The Maryland Historical Society

Founded in 1844, the Maryland Historical Society (MdHS) is the oldest continuously operating cultural organization in the State of Maryland. The MdHS mission is to educate people of all ages about the American experience through the rich history of Maryland using the Society’s collections, and to preserve important objects and archival materials from prehistoric Maryland to the present day. We are committed to improving people’s lives by sharing Maryland’s history and culture. Creating meaningful connections by providing engaging programs and educational services to diverse communities throughout the state is vital to our success.

A collection of 350,000 historical objects and artworks and seven million books, documents, and manuscripts are the foundation of innovative K-12 educational experiences, exhibitions, publications, library services, and public programs that annually engage nearly 100,000 people in Maryland and beyond. The MdHS Pathways Grants Program (MdHS Pathways) is an extension of the Society’s commitment to fostering a strong and sustainable Maryland heritage community.

MdHS Pathways Overview

MdHS Pathways provides funding to history and cultural organizations throughout the state of Maryland for programmatic capacity-building grants. Capacity-building in this context refers to non-capital projects that support the long-term fiscal and programmatic sustainability of the applicant organization. Eligible projects include a marketing initiative to reach new audiences, the development and implementation of a multi-year fundraising plan, or the creation of a new collections-care policy, but we encourage applicants to be creative in making the case for projects that further the long-term sustainability and impact of their organization. MdHS Pathways is made possible by an annually recurring allocation to MdHS from the State’s Preservation of Cultural Arts Fund. This fund was proposed by Senate President Mike Miller in the 2018 legislative session and enacted into law. The following application deadlines have been developed for the first funding cycle of the program in fiscal year 2020:

Important Dates:

- Friday, November 22, 2019: Mandatory Letter of Intent (LOI) due;
- Friday, December 13, 2019: Full FY2020 application due;
- March 2020: Award announcements;
- May 1, 2020: Beginning of FY2020 Grant Period. Applicants will have until May 1, 2022 to complete their proposed scope of work and expend all grant funds.
Applicant Eligibility:

Eligible applicants will steward and interpret locally based, historically significant sites and landscapes; museum and library collections; and/or educational assets as a core part of their mission activities. Eligible applicants will be incorporated, non-profit organizations in good standing with the State of Maryland and in operation for a minimum of two years in the State of Maryland; have an annual operating budget below $2 million; and public funding will constitute less than 50% of their annual operating budget.

Government agencies, individuals, businesses, organizations lacking non-profit status for a minimum of two years, any organization with an annual operating budget exceeding $2 million, or any organization that receives the majority of their support from government sources are ineligible for this grant opportunity. Applicants that are not primarily located in Maryland are ineligible. Organizations that have received a past MdHS Pathways grant must wait a minimum of one grant period after the conclusion of their awarded grant period to reapply.

Applicants are encouraged to partner with other organizations on project proposals. While typical fiscal sponsorships wherein a formal non-profit organization takes on grant receipt and administration obligations for non-eligible organizations are not permitted, established history non-profits may partner with and allocate grant funds to non-traditional partners such as faith-based groups or social service organizations. In this case, one applicant history or cultural organization will serve as the primary project lead and administrator, but all organizations included in the grant project’s proposed scope of work must submit letters of support that demonstrate legal authority and capacity to commit to the project. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about your organization’s or partnership’s eligibility.

Project Eligibility:

The overarching goal of MdHS Pathways is to build the long-term resiliency and capacity of the existing museums, historic sites, and other organizations that make up Maryland’s heritage community. Successful projects will demonstrate how grant funded activities lead to a stronger organization or heritage community in the future.

Successful projects could include new marketing initiatives, the development of new business models, professional development opportunities, and merger studies and negotiations among others. We encourage applicants to secure outside expertise demonstrating a track record of success in their proposed project areas. This may come in the form of organizational partnerships or procurement of consultant services.
**Award Range and Funding Restrictions:**

*MdHS Pathways* anticipates making 10-12 awards per year. The award maximum is $20,000 and the award minimum is $10,000. No matching funds are required, however applicants that demonstrate additional cash investment in their proposed project equal to at least 25% of their overall project budget will receive two extra points in their evaluation score. No more than 15% of the project award may be allocated towards the applicant’s indirect costs. Only activities that take place during the grant award period may be charged to the grant. This is a non-capital grant program. Traditional capital projects such as building maintenance, construction, or major equipment purchases are ineligible for funding. However, the development of capital plans such as a campus use study or development plan may be considered. As this grant opportunity is supported by state funds, political lobbying expenses are also ineligible for funding.

**Application Submission:**

For their FY2020 proposal to be considered, all applicants must submit a brief Letter of Intent (LOI) by Friday, November 22, 2019 at 11:59PM. Full applications must be submitted by Friday, December 13, 2019 at 11:59 PM.

All LOIs, proposals, and reports must be received electronically via the submittable online application portal accessible via link at mdhs.org/grants. We will not accept mailed or written applications. Please contact us with any questions or difficulties regarding the submittable portal.

**Award Determination & Management**

*MdHS Pathways* evaluation is designed to mitigate bias and provide transparent feedback to applicants that helps strengthen their organization and future applications. Proposals will be evaluated competitively by a rotating, third-party grant review panel made up of industry experts from Maryland and neighboring states as well as one representative from the Maryland Historical Society. Panelists will disclose any relationships with applicant organizations and will recuse themselves from any proposal that poses a conflict of interest.

**Evaluation Criteria:**

Panelists will score applicants’ proposals on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) based off the following six criteria.
- **Heritage Value:**
  Has the applicant demonstrated the social and academic value(s) of the historical resource they steward to Maryland’s broader culture and their immediate community? Is this resource central to the applicant’s mission? Has the applicant demonstrated the extent to which their heritage resource is made accessible and relevant to the diverse population of Maryland?

- **Clarity:**
  Are the proposed project’s purpose, scope of work, timeline, and roles and responsibilities clearly defined? Does the project budget clearly align with the project outcomes and has the applicant demonstrated that the projected costs are reasonable for the work provided?

- **Urgency:**
  Is the proposed project time-sensitive? For example, does it leverage an upcoming anniversary or is it required as soon as possible to save an imperiled historical resource or stabilize a struggling organization?

- **Impact:**
  Has the applicant demonstrated how the project increases their capacity to carry out their mission? How might their organizational operations and outlook improve as a result of successful completion of their project? How is that change realized in stewardship or their historical resource or value for the audience they serve?

- **Expertise:**
  Does the proposed project team have demonstrated expertise in the various activities needed for successful project completion? Expertise in this context could range from representation from the group the project proposes to serve for community-based projects to formalized conservation training for collections stewardship projects. Applicants should clearly describe the roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of project team members.

- **Sustainability:**
  Has the applicant demonstrated how the proposed project builds their organizational capacity and resiliency in the long-term? Does the project fit within or contribute to a greater vision of what the organization could be in the future? Projects that contribute to cross-organizational collaboration and the capacity and resiliency of Maryland’s broader heritage community will be given special consideration.
**Bonus Points:**

Beyond the panelist review, applicants may receive up to four bonus points based on the following conditions.

- **Leveraging Investment:**
  Applicants that provide evidence of at least 25% cash match towards their project will receive two bonus points. In-kind match is not eligible. The applicant must demonstrate cash-in-hand at the time of their application.

- **Geographic Reach:**
  Building capacity statewide is a guiding principle of *MdHS Pathways*. Proposals submitted by applicants located outside of a designated Maryland Heritage Area or within counties that are underrepresented in the proposal cycle may receive up to two bonus points.

**Funding Determinations:**

A perfect scoring application could receive 34 points with a score of 5 in all 6 evaluation categories and four bonus points. Awardees will be determined based on a scoring curve and the availability of grant funds. Applicants will have access to their final scores as well as consolidated narrative feedback provided by the panelists’ comments during their review.

**Grant Timeline:**

- **September 2019:** FY2020 Grant Guidelines and Application Published;
- **September – November 2019:** Applicant Workshops;
- **Friday, November 22, 2019:** LOIs Due;
- **Friday, December 13, 2019:** Grant Applications Due;
- **January – February 2020:** Panel Review;
- **March 2020:** Awardee Announcements and Receipt of Grant Agreements;
- **May 1st, 2020:** FY2020 Grant Period Begins, First 50% Award Disbursement;
- **May 1st, 2021:** Interim Report, Second 25% Award Disbursement;
- **May 1st, 2022:** Conclusion of Grant Period;
- **June 15th, 2022:** Final Report Due, Final 25% Award Disbursement.

**Award Disbursements:**

Following the initial 50% award, scheduled disbursements will be made subject to the continuing provision of state funds and the applicant’s adherence to the grant agreement and timely submission of reports.
Funding Management:

Only expenses incurred within the proposed grant period between May 1st, 2020 and May 1st, 2022 are eligible for funding. Only expenses that are included in the applicant’s final project budget included in the grant agreement are eligible for funding. Applicants may transfer up to 25% of the total grant award from one approved budget line item to another approved budget line item, however transfers exceeding 25% of awarded funds to new line items outside the approved scope of work require written approval from the grant program officer. Applicants are required to keep record of all grant expenses in their project budget and submit a signed and authorized reporting of expenses as part of their interim and final reports. These requirements will be further detailed in the grant agreements for awardees.

Grant Terms & Conditions:

All awardees will be required to sign a grant agreement with MdHS affirming their compliance with federal and state law; their willingness to comply with proposed financial obligations and reporting; and their commitment to acknowledge MdHS in any public materials that are produced as a result of the grant.

Questions? Please do not hesitate to contact program administrator David Belew at grants@mdhs.org or (410) 685-3750x344. We are here to help and are excited to learn more about your organization and project idea!