



CPA Funding Application Form

City of Worcester

Submitted On:

May 8, 2025, 03:52PM EDT

Project Name	Preservation of Worcester Jail Records
Project Location and/or Address	American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury St., Worcester MA 01609
Project Lead Organization (or Individual if Applicable)	American Antiquarian Society
Legal Status of the Organization	501(c)3
Current Property Owner (if Different from the Applicant)	
Brief Project Description	The American Antiquarian Society seeks financial support to preserve 100,000 documents of records of daily activity at the Worcester County Jail in the nineteenth century, to make them available for public use.
Project Contact Information	Dr. Scott Casper, President [REDACTED]
What CPA category does this project fall under? (Check All that Apply)	Historic Resources
What activity are you proposing to do in this category? (Check All that Apply)	Preserve
What is the project budget?	38,500
How much are you requesting in CPA funding?	25,000
Historical Resource Projects: Have you received a Positive Determination of Local Historic Significance from the Worcester Historical Commission?	Yes
Are you requesting an expedited review process for your project? The CPC shall consider an expedited timeline for review (i.e., a Special Application) only under certain circumstances. See the Application Guidance document (linked below) for more	No

information.	
Please briefly describe your project.	In 2024, a trove of 19th-century records from the Worcester Jail was transferred to AAS: schedules, financial accounts, visitor lists, medical records, and other accounts, estimated at 100,000 documents in 45 oversize ledgers and 18 boxes. Phase I processing is the subject of this request. AAS conservation staff has assessed the collection. Documents are folded and tied into bundles. Ledgers are loose in their bindings. Many documents are in fragile condition. No mold was identified. Most are coated in a layer of dust and dirt. Next, AAS staff will open boxes, untie bundles, review and organize contents. Materials will be vacuumed, unfolded, and assessed. At-risk items will receive conservation treatment. Loose materials will be re-housed in acid-free folders and boxes. Bound volumes will be measured for, and re-housed into, custom boxes. AAS staff will create a finding aid and webpage to allow immediate access. AAS will deliver a public program, partnering with the Sheriff's office.
What permissions, permits and plans will be necessary to carry out this project, and what is the status of their acquisition?	We have taken ownership of all records and items from the Sheriff's office. No permits or permissions are needed to start this work.
Do you foresee any delays in acquiring these permissions within the next 6 months? If yes, please explain, otherwise, type N/A.	N/A
What is the desired start and end date of this project?	We have applied for funding to cover 1 year, which is our estimated scope to do the preservation work. We intend to start this project in September 2025.
Please attach a Timeline for the project.	Project Timeline Jail Records Project_Final.pdf
Please upload a complete project budget (.xlsx or .pdf) that includes the source of the funding for each line item. CPA funds can ONLY be used on CPA eligible project elements. Please make sure to be specific about the use of all CPA monies requested.	CPC Grant Budget Final.pdf
What is the status of the match funding identified in the budget?	The Society is matching 35% of project costs using our general operating funds. An enclosed letter confirms this match, which is also laid out in our submitted budget.
Please upload commitment letters and/or funding agreements demonstrating that match funding is in place.	Matching Funds letter.pdf

Please explain why CPA funding is needed for this project. If CPA is the only proposed funding source for this project, please explain why.	Given the public interest in these records, AAS plans to complete the first phase of work (preservation, organization, rehousing) in one year. CPA funding would ensure this project can move forward. If using internal funding only, this project would require three years given normal budget constraints. CPA is the only external source for this phase of the project because an initial proposal to the MA Board of Library Commissioners was canceled by federal funding freezes.
Please describe the experience of the project manager or project management team in completing a project like this one. Please include examples of similar projects pursued in the past, and why they are relevant.	Ashley Cataldo, Curator of Manuscripts, will be project supervisor. She is responsible for selecting, cataloging, and making accessible the Society's collection of diaries, ledgers, correspondence, and other papers. Cataldo and the project team have experience managing and completing similar projects, funded by private donations, foundation grants, or government funds, including: 1. Rehousing and redescribing the Chase Family papers for public use, funded by the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation: access to 700 pages of manuscript content that brings forward voices of formerly enslaved people and illuminates the world around them. 2. Cataloging and rehousing over 7,500 pages of manuscripts written by children as part of a 2-year NEH grant "Historic Children's Voices." This project included a digital resource featuring scans and transcriptions, classroom resources, and a summer teachers' institute.
Please describe the financial position of the organization and its ability to cover the upfront costs of this project. CPA funding is provided on a reimbursement basis.	Founded in 1812, AAS is a long-standing Worcester nonprofit organization. We have strong reserves of over one year of operating costs and are fully capable of covering all project costs in advance of receiving reimbursement. A 40+ year history of cost-reimbursement grants with the federal government (NEH) demonstrates our internal capacity to manage these types of grant structures. We can provide financial statements upon request.
How will this resource/property/building be maintained in the future?	The collection will be stored in the Society's secure stack area, built in 2002. State-of-the-art climate control, which maintains the space at proper temperature and humidity for historic paper and bound manuscript volumes, will ensure long-term preservation for the collection. This stack also features high-density, size-appropriate shelving for bound volumes and manuscript boxes. The stack provides a sustainable and steady environment for storage and access.
Please describe how this project/program will benefit Worcester residents in general, as well as specific groups that will benefit from the project.	The AAS library is open to the general public. Once this work is complete, the documents will be available for research and viewing; and for those who cannot visit, there will be web resources. With the Sheriff's office, we will host a program for the public on the history of incarceration in our region. This may involve additional partners or local historians, particularly as we expect the documents to shed light on underrepresented groups in the Worcester area.
Please identify which of the Community Priorities identified in the Community Preservation Plan align with this project (check all that apply).	PRIORITY 1: Increase accessibility to historic resources, open space, parks, and in community housing.

Please describe how this project aligns with the above Community Priorities.	This project increases accessibility of a locally significant historic resource. By moving these documents to AAS, we have already ensured they are housed safely and securely. In assessing, cleaning, preserving, and rehousing the items, we can safeguard their continued existence for future generations. Lastly, by creating a finding aid, web resource and public program, we ensure people will be able to use these collections for research – whether personal, academic, or professional.
Historic Resource Category Goals	GOAL 3: Preserve, digitize, and archive historic records.
Open Space and Recreation Category Goals	This project does not align with any of these Category Goals.
Community Housing Category Goals	This project does not align with any of these Category Goals.
Please describe how this project aligns with the above Category Goals.	This project works towards two goals by preserving records important to Worcester’s history, particularly the stories of underrepresented groups from the 19th century affected by incarceration practices at that time. The relationship between AAS and the Worcester County Jail goes back over 200 years. Worcester’s early civic leaders, many of them AAS members, were instrumental in creating and establishing policies for the jail. Members included Thomas Ward and John W. (Waldo) Lincoln, who both served as sheriffs, between 1805-1851. The jail documents include intake records, medical records, and visitor logs—some of the few places where women, people of color, and low-income populations were documented as individuals during this period. AAS also holds other related records, such as those of the Worcester Lunatic Asylum and the Natural History Society of Worcester. Taken together, these local history records document both the complexities and aspirations of the city and its communities.
Does your project align with any other City or Regional Plans? Please be specific. See the City of Worcester website to view local plans.	Nothing additional
Does your project have community support? Please describe outreach efforts for this project.	The Telegram and Gazette has recently reported on this donation to AAS and our partnership with the Sheriff’s office. (Attached). Also enclosed is a letter of support from the Sheriff.
Please upload any letters of support.	Letter from Sherriff.pdf T-G Article AAS Jail records April 2025.pdf
Is there anything else you want the CPC to know about your project?	Thank you for your consideration of our project!