



France-Merrick FOUNDATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the basic requirements to apply?

- Applicants must be a non-profit organization holding 501(c)(3) status under the Internal Revenue Code or have a 501(c)(3) fiscal agent in good standing.
 - Per Maryland law, the non-profit must have at least three officers on its Board of Directors: president, secretary, and treasurer.
 - Per U.S. law, the Board of Directors must have at least 51% “unrelated” voting board members, who are not related by family or through business partnerships.
- The France-Merrick Foundation concentrates its grant-making within Maryland and primarily within the greater Baltimore area.
- The Foundation invests in one-time, project-oriented requests that have defined beginnings and endings, as opposed to annual giving or ongoing operational support.
- Applicants must demonstrate the financial stability to sustain the project for which funding is being sought.
- Applicants are also expected to demonstrate adequate administrative capacity and program effectiveness, and are encouraged to share evaluation criteria, methods, and expected outcomes in their requests.

The Foundation does not provide funding for:

- Individuals
- Special events or advertising space in programs
- Deficit financing/debt reduction
- Political activities
- General operating, annual giving, or other recurring costs

What are the deadlines for requests?

The Foundation accepts Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) on a rolling basis and encourages organizations to send them anytime.

Foundation staff acknowledge letters within 24 hours, if received on a business day. We communicate decisions (invite a proposal or decline) about requests under \$50,000 monthly and wait until after the LOI closing date [listed on our website](#) to make decisions about inviting proposals over \$50,000.

We notify applicants within 10 days of the posted closing date as to whether a proposal will be invited. Due to limited resources, we cannot request proposals from all inquiries that meet our criteria.

Organizations with requests that do not fit with our priorities, style of funding, geographic preferences, or other criteria may hear from us before the decision closing dates so that they can more quickly look for alternative funding.

What is the process for reviewing applications?

The France-Merrick Foundation follows a two-stage review process. Applicants first submit a LOI. After reviewing LOIs, the Foundation may invite applicants to submit a proposal. [Basic requirements](#) and the timeline for submission are available on our website.

- **LOI review process:** We review LOIs monthly and quarterly, depending on the size of the grant requested, and make decisions about whether to advance the application based on priorities, pipeline, timing, capacity constraints, and available grant funds. Staff regularly discuss organizations' requests and ideas before an LOI submission.
- **Proposal review process:** Following a successful LOI, the Foundation invites organizations to submit a proposal within about a month. The invitation includes clear deadlines and submission requirements (including detailed project plan, budget, board information, audit, etc.). Once received, each proposal is assigned to a staff member, who conducts a thorough review including follow-up questions and a site visit.
- **Board review process:** Foundation staff present proposals to a grants committee for initial board review. This committee makes funding decisions on smaller grants (\$50,000 or less) and determines which proposals to submit to the full board for additional review and final decisions. The full board generally meets quarterly.
- **Timeline:** Overall, the Foundation's review process may take three to five months depending on submission timing and grant size.

Where can an organization send a LOI?

After confirming the eligibility of your organization and project, please review the Foundation's [LOI requirements](#), and start your online LOI submission on our [online portal](#). The portal allows you to save your progress and return to the application, as needed. For assistance with this part of the application, please contact our Grants Administrator, Nate Kalb at nkalb@france-merrickfdn.org.

How does the Foundation define a project?

The Foundation funds one-time projects with defined beginnings and endings.

We do not invest in programs or operating support. Approximately 60% of our grantmaking invests in "brick and mortar" capital projects, 30% in equipment, and 20% in nonprofit capacity building or other one-time needs.

We seed new models that require philanthropic dollars to pilot but have subsequent paths to sustainability (such as fee-for-service or reimbursement models).

With specific questions about your project, please [contact us](#).

What are the Foundation's priorities within the six areas of focus?

Typically, our grantmaking dollars are divided as follows:

Education: 30-35%

Civic and culture: 10-15%

Economic development: 15-20%

Environment: 10-15%

Health and human services: 15-20%

Historic preservation: 4-7%.

Within each program area we have expressed priorities and goals, and we publish the percentages of grantmaking dollars supporting each program area in our annual reports.

What amount should my organization request?

The request should reflect the total project size, funds raised, remaining funding gap, plan and probability of closing the funding gap through other channels, etc. We typically do not expect to fund 100% of a project. We strongly prefer not to make grants under \$10,000 and generally do not make grants that exceed \$500,000. Our median grant in the last five years was \$50,000 and our average grant was \$112,500. Our [sample grants page](#) and [past annual reports](#) can provide context for the types and sizes of grants that we make.

Why aren't the Foundation's proposal questions on its website?

Our proposals are invitation-only to make sure organizations do not spend extra work on a proposal if we are unable to offer a full review. Our questions are fairly standard, and we are flexible about format. We will accept a proposal prepared for another funder as long as it addresses the questions we ask.

What percentage of requests does the Foundation fund?

We currently fund between 20-40% of requests per cycle. That's a lower ratio than what we have supported in the past due to an increase in strong requests. This means the process has become more competitive; please note that prior funding is not a guarantee of future funding.

What makes a strong request stand out?

Strong requests present an evident need, an implementation plan, a reasonable scope, a well-defined fundraising strategy, a demonstration of past organizational success, a clear connection to our priorities, and an attainable timeline.

Does the Foundation fund projects outside of Baltimore?

We fund projects to advance environmental and historic preservation priorities throughout the State of Maryland. In the last several years, however, nearly 90% of our grants supported work in Baltimore City and/or Baltimore County. We occasionally fund projects in Anne Arundel, Howard, and Carroll counties, depending on connection to Foundation priorities, need, and competitive proposals. Please [contact us](#) with questions about geographic fit.

Does my organization need to meet with the Foundation before applying for support?

Meetings and phone calls are not necessary but may provide clarity about goals and fit. We encourage you to [contact us](#) with any questions to ensure you have the best information to make your case. It is not necessary to request a meeting before submitting a letter of inquiry.

Will Foundation staff visit and learn about our project before we apply?

We prefer to visit the project after requesting a proposal. We work to include a site visit as part of our review process.

What percentage of a grant does the Foundation allow to cover administrative costs?

We do not have a standard administrative cost allowance (sometimes labeled "overhead" or "indirect" costs). Because we fund projects with defined beginnings and ends, we are not inclined to support operating budgets through our grants. At times, a percentage or amount may make sense, depending on project circumstances. We can discuss the context of costs or percentages as we evaluate the proposal's fit with the Foundation.

When can my organization reapply?

That depends on whether you received a declination or grant funding.

- If your LOI or proposal was declined, you may apply again for another project at any point. Please do not apply for the same project again unless staff requests it and there is a clear change in the project that justifies resubmission.
- If you received a grant, please note that grantees become eligible again two years after the final payment on the grant. If the grant is paid over multiple years, the organization becomes eligible two years after last payment. This process ensures that we fund one-time projects and that we can support more nonprofits over time.

Does the Foundation make multi-year grants?

From time to time, we make multi-year payments on grants depending on the context of the request, the need for funds in a given year (based on organizational information), and the availability of funds (based on the Foundation's grant budget). We consider each request on a case-by-case basis.

Does the Foundation offer matching grants?

If you received a grant from another funder (including a government agency) that requires a match and your project is a fit for the Foundation's approach and areas of giving, we will consider making a matching grant. The Foundation also makes grants that require a match to help organizations meet their fundraising goals. That said, most grants are not matching grants. Please [contact us](#) to discuss whether a match makes sense for your specific request.

What happens after a grant is made?

Once we make and communicate our decision, we send a grant agreement within one week. We usually make payments — electronically — within two weeks of receiving a signed grant agreement if there are no contingencies on the grant.

What kind of reporting does the Foundation require?

We request a written report one year after the grant has been made. Depending on the payment schedule, we may also require annual progress reports until one year after the last payment. The reporting format is included in grant award letters and includes narrative and financial sections. For endowment gifts, which are very limited, we require ongoing annual reporting with a specific format that we share annually with endowment grantees.

Can I apply directly to you for a scholarship?

No. We are proud to have funded about 1,500 scholarships, over time, at private schools, colleges, and universities. When we make those grants, the institution then makes the decisions about scholarship recipients based on criteria of the scholarship and the school's process for determining eligibility and fit.

Do you only make grants to tax-exempt organizations?

We make grants to 501(c)3 organizations and those with fiscal agents, if an organization does not have its own 501(c)3 or chooses to use a fiscal agent.

How can I learn more about the Foundation on an on-going basis?

Thank you for your interest! Please sign up for our [quarterly newsletter](#) and follow us on social media.



Additional questions? Please [contact us](#).