



10/04/2022

Dear Colleague,

The Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) is proud to announce the fourth grant cycle of the Thomas V. "Mike" Miller, Jr. History Fund with several exciting changes.

Since 2019, the Miller History Fund provided \$600,000 to 33 organizations in 16 Maryland counties. This funding has empowered Maryland heritage organizations to make long-term investments in their future with capacity-building projects that have ranged from strategic planning to collections digitization. We strive to be transparent and accessible stewards of these state funds. Given the relatively small amount of funding, MCHC also works to ensure this program is targeted and responsive to the needs of our cultural sector.

In this spirit, we embarked on a larger assessment of the program inclusive of both internal deliberations and an anonymous public survey of past grantees and other stakeholders. The public survey was shared widely with MCHC's extensive contact list, online industry forums, and with Maryland's network of local Heritage Area directors. Over a two month period this summer, 49 survey participants representing institutions in all 23 Maryland counties and Baltimore City shared information on their organization's size and priorities as well as feedback on the structure and management of the Miller History Fund.

Some high-level take-aways from the survey are included below:

- 71% agree that Maryland's historical collections and museums are the cultural resource most in need of funding;
- 97% agree to strongly agree that the review process utilizing public evaluation criteria and third-party expert panelists from Maryland and surrounding states is "fair and transparent;"
- 100% agree to strongly agree that Miller History Fund support staff are "accessible and helpful throughout the application process."

Narrative feedback also informed our assessment. Several participants shared that the \$200,000 MCHC is able to grant out each year is not commensurate with the capacity building needs of our public history sector. Many others noted specific equipment and assessment needs for collections care unsupported by existing state funding programs.

Moving forward, in response to this data and in support of MCHC's areas of expertise, the Miller History Fund will only support historical collecting institutions such as museums, historical societies, archives, and others for whom historical collections stewardship is a primary aspect of their mission.

Previously open to only those organizations with a budget of under \$2,000,000, smaller collecting sub-units and departments that operate within a large organization may now be eligible to apply. In preparation for the Semiquincentennial of the American Revolution, the program will also prioritize support of commemoration planning activities and conservation and access projects for Early American historical collections.

Full details on applicant eligibility and evaluation criteria are in the FY 2023 grant guidelines. An applicant webinar is scheduled for October 19th with more learning opportunities pending. All information is available online at <https://www.mdhistory.org/about/miller-history-fund/>

This refinement of the Miller History Fund represents a more targeted investment of limited funds with growth opportunities to collect more data and link field services and MCHC expertise with grantees.

This new chapter of the Miller History Fund is an exciting moment for MCHC and the 300+ history museums that share our state's irreplaceable heritage. This program is designed to be nimble and responsive to the needs of our peers. In the years ahead, we will continue work with stakeholders to evaluate and adapt the Miller History Fund to best serve our sector.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Belew". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Belew
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