

Funding Strategy

Reference: Funding Strategy for Nevada State Prison Preservation Society (NSPPS)

Summary

Enclosed is a funding strategy for NSPPS. This document identifies the best grants to pursue for accessibility and masonry repair. Once you have had a chance to review the grants I have pre-vetted, I look forward to discussing our next steps.

Funding Research Process

I filtered grant opportunities by alignment, funding history and award size, narrowing a total of 208 potential grants generated by the nonprofit application Instrumentl down to what you see below. This initial Instrumentl search for grantmakers had mixed results. Historic grants can be tricky, and much of the real progress was made by searching for grant recipients – in this case, other museums – and then finding who had funded them.

I went about this by using apps, artificial intelligence and internet searches to determine which grants were awarded to large, local museums with paid staff. Museums such as the Nevada State Prison don't grow because they find likeminded people who are devoted to their cause – they appear to grow because they found funders who value education in a more general sense, or had relationships with government entities. Some progress was also made through chance, in-person encounters with locals who work in the nonprofit industry.

Ironically, in light of the current freeze on federal grants, it was grants related to the Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) which were the hardest to come by. There is a great number and diversity of disability-related grants, but many of them are specific to veterans, to the wheelchair-bound, or to ADA-compliant businesses, rather than nonprofits. This could change with time, and a link to the official list can be found [here](#). The ongoing freeze enacted by the current administration makes it unclear when federal funding may be available. A foundation grant has been identified, and is available below.

What Next

To move this document into action, I can provide new contracts to prepare the grant applications recommended in this strategy.

Searching for these grants provided the opportunity to see how a number of other prison museums are funded. It appears that Alcatraz Prison, for example, is part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, managed by the National Park Service and thus not a good comparison for NSPPS. On the other hand, Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site in Philadelphia is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, which means that

NSPPS could contact their organization to see whether its strategies for growth could serve as a model for your own expansion.

Kind regards,

Christopher Cox

Funding Strategy

Last Updated: 03-24-25

Funding Sources to Consider

Funding Agency	Program	Eligible Projects	Funding Available	Deadline	Website
John Ben Snow Memorial Trust	John Ben Snow Memorial Trust Grant	Program Funding	Avg: \$12K	LOI: Dec. 1 – Feb. 1 App: Apr. 1 Award: Jul. 1	Link

Based in upstate New York and with \$30 million in assets (and growing), the John Ben Snow Foundation and Memorial Trust declares on its website that it is focused mainly on helping young people. Its namesake was a prominent businessman of the first half of the 20th century who especially liked to help young people and his hometown of Pulaski, New York. Interestingly, the trust (not the foundation!) has also awarded historic and museum grants in northern Nevada, including to NSPPS.

Let me explain: This organization has three trustees who each select favorite nonprofits in the places they currently live: New York, New Jersey and Nevada. Our Trustee is Emelie Melton Williams of Reno. She has had this position for 23 years, and has worked for a number of large nonprofits in our area. She gave \$14,000 to the Goldfield Historical Society in 2020, and \$12,000 to Historic Reno Preservation Society in 2022, both for “historic preservation.”

In the case of Goldfield Historical Society in particular, the purpose of the organization is the preservation of historic buildings, almost to the exclusion of all else. Some of its buildings, especially the historic high school, are in severe need of help. I am confident that Williams will be willing to at least consider funding a construction project. Because the biggest grant recipient in Carson City has been Boys and Girls Club of Western Nevada, it will be good, when applying to this grant, to emphasize NSPPS’s role in education for youth.

In addition, Williams gave NSPPS \$12,500 in 2015. I had to do significant digging to find record of this sum because of an apparent error on Instrumentl. She remembers working with NSPPS, and would like to speak with you further about an application in 2026, because the deadline for 2025 has passed.

After reviewing monies given and speaking to another grant writer, now retired, who has written proposals to this organization in the past, I strongly believe that \$20K is a likely to be a hard ceiling for a budget.

Contact Information:

info@johnbensnow.org
315-632-2559

Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation	Direct Effect Grant	Accessibility	Avg: \$25K	Unk	Link
--	---------------------	---------------	------------	-----	----------------------

This organization was founded by the same Christopher Reeve who portrayed Superman in the 1970s and 80s film series, and was later paralyzed in an accident. Assets fluctuate between three to eight million dollars every year, but giving tends to remain the same. It is dedicated, above all, to help for those with paralysis, rather than ADA compliance in general. Many grants were for medical equipment, and none explicitly mentioned construction or capital campaigns, so that I almost shelved this particular grant.

However, well over 100 of 1,747 grants in the last 11 years have been devoted to “accessibility.” Thus, it seemed that something approaching 10 percent of funds may be spent specifically on construction. In the (possibly short-term) absence of federal monies to support people with disabilities, this is a possible foot in the door for further practical improvements to NSP.

According to a representative of this foundation, funding for “facility modifications” can be as great as \$24,999 (which is also the average). In addition, she specifically identified the Direct Effect Grant as the grant to which NSPPS should apply. This led me to a few awardees that were like NSPPS.

In 2023, the Village of West Jefferson, Ohio received an incline platform lift (IPL) for a historic building. In 2019, Swannanoa Valley Museum and History Center received \$24,999 for “facility accessibility modifications.” The Camp Ritchie Museum also received the full amount for accessible pathways to increase access to its 157 acres in 2022.

It appears to me that a historic site or museum is a grantee most years. There could even be a quota.

Contact Information:

1-800-539-7309

Qol@Reeve.org

Estelle J. Kelsey Foundation	Kelsey Foundation Grant	Project, capital	Avg: \$41K	LOI, then app; no deadline	Link
-------------------------------------	-------------------------	------------------	------------	----------------------------	----------------------

The Estelle J. Kelsey Foundation was established in 2014, shortly after its namesake’s death. Its Chairman is Donald A. Bernard, Sr. of Bernard Holdings and Capital Group. Giving is overwhelmingly local to northwestern Nevada but is eclectic in nature, with giving to education, medicine, fine arts and charity. Roman Catholic nonprofits are strongly favored, but faith-based funding is a minority of overall funding. They have funded Nevada Women’s History Society in small amounts almost every year since 2017, and have given annually to the Nevada Museum of Art since 2016 in amounts ranging from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

In 2015 and 2017, it donated \$10,000 to the Smith Valley Historical Society for construction-related purposes. Historical societies that remote don’t often get donations from foundations like this one, so NSPPS may stand a decent chance, given its location and custody of a large, historic group of buildings.

This foundation gave \$2,000 to NSPPS in 2017. The listed purpose was “prison preservation.” As it happens, and as our letter and email outreach has confirmed, Donald Bernard is interested in the preservation of NSP because,

for eight years, he lived on the site when his father was warden. He would like to speak with NSPPS next month. There is little else I could write you that is better than this.

Contact Information:

5008 Lakeridge Terrace East
Reno, NV 89509

Dale and Edna Walsh (DEW) Foundation	DEW Foundation Grant	May include general operating expenses	Avg: \$31K	LOI: Jun. 1 App: Aug. 1	Link
---	----------------------	--	------------	----------------------------	----------------------

The DEW Foundation incorporated in Illinois in 1994 and relocated to Reno in 2008. It's assets hover around \$40 million, and total number of grants awarded spiked in 2023, the last year for which I have data. It is not "guided by a single charitable vision," which means that it is open to applications from almost anyone. This foundation's only real stipulations are that a nonprofit be relatively local to them and generally apolitical. This foundation is very evangelical Christian in orientation, but gives at least as much to secular as to faith-based nonprofits. Schools and nonprofits related to children seem to do especially well with DEW.

Grants are generally in the low five-figures, and repeat grantees can roughly double their original award. This foundation favors past grantees overall. The DEW Foundation has given consistently to the American Museum of Ceramic Art in Pomona, California, Nevada Discovery Museum, and Nevada Museum of Art, often for "general operating support" (which is always encouraging!) In addition, this foundation has given to Farmers Assisting Returning Military (FARM) and has repeatedly given to Wounded Warriors Outdoors, Inc., which takes disabled veterans on hunting trips for therapeutic purposes. When we contact DEW, it will be worthwhile to see whether their sympathy for soldiers may also extend to law enforcement, and whether their sympathy for wounded vets could help us with accessibility-related costs.

Most importantly, according to DEW's website, "Our mix [of nonprofits] includes support for younger, more entrepreneurial organizations as well." While NSPPS is by no means the newest nonprofit, this appears to be a foundation that will be fair to an organization that lacks bells and whistles like an endowment or paid staff.

Contact Information:

Tammy Prater, Grant Manager
info@dewfoundation.org

E.L. Cord Foundation	E.L. Cord Foundation Grant	See below	Average: \$37K	Ongoing	Link
-----------------------------	----------------------------	-----------	----------------	---------	----------------------

Businessman E.L. Cord (1896-1974) owned the Auburn Automobile Company, which built Auburn and Cord vehicles in the interwar years. The foundation named for him is based in Nevada and gives to organizations almost exclusively in northwestern Nevada. Total assets have hovered around \$60 million since at least 2009. Giving to local museums, in particular, can be extremely generous. In 2022, this foundation gave \$210,00 to Nevada Museum of Art, and \$100,000 to the National Automobile Museum, both in Reno. That year alone, it also gave \$68,000 to Friends of Dangberg Ranch in 2022, when Dangberg's assets totaled \$229,000.

Much of this giving was classified as “general purpose,” but it isn’t clear whether that explicitly means “general operations,” or if the person who classified all the spending was unwilling to break down, in a short summary on a tax form, precisely what all the money was spent on.

The E.L. Cord Foundation indicates an interest in “culture” and “education.” I don’t think culture means “local, Nevada culture” because of its interest in orchestral music and Shakespeare, so we may be best served by pitching ourselves as educators. Given the backgrounds of your tour guides and the excellence of your tours, that won’t be especially difficult.

This foundation’s donations to the National Automobile Museum probably has just a little bit to do with Cord’s involvement in that industry. Any relationship between NSP and Auburn Automobile Company would have been invaluable. Glen has advised that no such relationship is known to exist, and because knowledge of NSP is so specialized, he is certain to be the final word on the matter.

This foundation stresses that it wants to be a hand up to self-reliant organizations, rather than a hand out to repeat grantees. If we emphasize that repairs to the fabric of the NSP would last for many years, it could go a long way toward a grant.

This funder has invited us to apply.

Contact Information:

[Link](#)

Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation	Lahontan Community Fund Grant	Various	\$77K	App: Feb. 28 Award: Jun 16	Link
---	-------------------------------	---------	-------	-------------------------------	----------------------

A community foundation is a charity that generally supports a geographic area. It often pools donations and uses that money to support local nonprofits. The Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation, based in Incline Village, was founded in 1996 to serve the Tahoe region, which it defines as including both the Nevada and California sides of the lake. According to its website, it has given over \$114 million to nonprofits.

Within Nevada, giving becomes more sparse, but does not disappear entirely, the further one gets from Lake Tahoe. Funding is available for Carson City, and funding is available for museums.

There have been 19 Parasol Tahoe donations to museums in the last nine years. In 2019, Lake Tahoe’s Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society and other parties received \$152,280. The year before that, the Children’s Discovery Museum all the way in Las Vegas received \$1,250 for “education and youth.”

Also in 2018, Nevada Museum of Art in Reno (which is much larger, and devoted to the arts, which receive most funding anyway) received \$483,497 for a number of different purposes. Part of that funding was for expansion, which is certain to mean construction.

At the same time, only eight grants have gone to Carson City-based nonprofits, including just \$5,300 to Nevada State Museum. This could mean that Carson is overlooked by Parasol Tahoe; it could mean that more locals should apply. We’ll only know when we receive a response.

If this foundation is interested, the Lahontan Community Fund grant looks promising, but other grants may be available which are not advertised on the website.

Contact Information:

Laura Roche
Program Director
[Link](#)

Community Foundation of Northern Nevada	To be determined	Research Funding	Average: \$64K	TBD	Link
--	------------------	------------------	----------------	-----	----------------------

The second and likely most important community foundation for the purposes of NSPPS is the Community Foundation of Northern Nevada, formerly the Community Foundation of Western Nevada. With \$145 million in assets, it has given about 150 grants per year since 2017, including sums both large and small for museums.

The most important large sum is the half million dollars given to the National Automobile Museum in 2023, which was for “renovation.” NSPPS is nowhere near the size of the National Automobile Museum, but this very generous grant shows that this foundation is willing to pay for construction in a way that some others are not. Also important are the many grants of \$20,000 or so which this foundation has repeatedly given for “general support” or “general operating” – to be spent at will.

I was recently made aware that there are more grant opportunities than those currently listed on its website (which are not germane to NSPPS). Further, many people establishing foundations of their own make use of this community foundation: It *may* be possible to meet people willing to provide matching funds for a grant through this organization, or even people willing to make NSP into a pet project. While that’s also true of Parasol Tahoe, NSPPS is much more in this foundation’s ballpark.

In addition, this foundation offers a class, its [Nonprofit Academy](#), to new executive directors and CEOs who have served for less than three years (those who have served longer are accepted on a case-by-case basis). It could be extremely valuable to a nonprofit seeking growth, and also seeking to prove to funders that it is doing everything necessary to grow. The Academy is already in session for 2025.

President and CEO Eaton Dunkelberger and other staff have been very kind to me personally and are easy to work with.

Contact Information:

Shari Netzel
snetzel@nevadafund.org

Michelle Duggan
mduggan@nevadafund.org

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Commission for Cultural Centers and Historic Preservation Grant	Construction	Various	TBD	Link
--	---	--------------	---------	-----	----------------------

This grant requires no introduction, but it does require some explanation, and it will be best if that information exists in a written form, where you can find it whenever you like.

It is reasonable to conclude that the three million dollars made available by SHPO every grant cycle will continue to exist. Unlike some other state grants, it is not a “pass-through” grant, which is a federal grant that is simply offered by a state government. According to Carla Cloud of SHPO, “The grants are made possible through funding from the sale of general obligation bonds, and the bonds come from... interest on property sales taxes.”

When we last spoke, I asked Carla what the worst possible case for SHPO funding might be. She told me that it is *technically* possible for federal funding for SHPO’s employee payroll to be pulled, so that there will be nobody available to give the funding out. There is no evidence, at this time, that such a thing will occur. It appears we may know by April whether that funding may even be increased to six million dollars. SHPO has strongly advocated this with the State of Nevada for years because grant requests exceed three million dollars every single grant cycle.

Whatever may happen, because of circumstances I advised you of previously, NSPPS shouldn’t request anything less than \$200,000 from this grantmaker. It should have a backup budget for no less than \$100,000.

Travel Nevada	3D Destination, Rural Marketing Grant	Tourism	Various	App: Apr. 30	Link
----------------------	---------------------------------------	---------	---------	--------------	----------------------

The Nevada Division of Tourism offers tourism-related grants through Travel Nevada.

Friends of Sutro Tunnel recently won the 3D Project, and there is already a great deal of buzz in Dayton about what that can mean for the local economy and the prospect for enticing jobs (and locals’ children and grandchildren) to return there. But 3D is not straightforwardly a grant. Travel Nevada calls it a “community planning program” which results in a multi-year plan to develop a community in ways that encourage tourism:

“Following onsite visits, the team works to identify strengths and gaps and conducts additional research to support recommendations around destination sustainability, capacity-building, economic development, hospitality, funding, and more.”

After attending Travel Nevada’s [meeting](#) in Dayton, where this program was explained in some detail, I think the Board of Directors may wish to deliberate about the impact this grant may have. It appears to be an offer of both money and aid in effective scaling. One million dollars are available. It will require personal meetings, over and above online research, to determine how to prioritize this unique opportunity.

As for the Rural Marketing grant, it is a very normal grant for advertising, and is also provided in order to bring tourism into rural communities. \$1.5 million are available. It looks as though NSPPS could get at least \$20,000 out of the rural marketing grant (a summary of approved applications from 2022 can be found [here](#)). With 91 grants awarded that year, it appears possible that the criteria for awarding grants could be similar to that which was used by SHPO last year.

Contact information:

Cortney Bloomer
(775) 220-7873
cbloomer@travelnevada.com

Abby Ortiz
ruralgrants@travelnevada.com

Honorable Mentions:

The [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) may be worthy of attention, though not all of its grants appear to apply directly to NSPSS during this grant cycle.

[This](#) grant, offered by Carson City, may be offered again.

NSPPS may qualify for [this](#) opportunity at some point, even if it currently does not.

Finally, I learned just before our final meeting that A'Keia Sanders, Director of the Governor's Office of Financial Assistance, is still interested in working with you, even though you were not eligible for the grants she discovered in the past.

Timeline Overview

January 2025	February 2025	March 2025
	Snow: LOI due 1st Parasol Tahoe: App due 28th	
April 2025	May 2025	June 2025
Snow: App due 1 st Travel NV due 30th		DEW: LOI due 1st Parasol Tahoe: Award due 16th
July 2025	August 2025	September 2025
Snow: Award due 1st	DEW: App due 1st	

October 2025

November 2025

December 2025

January 2026

February 2026

March 2026

April 2026

May 2026

June 2026

Snow: App due 1st
Travel NV: due 30th

Snow: LOI due 1st
Parasol Tahoe: App due 28th

DEW: LOI due 1st
Parasol Tahoe: Award due 16th

July 2026

Snow: Award due 1st

August 2026

DEW: App due 1st

September 2026