etc.)

County of Johnson, Iowa

2. Applicant Type:

Governmental (City, County, State, Regional)

3. What is your current Partner Site Status?

Neither, but we plan to become designated

5. Applicant's Federal ID Number

42-6004806

7. Applicant's Contact Person:

First Name : Mickey

Last Name : Miller

Street Address : 913 South Dubuque Street

Apt/Suite/Office : Suite 201

City : Iowa City

State : IA

Postal Code : 52240

8. County

Johnson

9. Email Address

mmiller@co.johnson.ia.us

10. Phone Number: Format must be (XXX-XXX-XXXX)

319-356-6000

2. Project Information

11. Project Name

Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Interpretive Signage Project

12. Project Description (Please describe in one sentence, 25 words or less)

Johnson County will create and install signs to interpret the history of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum.

13. Street Address of Project Location

S. side Melrose Ave. 0.16 mi E. of jct. Melrose Ave. and Slothtower Ave.

14. City of Project Location

Iowa City

15. County Name of Project Location

Johnson

17. Project funds will be used for the following type of activity: (Check all that apply.)

Outdoor Interpretive Signage

3. Project Summary

18. Specifically describe the grant project in a clear and concise summary. Begin by completing this sentence: The (name of your organization) seeks a SSNHA General Grant to _____. (Maximum of 1800 characters)

Johnson County seeks a SSNHA General Grant to purchase and install signage at the site of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum.

The site, located in Iowa City on Melrose Ave. near the Hwy 218 exchange, is one of the few remaining intact examples of county poor farms established in each Iowa county in the 19th century. First opened in 1855, the site serves as a window to the fertile land, changing farm, farm to factory, and 19th century definitions and policy surrounding mental health treatment and social services.

The need to care for the poor and mentally ill was established in the United States in the 1820s as a duty of state and local governments, and this duty was recognized early in Johnson County history. Initially, Johnson County chose to contract care from local physicians. However, in 1855 the Johnson County Board of Supervisors procured 160 acres on the edge of Iowa City for a "poor farm" to provide systematic care with economy.

Although 19th Century care of the poor and mentally ill was crude by modern standards, the concept of the Poor Farm reflected the prevailing attitude that fresh air and work would be good for the "poor unfortunates." The farm was to be self-supporting and "inmates" were expected to do farm chores to the extent of their abilities. For a rural state like Iowa, this structure made sense, as many residents had previous farm experience, and their labor helped compensate the County for their care. Crop farming and dairy production were the primary functions of the Johnson County farm until the 1960s.

The County will purchase five interpretive panels from Fossil Industries. Signs will measure 24" x 36" x 1/2" polycarbonate. Johnson County Historical Society professional interpretive staff will provide their expertise.

19. Goals

Address the goals of this project and how it fits into the overall goals for your site or organization. Explain how the project fulfills a demonstrated area of need. (Maximum of 1800 characters)

The Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum district provides an unusual educational and interpretive opportunity for visitors to learn about Iowa's agricultural past and its historic treatment of indigent and mentally ill residents. Although the Asylum has been individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for several years, the Farm as a district is currently being reviewed for listing on the NRHP, and the Johnson County Historical Society (JCHS) conducts tours to an average of 400 people annually at the site, there is no signage. The County and JCHS are working together to design interpretive signage to assist visitors in understanding the agricultural and societal significance of the site.

The County is in the process of creating a comprehensive plan for development of the site and some projects are under way. Last summer, the County utilized Technical Assistance Network (TAN) funding from the State Historical Society of Iowa with the purpose of completing a historic property assessment to assist with building stabilization and preservation planning. The County's Facilities department has implemented some recommendations and made a schedule and budget for the others. The County will learn later this summer whether our nomination to the NRHP has been approved, which would make the site eligible for preservation and rehabilitation funding.

The County Board of Supervisors is partnering with the Conservation Board to create a mowed bike trail through the site to connect to already existing trails. Interpreting the history of the Poor Farm and Asylum is another step to meet overall goals of preserving the site, increasing the number of visitors to the area, and enhancing the tourist and recreation experience, bringing repeat visitors.

4. Interpretive Themes

20. Number in order of priority those interpretive themes which relate to this grant project as applicable.

- The Fertile Land
- The Changing Farm
- Farm to Factory: Agribusiness in Iowa
- Higher Yields: The Science & Technology of Agriculture

21. Describe and/or attach examples of how your theme(s) will be preserved or interpreted. Include references to subcategories from the SSNHA Interpretive Plan. (Maximum of 1800 characters)

The proposed project will include the design of five interpretive panels, addressing such topics as: 1) Introduction to County Poor Farms/Asylums; 2) History of Care for Mentally Ill in Johnson County; 3) The Asylum; 4) Residents: Who, Why, When; and 5) The Farm (discussion of activities, structures, cemetery, current use).

The Johnson County Historical Society's (JCHS) collections and documents unearthed at the County during research of the NRHP Nomination will provide many choices for historical documents and photos of the Poor Farm and Asylum and its residents that can be used on the panels.

The interpretive panels will tell "The Fertile Land" story of Iowa's method of using its plentiful agricultural resources in efforts to care for the poor and mentally ill. The Poor Farm land was farmed by its residents, who earned their room and board by doing farm chores. Fruits and vegetables provided for the residents' meals—both fresh in-season, and "put-up" in Mason jars for the long winters. Extras were sold in town, and commodity crops and dairy products also assisted with the farm's income, an example of the "Farm to Factory" story. The use of the land was a good investment for the County; in 1863 the farm made a surplus of \$500. Even now, with the dormitories long shuttered, the land continues to be farmed by a local commodity farmer, and the land leasing fees (more than \$35,000 per year) are directed toward a special maintenance fund for the farm buildings.

Poor Farms reflected a shift from the family farm model to a unique hybrid of business-focus and charity. "The Changing Farm" is also an important theme that will also be told through this project.

23. How does the project contribute to telling the story of agriculture; does it enhance or expand new or different stories? How does the project contribute to development of the Heritage Area region? Describe how the Heritage Area will have a role in this project (SSNHA Staff & Partner Sites). (Maximum of 1800 characters)

Although County Poor Farms and Asylums in Iowa were once ubiquitous, changes in mental health service delivery and social services made them obsolete. The social stigma attached to the sites and, in some cases, counties' embarrassment about poor treatment of inmates at the locations, doomed most sites to fall into disrepair and demolition. For county boards of supervisors overseeing dwindling financial resources and ever-growing needs, maintenance of unused Poor Farm sites has, understandably, been a low priority.

Johnson County's relatively intact Poor Farm and Asylum site provides a unique opportunity to contribute to the Heritage Area region by telling new and fascinating stories that are relevant outside this one site. More openness and understanding about mental health treatment in our society today opens the door to these educational opportunities and discussions.

The County plans to pursue Partner Site designation not only to assist with further development and promotion of the site, but also to expand and enhance visitors' understanding of this unique use of an agricultural resource. Visitors will learn that idioms like "sent to the funny farm" or "driven to the poor farm" have quite literal historical origins. Visitors from across the state will learn not only about Johnson County's Poor Farm and Asylum, but about the similar sites once extant in their own hometowns.

24. Visitor Experience Need

How will the proposed project develop positive visitor experiences consistent with the SSNHA Interpretive Plan? (Maximum of 1400 characters)

The proposed project ties strongly to the identified needs for visitor experiences outlined in the SSNHA Interpretation Plan. The plan identifies "Information Signs and Kiosks" and "Interpretive Exhibits" as core or needed for a heritage area to provide contextual interpretation about the region. The proposed signage will give visitors the opportunity to learn not only about the history of the farm, its production and technology, but also about the history of mental health treatment and social services delivery. Most Iowans take farming for granted; miles of corn and bean fields are simply part of the landscape. Providing interpretive signage at the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum will help engage visitors with the site, providing a unique opportunity for visitors to simply walk an old farmstead, see the buildings, and consider the history and the people behind the land.

The project will impact target audiences referenced in the Interpretive Plan, particularly residents, repeat visitors, students, heritage travelers and niche travelers. In particular, the County expects the signage to impact residents and students, many of whom have vague or inaccurate notions of the Poor Farm's history.

5. Timeline/Evaluation

25. Describe the timeline of the project. List key threshold tasks including beginning and ending dates for each task.

From date

06/18/2014

To date

12/01/2014

Description of project

Johnson County and Johnson County Historical Society staff will continue to work together to draft language and images for signage.

From date

12/02/2014

To date

12/15/2014

Description of project

Signs will be ordered from Fossil Industries.

From date

03/16/2015

To date

03/31/2015

Description of project

Completed signs and pedestals will arrive.

From date

04/01/2015

To date

05/15/2015

Description of project

Install signage (dependent on when frost is out of the ground).

26. Evaluation**How will you evaluate the project goals after completion? (Maximum of 900 characters)**

The goals of the project are to interpret the rich history of the site and its environs for the benefit of present and future generations. The project will help to enhance understanding of the role of County Poor Farms and Asylums and draw visitors to the site and improve appreciation of the site. These goals will be evaluated by visitor numbers (requests to the Johnson County Historical Society for guided tours, usage of the trail, media interest, and interest in and support by local schools, youth groups and community organizations). Evaluation will also be gauged by comments and testimonials from visitors and requests for additional information.

27. What are anticipated outcomes to individuals, customers, participants as a result of this project? (Maximum of 900 characters)

We anticipate the project will enhance the visitor experience by helping visitors become more engaged with the site and develop a broader understanding of the role of agriculture in the County Poor Farm and Asylum model. Adding an educational element to the site will draw more visitors from schools and youth groups in the surrounding area, which will help Iowa children learn more about their state and its rich agricultural heritage.

28. What are the anticipated impacts to your organization or community because of this project? (Maximum of 900 characters)

Over the years, many individuals and groups have expressed interest in preservation and interpretation of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum. Although the Asylum has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places for a number of years, the full district is expected to be listed by the end of the summer. Plans are under way to develop a mowed trail through the property, which will bring additional visitors and attention to the site. The County is in the process of creating a comprehensive plan for development of the site, including preservation planning. As the plans develop, interpretive signage is a valuable first step in creating more interest to facilitating the project.

6. Project Budget

29. Project Budget

Please complete the following budget for your project and attach a Budget Explanation below to further explain budget items in detail. **See Page 3 of Grant Information Packet for match clarification. In-kind matches must be directly attributable to the project. Personnel time for employees, volunteers, and consultants as well as contributions of services, materials and supplies are considered in-kind match.**

	Grant Request	Cash Match	In-Kind	Subtotal
Consultant				
Personnel Use			3,427	3,427
Contract for Services				
Travel Expenses				
Equipment Expenses				
Materials & Supplies	4,800	3,631		8,431
Other Expenses				
Column Totals	4,800	3,631	3,427	11,858

30. Attach a Budget Explanation to further explain budget items in detail. After you have chosen the file, click upload.

[Budget Explanation for Poor Farm Signage Project.pdf](#)

31. Source of Cash and/or In-kind Match. (Maximum of 600 characters)

Cash match will come from County funds. In-kind match will come from County staff, County Conservation Board staff, and Johnson County Historical Society staff.

32. Attach letter documenting applicant's match of funding. After you have chosen the file, click upload.

[Matching funds letter.pdf](#)

7. Support for Project

33. Support for Project

List supporters of the grant project.

	Supporter	Description of Support
1	Johnson County Historical Society	professional interpretive services
2	Johnson County Historic Preservation Commission	volunteer labor, research services
3	Johnson County Conservation Board	installation of interpretive panels
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

34. Sustainability

What is your plan to sustain the project beyond this grant? (Maximum of 900 characters).

The County will continue to develop and maintain this site after the grant is completed.

35. Upload anything else you would like to attach to the General Grant Application. After you have chosen the file, click upload.

[JCHS Letter of support.pdf](#)

