



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

A program of Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Fund for Sacred Places provides financial and technical support for community-serving historic houses of worship across America. The National Fund provides matching grants of \$50,000 to \$500,000 to congregations undertaking significant capital projects at historic houses of worship, along with wraparound services including training, technical assistance, and planning support.

The National Fund provides:

1. **Matching 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.

Matching grants

Capital grants from the National Fund range from \$50,000 to \$500,000 and can be used for urgent repair needs related to structural components, walls, roof, and/or other elements of the building envelope that are integral to a building's preservation and longevity. All grants require a one-to-one cash match. Only funds raised after a congregation has been notified of its acceptance into the National Fund program are eligible for matching funds. The National Fund for Sacred Places differs from most other grant programs because the capital grant process is intentionally designed as a secondary step. Work on the National Fund project may not begin until the congregation has been accepted into the program and all grant-funded work has been reviewed and formally approved by National Fund staff. All grant-funded work must adhere to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#). Grantees must provide evidence of matching funds pledged or raised, and a fundraising plan if appropriate, prior to disbursement of the first 50% of grant funds. Grantees must also provide permit-ready construction documents and bids for their scope of work. The second 50% of grant funds are disbursed after the capital project is complete and has been reviewed and approved by National Fund staff.

Training, capacity-building and technical assistance

Congregations invited to participate in the National Fund program are also eligible for planning grants of up to \$20,000 to help defray costs of hiring experienced and qualified professional services for the project. Planning grants can be used for a variety of professional services needed beyond the expertise of the congregation. Previous participants have used planning grants to defray costs associated with hiring professional services for

items such as building conditions assessments, capital campaign marketing or video production, and fundraising feasibility studies. Congregations without a comprehensive, up-to-date building conditions assessment completed by an architect will likely be asked to use the planning grant to secure one.

Congregations accepted into the National Fund program also receive an individualized package of [technical assistance](#) tailored to its needs. The technical assistance package typically includes one of the following services: Capital Campaign Support, Communications Support, Economic Halo Effect Study, or Community Engagement.

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 applicant must be a religious congregation or closely affiliated nonprofit organization.
4. If the applicant is a congregation, the congregation must be at least three years old.
5. The property must possess historical, cultural, or architectural significance. 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 the ways in which 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 a building’s 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 conditions 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 documentation (100% Construction Documents) or equivalent documentation 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, including bids from qualified contractors, and select a contractor and bid(s)
 - c. Develop a realistic fundraising plan
12. All grants require a 1:1 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.**

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. 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

Please review the Eligibility Requirements prior to consulting these guidelines.

Grant Cycle

The National Fund grant program operates on an annual cycle. Online Applications are typically open for submission between mid-January and late February. After careful review, a select number of congregations will be invited to complete an Additional Information Form 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. **Application:** A comprehensive application that captures information related to the [National Fund's six core criteria](#): Historic, Cultural, or Architectural Significance; Community-Serving Congregations; Project Scope and Need; Fundraising Readiness; Healthy Congregations; Strong Applications. The application is completed online, via an online grants system called [Foundant](#).
2. **Additional Information Form:** After staff review of the Applications, a limited number of congregations will be invited to submit an Additional Information Form. This form is designed to capture additional detailed information about the applicant's architectural planning and any other information needed for funding decisions. At this second and final stage in the application process, congregations may be asked

to work with National Fund staff to refine their proposed project scope in accordance with grant guidelines (applicants should demonstrate that urgent repair needs to the building envelope have already been identified by a building conditions assessment and addressed before proposing ADA or interior rehabilitation projects).

3. **Capital Grant Submission**: After acceptance into the National Fund program, grantees receive technical assistance and project planning support from National Fund staff. Once grantees have met several specific benchmarks in their planning process, they complete a Capital Grant Submission form providing permit-ready documentation (100% Construction Documents) or equivalent documentation that describes the scope of work supported by the National Fund grant and adheres to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#); bids and selected contractors; budget; documentation that one quarter of the matching funds have been raised or pledged; and a fundraising plan for the remainder of the matching funds, if applicable. After National Fund staff have approved the Capital Grant Submission, the first half of the grant is disbursed, and work may begin on the National Fund project. The final half of the grant is released once the project is completed and the finished work has been reviewed and approved by National Fund staff.

CORE CRITERIA

The National Fund for Sacred Places assesses grant requests according to the core criteria described below, while also striving to build a diverse participant pool that reflects a broad range of geographic, cultural, and religious identities.

We welcome submissions related to historic sacred places important to all communities including those that have been historically underrepresented within preservation, such as places associated with women, immigrants, Asian Americans, Black Americans, Latine Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and LGBTQ+ communities.

We prioritize projects where there is a demonstrated need (meaning that the congregation cannot raise the funds alone), or where it is clear that a National Fund grant will have a catalytic effect (meaning that our grant is likely to lead to additional monies being contributed to the project).

Historic, Cultural, or Architectural Significance

The National Fund for Sacred Places supports congregations undertaking significant capital projects at purpose-built historic houses of worship. The National Fund prioritizes buildings that have historic, cultural, or architectural significance; particularly those that are significant at the national or regional level. 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 the ways in which a historic house of worship is significant.

Community-Serving Congregations

The National Fund prioritizes congregations that are engaged in their communities and that are providing public value. Engaged congregations operate and host programming that serves non-members and/or vulnerable and at-risk populations; share space with non-affiliated groups and organizations (often at subsidized rates); partner and collaborate with other congregations, faith-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and/or

municipalities; and have a widespread reputation for being a welcoming center of community life and as an anchoring institution.

Project Scope and Need

We fund historic preservation projects addressing urgent repair needs related to structural components, walls, roof, and/or other elements of the building envelope that are integral to a building's 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 conditions assessment and addressed before proposing ADA or interior rehabilitation projects. All projects must respect the property's historic character and materials and adhere to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#).

Fundraising Readiness

All National Fund grants require a 1:1 cash match, so applicants must demonstrate that they are able to raise matching funds within the two-year grant period. Applicants must demonstrate a need for project funds that exceeds the congregation's typical donor base and membership. Successful applicants have begun to lay the groundwork for fundraising by undertaking some or all of the following activities, although this is not an exhaustive list: building the team who will oversee the campaign or effort; establishing realistic fundraising goals; brainstorming prospective donors; beginning to plan fundraising events; etc. We encourage congregations undertaking capital projects larger than \$500,000 to work with a fundraising professional.

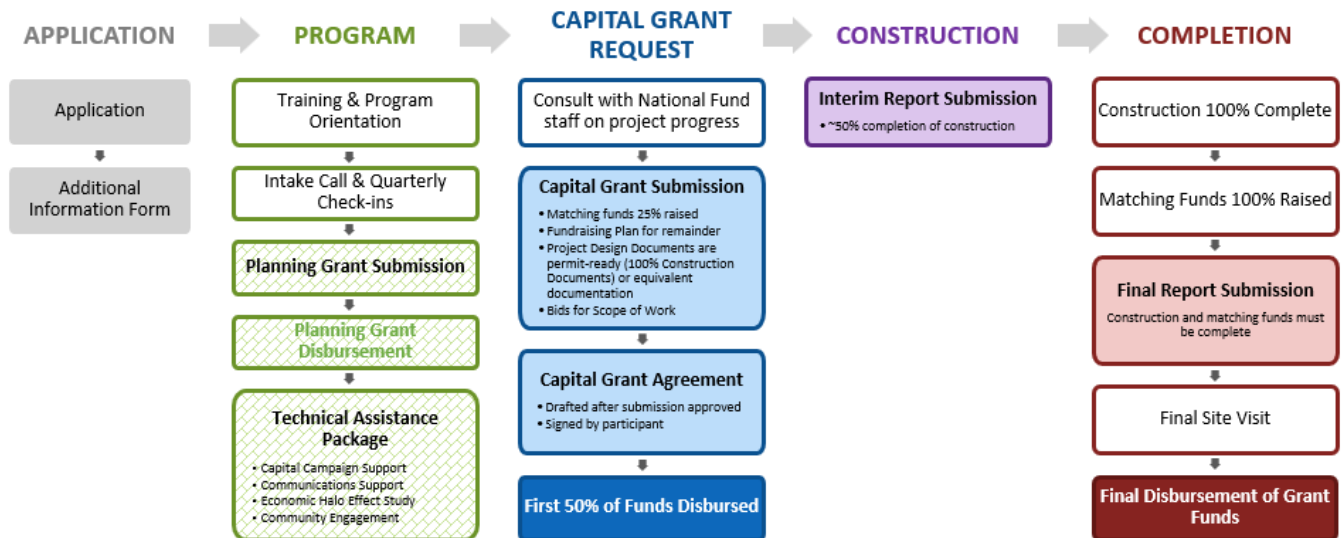
Healthy Congregations

The National Fund prioritizes healthy, stable congregations so that our investment is truly impactful and lasting. We look for some or all of the following, although this is not an exhaustive list of characteristics that indicate healthy congregations: tenured, well-respected clergy; capable lay leadership; stable or growing membership; financial strength and stability; consensus around project goals; positive and supportive relationship with regional denominational offices, if applicable; and a history of weathering challenges with resilience. We also take into consideration the congregation's commitment to the care and long-term stewardship of its building, with an understanding that the building is an asset for ministry and is central to congregational life.

Strong Applications

The National Fund is a very competitive grant program. It is important that congregations complete the application in full with all attachments; make a compelling case for support; and clearly communicate the key details of their project.

National Fund for Sacred Places Program Roadmap



Matching Funds and Grant Disbursements

All capital grants awarded from the National Fund require a 1:1 cash match – and matching funds must be new money solicited, applied for, pledged, or secured after the congregation’s official acceptance into the National Fund program.

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

After approving that all project components meet historic preservation standards and the congregation has the capacity to raise necessary match funds, capital grants are disbursed in two lump sums of 50% each.

The first 50% of the capital grant award will be disbursed when:

- National Fund staff review and approve permit-ready documentation (100% Construction Documents) or equivalent documentation that describes the proposed project and adheres to the [Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation](#)
- The congregation submits selected bid(s) and contractor(s) for the scope of work supported by the grant (note that we recommend soliciting at least 3 bids but recognize this may not always be possible)
- The congregation has raised at least one-fourth of the total matching funds we require and has a sound plan for raising the remaining matching funds to complete the project
- The congregation completes the Capital Grant Submission form in [Foundant](#), National Fund staff review and approve the capital grant documentation, and a signed grant agreement and appropriate financial documents have been returned by the congregation to National Fund staff

The second 50% of the capital grant award is disbursed when:

- The National Fund scope of work has been completed and the grant and matching funds have been spent on eligible project-related expenses
- 100% of the match has been pledged and/or raised
- The grantee completes a final report in [Foundant](#) and a site visit with National Fund staff

Please note you must receive approval from the National Fund before starting any physical work on your building if the work is part of the project funded by the National Fund grant.

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 grant agreement.

Eligible sources of matching funds 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 donated to the congregation for the express purpose of supporting the National Fund match and are not sold until 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.

Matching funds 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 would not count towards the match, even if the funds were received after October 1.

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, but are not limited to:

- Grant funds are restricted solely for use on the project; and the project will not result in the demolition of a historic building or have an adverse impact on historic resources
- Grant recipients must acknowledge that the National Fund for Sacred Places is a historic preservation program, not a program for new construction
- Any documents or plans for preservation work that result from the project must adhere 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
- No part of the grant will be used for lobbying activities or to participate in any political campaign in support of or in opposition to any candidate for public office
- Subject to the "ministerial exception" (or other applicable First Amendment exceptions to which Grantee is entitled), as such exceptions are defined by judicial decisions, federal statutes, or such other federal laws as may be applicable, and as modified from time to time, Grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, creed, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, mental and physical disabilities, sex (including pregnancy), personal appearance, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, genetic information, matriculation, political affiliation or veteran status
- 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 grant agreement, the grant funds must be returned

Eligible Activities and Expenses

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 conditions assessment and addressed before proposing ADA or interior rehabilitation projects.

Ineligible Activities and Expenses

Ineligible Expenses include, but are not limited to:

- 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
- Security upgrades
- 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 adheres to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#))
- Mortgages or debt repayment