



AT THE INTERSECTION  
OF HERITAGE, FAITH,  
& COMMUNITY

Partners for Sacred Places



National Trust *for*  
Historic Preservation®

**The National Fund for Sacred Places**  
**A program of Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with**  
**the National Trust for Historic Preservation**

## **OVERVIEW**

The National Fund for Sacred Places (the National Fund) is a program of Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The National Fund provides:

1. grants for the planning and execution of urgent capital projects at historic sacred places that are valued for their cultural importance as well as their role in providing human services, strengthening communities, and revitalizing neighborhoods; and
2. training, capacity-building and technical assistance to ensure that grant-funded projects are successfully planned and implemented.

Capital grants from the National Fund range from \$50,000 to \$500,000 and can be used to repair or restore key elements of a sacred place that keep the building stable, watertight, and available for use by the community. Grants of \$50,000 to \$175,000 require a one-to-one match, while grants over \$175,000 require a two-to-one match. Only funds raised after a congregation has been notified of its acceptance into the National Fund program are eligible for matching funds. Work on the National Fund project may not begin until the congregation has been accepted into the program and all capital grant documentation has been reviewed and approved by the National Fund team.

If accepted into the National Fund program, congregations must raise one quarter of the matching funds and provide permit-ready architectural planning documents that describe a definitive scope of work formalized through the capital grant submission process. All capital project work must comply with the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#). In addition to the project documentation, participating congregations must demonstrate a sound fundraising plan for funding the entirety of the project, not just the National Fund matching funds. After National Fund program staff have approved architectural documents and reviewed the fundraising plan in the capital grant submission form, 50% of the capital grant is paid to the congregation. The remainder of the capital grant is paid when the capital project is complete and finished work has been reviewed and approved by National Fund program staff.

Please note: In these materials, the term “congregation” is used to refer to the worshipping body or faith community of any religion including those that do not identify with this term (such as mosques/masjid). The National Fund for Sacred Places accepts applications from any faith tradition and seeks to provide inclusive programming and resources across religions.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. The property must be located within the United States or its territories.
2. The property must have been originally built to be a house of worship and must be owned by an active community of faith.
3. The congregation must be at least three years old.
4. The applicant must be a religious congregation or closely affiliated nonprofit organization.
5. The property must possess historical, cultural, or architectural value. We do not ask for any official documentation of historic or cultural significance. Designation as a local landmark or listing on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) is not required, but referring to the [National Register criteria](#) can help clarify in what ways a historic house of worship is significant.
6. The property must be occupied by a congregation that is community-minded and that serves nonmembers. Congregations that share space and partner with other nonprofit organizations are prioritized.
7. The property must have urgent repair needs related to structural components, walls, roof, and/or other elements of the building envelope that are integral to building preservation and longevity. Projects that improve functionality or improve accessibility of the property in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) are also eligible, as well as renovation projects that make vacant or underused space usable for community outreach, but applicants should demonstrate that urgent repair needs to the building envelope have already been identified by a building condition assessment and addressed before proposing ADA or interior rehabilitation projects.
8. Anticipated capital projects must respect the property's historic character and materials, and must adhere to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#).
9. The congregation must demonstrate a need for project funds that exceeds the congregation's typical donor base and membership.
10. The applicant must exhibit several signs of positive organizational health, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Senior clergy (and/or lay leadership) is established in tenure
  - b. Consensus around project goals
  - c. Commitment to retaining and caring for the historic property
  - d. Stable or growing membership
  - e. Established partnerships with external entities
  - f. Financial strength and stability
  - g. If applicable, positive and supportive relationship with regional denominational offices.
11. The congregation must work with [Partners for Sacred Places](#) and the [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) prior to disbursement of the capital grant to ensure that all program requirements have been met. Recipients are required to:
  - a. Develop a comprehensive scope of work described by permit-ready construction documents with cost estimates produced by an experienced, qualified building professional or team of professionals, typically including architects
  - b. Develop a realistic budget and timeline for completing the work
  - c. Develop a realistic fundraising plan
12. Grants of \$50,000 to \$175,000 require a 1:1 match. Grants of \$175,001 to \$500,000 require a 2:1 match. One-quarter of the required matching funds must be raised or pledged before any portion of the grant

can be disbursed. **Funds that have been pledged before entry into the program cannot count toward the required match.**

13. **A limited number of grants above \$250,000 will be awarded per application cycle.** Congregations requesting a grant above \$250,000 must be exceptional in all of our evaluation criteria and must exhibit a high level of fundraising readiness. The majority of grant awards will be in the \$50,000 to \$250,000 range.

**Grant awards are determined by National Fund program staff when grantees are admitted into the program. We strive to fully fund grant requests but retain the discretion to reduce the award amount to meet program goals, particularly for grant requests over \$250,000.** Please note that the congregation is not required to have developed a finalized repair plan, budget, timetable, or fundraising plan prior to acceptance into the program.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE NATIONAL FUND FOR HISTORIC PLACES**

Please review the Eligibility Requirements prior to consulting these guidelines.

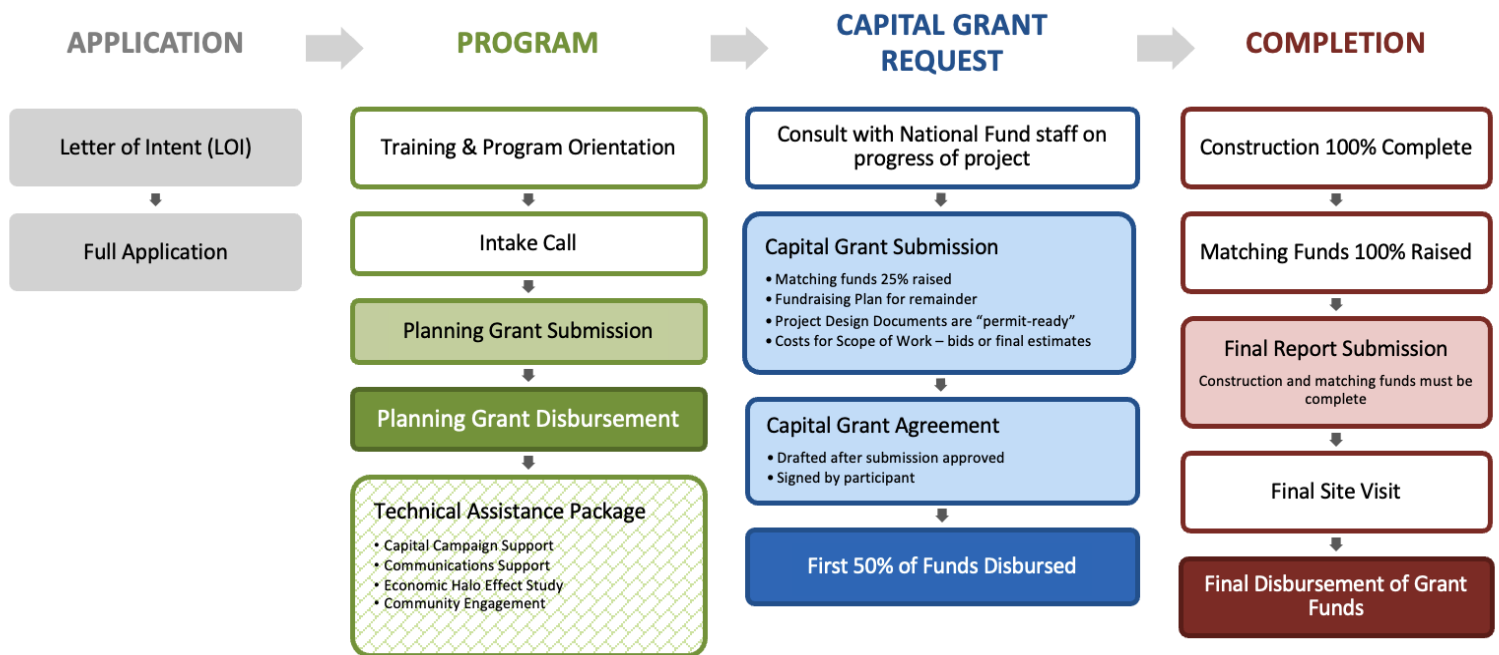
### **Grant Cycle**

The National Fund grant program operates on an annual cycle. Letters of Intent are typically open for submission between mid-January and late February. After careful review, a select number of congregations will be invited to complete a full application due in July. Final decisions will be made and congregations will be notified of their acceptance status in October. Please refer to the [Apply page](#) on the National Fund for Sacred Places' website for specific deadlines regarding the current grant cycle.

### **Application Process**

There is a three-step process to receive a capital grant from the National Fund for Sacred Places program:

1. **Letter of Intent (LOI):** A preliminary indication of interest and capacity. The LOI should address the National Fund's core criteria: historic, cultural, or architectural significance; community-serving congregations; project scope and need; readiness; healthy congregations; strong applications.
2. **Application:** After staff review of the LOIs, a limited number of congregations will be invited to submit a full application. The application should detail congregational traits, leadership, programming, and the proposed capital repair project.
3. **Capital Grant Submission:** If a congregation is accepted into the National Fund program, a required period of consultation and technical assistance led by Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation will be initiated. Congregations that successfully complete the consultation and technical assistance will be invited to complete a Capital Grant Submission form. Successful submissions will provide permit-ready documentation describing the scope of work supported by the National Fund and documentation that one quarter of the matching funds have been raised or pledged. After our review team has approved the submission, the first half of the award is disbursed, and work may begin on the National Fund project. The final half of the grant award is released once the project is completed and the finished work has been reviewed by the National Fund team.



## MATCHING FUNDS AND GRANT DISBURSEMENTS

All capital grants awarded from the National Fund require a cash match. Any grant under \$175,000 requires a 1:1 cash match, while grants of \$175,001 or more will require a 2:1 cash match (for example, in a 2:1 scenario, a \$300,000 grant will require the congregation to raise an additional \$600,000 in matching funds). The grant amount will not exceed 50% of the project cost.

The intent of requiring matching funds is to leverage new money raised because of the congregation’s participation in the National Fund. Therefore, funds solicited, applied for, pledged, or secured prior to the congregation’s official acceptance into the program will not be counted toward the project match. For example, if the congregation received notification that their application was successful and their organization was accepted into the program on October 1, any grants applied for and any donations solicited prior to that date, even if the funds were received after October 1, would not be eligible as matching funds.

Grants will be paid in two installments: 50% will be paid upon the execution of a capital grant agreement and confirmation that 25% of grant-required matching funds have been secured (in-hand or pledged). The remaining 50% will be paid upon completion of the grant-funded project and confirmation that 100% of the grant-required matching funds are in-hand. No portion of the grant will be paid until grant request applications are received, reviewed, and approved.

The congregation must agree to complete an Interim Report when the project is approximately 50% complete. The report must describe the status of the project and all expenditures made from grant funds as well as provide an update on the congregation’s compliance with the terms of their National Fund for Sacred Places Grant Agreement.

Your match **can** include:

- Congregational giving
- Funds raised through events, raffles, and other fundraising efforts
- Cash or documented pledges from individuals, foundations, or corporations
- Grants from government or other nonprofit organizations
- Gifts of stock or real estate that are sold after entry into the program
- Bequests received after entry into the program
- In-kind materials and professional services that directly benefit the grant-funded project. In-kind donations may not exceed 20% of the required matching funds. Value will be based on the fair market value of donated materials or services. Participants that will be using in-kind donations as part of their match should be in contact with National Fund staff to ensure that the pledged amount is properly determined and documented.

Your match **cannot** include:

- Reserve funds
- Bridge or construction loans
- Funds solicited, applied for, pledged, or secured prior to official acceptance into the program. For example, if the participant received notification that their application was successful and their organization was accepted into the program on October 1, any grants applied for and any donations solicited prior to that date, even if the funds were received after October 1, would not count towards the match.

Participants must provide documentation for any single matching gift of \$5,000 or more. In addition, participants must agree that they will retain documentation of all matching funds for a period of three years post-grant and will share this documentation with National Fund staff if requested.

## **GRANT CONDITIONS**

Grant recipients will be required to sign a contract agreeing to the conditions of the National Fund program. Grant conditions include:

- Grant recipients must acknowledge that the National Fund for Sacred Places is a historic preservation program, not a program for new construction.
- Overall stewardship of a congregation's historic resources, or the congregation's impact on community historic resources, is part of the evaluation. A project or plan that requires demolition of an historic building or has an adverse impact on an historic resource will not be eligible, even if the demolition or impact is not funded by the National Fund for Sacred Places.
- Grants or matching funds cannot be used for lobbying activities or to participate in any political campaign in support of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.
- Any documents or plans for preservation work that result from the project must conform to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#).

- All procurement of goods and services for the Project shall be conducted in a manner that provides maximum open and free competition and consideration of minority and women-owned business enterprises. Grantee must also maintain adequate procedures to ensure that the procurement of goods and services, including consultant services, do not present a conflict of interest.
- Consultants must be approved by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Partners for Sacred Places prior to the distribution of funds.
- National Fund grants may not be used to cover administrative costs or to subsidize staff salaries.
- Grant projects must be completed within the timeframe outlined in the Grant Agreement. **Projects cannot begin construction until National Fund staff have reviewed and approved provided plans and documentation.**
- Grant recipients must acknowledge the support of the National Fund for Sacred Places in all print, audio, electronic, and film/video media that it produces concerning the Project.
- A final report and financial accounting of the expenditure of the grant funds must be submitted within one month of the project completion date. A final report form will be provided. If the project is not completed in accordance with the contract, the grant funds must be returned.

## ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND EXPENSES

The National Fund for Sacred Places grants are awarded for capital preservation projects. Grants may be used for the restoration, rehabilitation, stabilization, and preservation of historic sites and structures, including bricks-and-mortar construction and associated management of construction and design services. The property must possess historical, cultural, or architectural value and/or be listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The property must have urgent repair needs related to structural components, walls, roof, and/or other elements of the building envelope that are integral to building preservation and longevity. Projects that improve functionality or improve accessibility of the property in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are also eligible, as well as renovation projects that make vacant or underused space usable for community outreach, but applicants should demonstrate that urgent repair needs to the building envelope have already been identified by a building condition assessment and addressed before proposing ADA or interior rehabilitation projects.

## INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND EXPENSES

- Demolition of character-defining architectural features
- Purchase or lease of property
- New construction
- Landscaping or fencing
- Cemeteries
- Parking lots
- Religious art restoration such as mural restoration
- Pipe organ restoration or replacement
- Purchase of audio-visual equipment
- Pew replacement
- Staff salaries or volunteer reimbursements
- Organizational overhead costs
- Catering or entertainment costs

- Consultant services for any activity other than design services or construction management
- Historic structure reports or historic resource surveys
- Academic research
- Conferences and educational workshops
- Media and marketing
- Expenses incurred prior to entry into the program (defined as the date of written notification of acceptance)
- Expenses incurred prior to capital grant submission and approval (National Fund staff review project documentation before work begins to ensure that all work is consistent with the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#).)
- Mortgages or debt repayment

REVISIONS: July 2016; 2017; January 2019; February 2021; October 2021; December 2021; January 2022; February 2023; January 2024