

Preserving Black Churches & African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund: Frequently Asked Questions

See below for the FAQ developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. If your question is not answered below, please contact blackchurches@savingplaces.org or actionfundgrants@savingplaces.org

Applicant Information

Who is eligible to apply for a Preserving Black Churches grant, an initiative of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund?

Eligible applicants for a [Preserving Black Churches grant](#) include historically Black churches with active and non-active congregations; 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations stewarding a historic Black church with or without an active congregation; and public agencies.

Are only historically Black church buildings eligible to apply for funding?

Yes. Historically Black church buildings are eligible to receive grants in all funding categories. Historic cemeteries owned by a historically Black church are only eligible under Project Planning. Funding for capital projects for historic cemeteries is available through the [African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund \(AACHAF\) National Grant Program](#).

Can we apply for Preserving Black Churches and the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund National Grant Program?

Yes. Grant recipients of the [AACHAF National Grant Program](#) are eligible to apply for a grant from Preserving Black Churches. However, the existing AACHAF grantee must submit the application under a different funding category than previously awarded. For example, an AACHAF grant recipient of Capital Projects funding is not eligible to apply to Preserving Black Churches for a Capital Projects grant, and should apply through a new funding category such as Project Planning, etc.

Can we apply for Preserving Black Churches and the National Fund for Sacred Places?

Yes. Eligible applicants can apply to [National Fund for Sacred Places](#) and Preserving Black Churches. However, funding received from other National Trust programs, including the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund's Preserving Black Churches and the National Grant Program, cannot be used to match grants from National Fund for Sacred Places.

General

What is a historically Black church?

For the purposes of [Preserving Black Churches](#), eligible applicants are entities representing historically Black Churches. Historic sites are typically at least 50 years old; however, buildings that are at least 35 years old may also be considered if they demonstrate exceptional significance.

A historically Black Church is defined as one or more of the following:

- Religious historic buildings built and erected by historically Black congregations and continuously occupied by active congregations;
- A historic religious building designed and/or constructed by Black architects/builders, occupied by an active congregation, or repurposed for public programming;

- A historic religious building or site not originally built by or for a historically Black congregation, but demonstrates documented historical, cultural, or social significance related to African American heritage;
- Active historically Black congregations that are a part of historic religious denominations including, but not limited to, African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ), the Baptist Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Episcopal Church, Lutheran Church, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, Catholic Church, non-denominational.

What is an active congregation?

For the purposes of Preserving Black Churches, active congregations are those which hold regular worship services and/or conduct public programming from a historically Black church building (defined above).

Does my historically Black church need to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a local landmark to apply for a Preserving Black Churches grant?

No. It is not required for properties to be formally listed or designated as historic to apply. But a special emphasis will be placed on sites that have had a prominent physical and/or historical place in their community. If you are interested in learning whether your historic church is listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, contact your State Historic Preservation Office.

Is Preserving Black Churches open to applicants of all faith traditions?

Applications from non-Christian faiths will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For more information, contact blackchurches@savingplaces.org.

Is a match required for Preserving Black Churches grants?

Yes and no. Matching funds are not required for the following funding categories: Capital Projects, Project Planning, Programming and Interpretation, and Organizational Capacity. (While matching funds are not required, projects that are leveraging additional investments are strongly preferred.) Matching funds are required for the Endowment and Financial Sustainability funding category.

Can I ask for reimbursement for work that has already taken place?

No. Work that has been completed prior to receiving a grant award is not eligible for funding.

Projects

What types of projects are eligible for funding from Preserving Black Churches?

Eligible applicants can apply in the following funding categories: Capital Projects, Project Planning, Programming and Interpretation, Organizational Capacity and Operations, and Endowment and Financial Sustainability. Eligibility under each funding category depends on the applicant and type of project. For details on funding categories, [view the Preserving Black Churches grant guidelines](#).

Can Preserving Black Churches grant funds be used for staffing and technology needs?

Preserving Black Churches provides funding to support organizational capacity and operations. The grants are intended to support creation of new staff positions that directly support the preservation and stewardship of historically Black church buildings. Funding cannot be used to support clergy or religious

staff. Grant funds can be used to support technological needs associated with non-religious programming and historic interpretation.

Can Preserving Black Churches grant funds be used for worship-related building elements?

We will accept proposals for the restoration, rehabilitation, preservation of interior sanctuary features such as historic church pews, pulpits, altars, baptismal fonts and baptismal pools.

Can you provide examples of successful Preserving Black Churches applications or projects?

Yes. Please check out our [2024 grantees](#).

Are ADA accessibility projects eligible for Preserving Black Churches?

Yes. Projects to improve accessibility of historically Black church buildings are eligible. Projects seeking capital funding should have completed all necessary planning (engineering and architectural) prior to the submittal of an application. If planning is not complete, applicants are encouraged to apply for project planning funding.

Are mechanical projects eligible for Preserving Black Churches?

Yes. Mechanical projects, including electrical and HVAC, are eligible under the Capital Projects and Project Planning grant categories.

Are stained-glass window repair projects eligible for Preserving Black Churches?

Yes. Projects repairing original architectural features are eligible under the Capital Projects and Project Planning grant categories.

Can I use Preserving Black Churches grant funds to repair our historic pipe organ?

Yes and no. Work solely focused on elements created to enhance the worship space or worship experience will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Please email blackchurches@savingplaces.org for guidance prior to submitting an application.

Are parsonages, annexes, and education buildings eligible for Preserving Black Churches funding?

The building must be located directly adjacent to the historically Black church. Please email blackchurches@savingplaces.org for guidance prior to submitting an application.

Which projects are eligible for the Endowment and Financial Sustainability category?

Endowment and Financial Sustainability grants can only be used for increasing or creating a new preservation endowment for a historically Black church. All funding must be invested in a preservation endowment and cannot be used for fundraising or capital campaign planning or project management. If awarded, funding will not be released for investment until proof of the 1:1 match is provided. For more information on the Endowment and Financial Sustainability category, visit the [Preserving Black Churches grant guidelines](#).

Application Process

How do we apply for a Preserving Black Churches grant?

Interested applicants must submit an application [through the National Trust's online grant application system](#) by the deadline or they will not be reviewed.

Can we submit applications for multiple projects for Preserving Black Churches?

Eligible applicants can submit one application under each funding category. However, if selected, only one application will be funded.

Can multiple people work on the application for Preserving Black Churches?

Yes and no. Only one email address can be linked to an application, but you can use the collaborate feature from the application to invite others to review, edit, and/or submit the application. You can learn more about that process via [this tutorial](#).

Can I see a copy of the Preserving Black Churches application questions? How do I submit an application?

You may only submit an application through our online grants system. Applications and/or additional information submitted by email, phone, or physical letters will NOT be considered. A copy of the [application questions may be viewed here](#).

Note that between the “Project” and “Historic Resource Information” questions, each project category has a section of specific questions. For example, if you are filling out a Capital Project application, you will see the questions under that section, but not the questions for any of the other categories when you are filling out the application within the grants system.

What is the historic resource?

The historic resource is the historically Black church building/site. All eligible projects must be connected to a historically Black church as defined above. Please include the name and location of the building or site in the “Historic Resource Information” section of the application.

Do I need to upload a budget, church financial paperwork, or project planning documents with the Preserving Black Churches application?

Yes. All required information is indicated in the application and must be included in order to submit.

Will Preserving Black Churches applicants or recipients be required to have a UEI or active SAM/CAGE registration?

No. The National Trust is a nonprofit organization, not a federal agency.

I can't find my church's Letter of Determination from the IRS. Can I still apply for Preserving Black Churches?

Yes, you can still apply. If you have an EIN, please list that. If you do not, we may follow up later in the process to confirm your tax status.

When I tried to set up an account in the grants system, it said the EIN I put in was already in the system. What do I do?

There could be a couple of reasons for this notification. If you have previously submitted a grant request to the National Trust, an account might exist for your entity. If this is the case, contact actionfundgrants@savingplaces.org to reset the account. Also, some denominations share one tax ID (EIN) between several churches, so that may be why this message has shown up. If this is the case, click past the message and set up a new account.

How I can I learn more about current and upcoming African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund grant opportunities?

Please subscribe to the [African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund's email newsletter](https://support.savingplaces.org/page/35730/subscribe/) [https://support.savingplaces.org/page/35730/subscribe/] for up-to-date information on grant opportunities and so much more. You can also visit the National Trust for Historic Preservation's [grant portal](#) to see current grant opportunities from across the National Trust's programming.

What is the process for applying for and receiving grants from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund?

All applications must be submitted by the deadline listed in the guidelines for the particular funding opportunity. If there is a Letter of Intent (LOI) process involved, applicants must meet the requirements of the LOI and Action Fund staff will notify applicants if they are eligible to submit a full application. Once the deadline has passed, staff will review the applications. The top applicants will be notified and given the opportunity to revise their applications based on staff advice. Final applications must be submitted by the grant deadline and staff will make final selections. Lastly, applicants are notified of their award status and a public announcement is made.

Do you have to create a Foundant account in order to submit an application?

Yes. In order to complete an application, a Foundant account must be created for the organization applying for the funds, unless an account already exists. Prospective applicants may view a blank version of the application in Foundant on the [National Trust's grant portal](#) before creating an account and submitting an application if they wish to review the requirements before applying. Instructions for this process can be [found here](#).

Can organizations submit more than one grant application?

While organizations may submit more than one application across the grant funding categories in a grant round, only one project per organization is eligible to receive funding. We recommend that applicants submit proposals for their highest priority project.

How can organizations know that they are submitting a competitive Action Fund National Grant Program application?

It is essential that applicants read and familiarize themselves with the grant guidelines specific to the [grant opportunity](#) prior to beginning the application. Competitive applicants demonstrate a clear understanding of the intent of the grant opportunity to which they are applying and can demonstrate that their projects meet the eligibility criteria. If questions remain regarding project eligibility, you may email actionfundgrants@savingplaces.org.

When will I know if my organization received a grant from the Action Fund National Grant Program?

All applicants will be notified of their status via email and through the National Trust's grant portal. For more details, please refer to the grant opportunity's guidelines.

Are matching funds required for this Action Fund National Grant Program?

Matching funds are not required, but projects that leverage additional investments (funding or in-kind services) are strongly preferred.

When are award funds disbursed to applicants? Before or after expenses have been incurred and paid by the applicant?

The timing of the disbursement of funds depends on the type of grant funding category under which funds were awarded. A specific timeline is included in the awardee's grant agreement along with all requirements that must be met for those disbursements to occur.

Typically, initial funds are disbursed upon the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund's receipt of an executed grant agreement and any other documentation required to enable electronic payments.

One exception is for endowment projects. Payment is only disbursed once proof is submitted that the required funds have been raised and the proper financial arrangements have been made.

Subsequent (interim and final) disbursements for all grant funding categories require that the grant recipient submit invoices along with proof of payment. All project expenses must be paid prior to submitting the final progress report. Proof of payment of all project expenses equal to the total award must be submitted with the final report in order for the final payment to be processed.

When are awarded projects expected to start and end?

Within one month after the awards are announced, it is expected that the applicant will have signed and returned their grant agreement and provided any requested documentation, including those needed to establish electronic disbursements. If these documents are not received within the 30-day period, it is possible that the award can be cancelled for non-responsiveness. The project period begins on the date that the grant agreement is fully executed. The length of the project period depends on the grant funding category selected in the application. For more information on the eligible grant funding categories, please review the applicable grant opportunity guidelines.

The National Trust grant application asks me to describe my "historic resource." What does that mean?

A historic resource is a historic building, structure, site, landscape, district, or neighborhood. In short, it is the physical property or properties that your project revolves around. The property does not need to have formal designations to be considered a historic resource. Most historic preservation projects involve a historic resource, so please answer this question on the application, or our reviewers will not understand the property you seek funding for. If you are unsure whether you should fill out that section of the application, email our Grants Office at grants@savingplaces.org for guidance.

Can the National Trust provide recommendations for consultants?

Unfortunately, because we receive applications from all over the country, we do not have a list of recommended consultants. You might consider reaching out to your [state historic preservation office](#) or a local or statewide preservation nonprofit organization, as they have more insight into local vendors and services.

The National Trust grant application asks for letters of recommendation. Who should I request these letters from?

Letters of recommendation should come from members of the community who are familiar with your project and can speak of its importance, its impact, or its necessity. They should be able to describe why they are supportive of the project and what their involvement is, if any. Letters can come from local government officials, external partners involved with your organization or the project, or other members of the public who fit the above description. Not all National Trust grant programs require letters of recommendation. If letters of recommendation are required, this information will be detailed in the program-specific guidelines.

Are grants from the National Trust federal grant dollars?

The National Trust is a privately funded non-profit organization. Most of our grant dollars are private, but occasionally a National Trust grant program may be funded by federal dollars, such as the [Telling the Full History Preservation Fund](#). If this is the case, it will be listed on the program's guidelines page.

Other Grant Opportunities

- **The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors**

The purpose of the fund is to assist in the preservation, restoration, and interpretation of historic interiors. Grants from the [Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors](#) generally range from \$2,500 to \$15,000.

- **Hart Family Fund for Small Towns**

Grants from the [Hart Family Fund for Small Towns](#) are intended to encourage preservation at the local level by providing seed money for preservation projects in small towns. Grants from the Hart Family Fund for Small Towns generally range from \$2,500 to \$15,000.

- **Henry A. Jordan, M.D., Preservation Excellence Fund**

The [Henry A. Jordan, M.D., Preservation Excellence Fund](#) supports innovative projects and programs in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. Individual awards typically range from \$1,000 to \$2,000, but applicants can apply for up to \$7,500.

- **Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation**

The [Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation](#) aims to save historic environments in order to foster an appreciation of our nation's diverse cultural heritage and to preserve and revitalize the livability of the nation's communities. Grants from the Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation generally range from \$2,500 to \$15,000.

- **African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund**

Grants from the [African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund](#) are designed to advance ongoing preservation activities for historic places such as sites, museums, and landscapes representing African American cultural heritage. Grants made from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund will range from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

- **Conserving Black Modernism Grant Program**

[Conserving Black Modernism](#), a part of the Action Fund's national grant program, is designed to empower and equip preservationists and stewards with funding and technical support to preserve the material heritage, innovation, and legacy of modern architectural sites designed by Black architects.

- **Descendant and Family Stewardship Initiative**

Grants from the [Descendant and Family Stewardship Initiative](#) support project management, capacity-building, grantmaking, and convenings for place-based organizations, in a two-year collaboration.

- **HBCU Cultural Heritage Stewardship Initiative**

Grants from the [Historically Black Colleges and Universities \(HBCU\) Cultural Heritage Stewardship Initiative](#) provide funding to HBCUs to develop Cultural Heritage Stewardship Plans to ensure they are equipped to preserve and maintain their historic campuses and historic assets. Grants made from the HBCU Cultural Heritage Stewardship Initiative will range from \$60,000 to \$150,000.

- **National Fund for Sacred Places**

The [National Fund for Sacred Places](#) is a program of Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and provides training, planning grants, and capital grants from \$50,000 to \$500,000 for congregations of all faiths. Visit [FundforSacredPlaces.org](#) for more details, including eligibility requirements, guidelines, and online application.