FY 2023 MCHC Miller History Fund Guidelines

Maryland Center for History and Culture

Founded in 1844, the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) is the oldest continuously operating cultural organization in the State of Maryland. MCHC collects, preserves, and interprets the history, art, and culture of Maryland. By exploring multiple perspectives and sharing national stories through the lens of Maryland, the MCHC inspires critical thinking, creativity, and community. 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 over 100,000 people in Maryland and beyond. *The Thomas V. "Mike" Miller, Jr. History Fund (Miller History Fund)* is an extension of MCHC's commitment to supporting Maryland heritage statewide.

MCHC Miller History Fund Overview

The *Miller History Fund* supports capacity building projects at museums, libraries, historical societies, and other stewards of historical collections throughout the state of Maryland. Capacity building in this context refers to non-capital projects that support the long-term sustainability of the applicant organization to steward its collection and engage the public. We envision a future where Maryland's stewards have the resources, tools, and outlets they need to provide our irreplaceable historical collections with the highest standards of care while making them accessible and relevant to Marylanders of all backgrounds.

Eligible projects include a marketing initiative to reach new audiences, the development and implementation of a multi-year fundraising plan, a collections digitization initiative, 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. The *Miller History Fund* is made possible by an annually recurring allocation to MCHC from the State's Preservation of Cultural Arts Fund. This fund was proposed by Senate President Emeritus Mike Miller (1942-2021) in the 2018 legislative session and enacted into law. The following application deadlines are for the FY 2023 grant cycle:

Important Dates:

- **October 3, 2022:** FY 2023 guidelines and application materials published;
- **November 11, 2022:** Letters of Intent (LOIs) due;
- **December 9, 2022:** Full application due;
- **January 2023:** Award announcements made;
- **April 2023:** Grant period begins.

Applicant Eligibility:

Eligible applicants will steward and interpret historical collections as a core part of their mission activities. The Miller History Fund's definition of historical collections is inclusive of books and manuscripts, photographs, sound recordings and moving images, archaeological and ethnographic artifacts, art, historical objects, and material culture with a connection to the diverse history and culture of Maryland. Eligible applicants will be government agencies or incorporated non-profit organizations in good standing with the State of Maryland and in operation for a minimum of one year in the State of Maryland. All applicants must have an annual operating budget below $2 million. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis for departments and sub-units who can demonstrate their distinct mission but operate within larger organizations or agencies with a budget exceeding this threshold.

Applicants that are not primarily located in Maryland are ineligible. Organizations that have received a past *Miller History Fund* grant must wait a minimum of one grant cycle 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 and Funding Restrictions:

The overarching goal of the *Miller History Fund* is to build the long-term resiliency and capacity of the stewards of Maryland's historical collections. Successful projects will demonstrate how grant funded activities lead to a stronger organization or heritage community in the future.

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.

The *Miller History Fund* 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 and this year the provision of "bonus points" for including matching funds has been removed. The *Miller History Fund* does not support existing staff salaries, though up to 25% of awarded funds may be directed towards general indirect or staffing costs.

This is a non-capital grant program, meaning building maintenance and construction projects are ineligible. As this grant opportunity is supported by state funds, political lobbying expenses are also ineligible for funding. Only activities that take place during the grant award period may be charged to the grant.

Examples of Eligible Projects:

- New marketing initiatives;
- Strategic planning;
- Professional development for staff and volunteers;
- Collections stewardship or digitization projects;
- A campaign or fundraising feasibility study;
- Sustaining public programs or exhibitions that build new audiences;
- A new interpretive framework for a permanent exhibition.

Examples of Ineligible Projects:

- Capacity building projects for heritage organizations that do not steward historical collections as a primary aspect of their mission;
- Capital projects such as building maintenance; new construction, or historic preservation;
- Capital planning projects that are not directly related to collections storage facilities and care;
- General operating support requests.

Note that this is not an exhaustive list and the MCHC definition of capacity building is intentionally broad. Overall, please keep in mind the capacity building spirit of the grant program. For example, a project that makes recommendations on ways collections storage standards could be improved throughout your organization would be more competitive than a funding request to conserve one object in the collection. Seed funding to launch a recurring program series targeted at new audiences will be more competitive than a request to support one festival or an existing lecture program.

 If you have any questions about project eligibility, we are happy to discuss with potential applicants.

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Application Submission:

For their FY2023 proposal to be considered, all applicants must submit a brief Letter of Intent (LOI) by Friday, November 11, 2022 at 11:59PM. Full applications must be submitted by Friday, December 9, 2022 at 11:59 PM.

All LOIs, proposals, and reports must be received electronically via the Submittable online application portal accessible via link at mdhistory.org/about/miller-history-fund/ and at mdhistory.submittable.com We will not accept mailed or written applications. Please contact us with any questions or difficulties regarding the Submittable portal.

Award Determination & Management

Miller History Fund 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. 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 collections 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 historical collections are 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 collection 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 of their historical resource or value for the audience they serve? Projects that contribute to cross-organizational collaboration and the capacity and resiliency of Maryland's broader heritage community will be given special consideration.

- *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 project impacts and organizational benefits will be sustained over time? Would a Miller History Fund grant be leveraged by other organizational resources such as additional funds, staff time, or volunteer time?

Bonus Points:

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

- *Geographic Reach (2)*:
  Building capacity statewide is a guiding principle of *Miller History Fund*. Proposals submitted by applicants located outside of a designated Maryland Heritage Area, within counties that are underrepresented in the proposal cycle, or those located in priority counties that have not yet received *Miller History Fund Funding* may receive up to two bonus points.

  Priority counties home to heritage organizations that have not yet received funding include Allegany, Calvert, Cecil, Charles, Garrett, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, and Wicomico.

- *Support of Maryland's Semiquincentennial Commemoration in 2026 (2):*
  The 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026 is a rare opportunity to advance Maryland's public history, engage the public, and conserve and share historical collections from the earliest years of our nation. It is also an opportunity to rethink commemorations and explore voices and stories from the era that have been excluded or hidden from our traditional narrative of the American Revolution.

  On a case-by-case basis, panelists may award up to two bonus points to project that support planning activities related to the Semiquincentennial as well as conservation and access projects for historical collections from the Early American period. For the purposes of this grant, this is defined as predating 1830 inclusive of the pre-contact, colonial, revolutionary, and early republic periods of our nation.

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:

- **Monday, October 3, 2022 :** FY2023 Grant Guidelines and Application Published;
- **Wednesday, October 19, 2022:** Virtual Applicant Workshop;
- **Friday, November 11, 2022:** LOIs Due;
- **Friday, December 9, 2022**: Grant Applications Due;
- **January 2023**: Panel Review and award announcements;
- **February 2023:** Receipt of Grant Agreements;
- **April 1st, 2023**: FY2022 Grant Period Begins, First 50% Award Disbursement;
- **April 1st , 2024**: Interim Report, Second 50% Award Disbursement;
- **April 1st, 2025**: Conclusion of Grant Period;
- **May 15th, 2025**: Final Report Due.

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 April 1st, 2023 and April 1st, 2025 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 MCHC affirming their compliance with federal and state law; their willingness to comply with proposed financial obligations and reporting; and their commitment to acknowledge MCHC 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@mdhistory.org (410) 685-3750x344. We are here to help and are excited to learn more about your organization and project idea!