



Ms. Foundation Grant Application Frequently Asked Questions

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Eligibility

Which geographic regions must an organization be serving to be eligible to receive funding?

While birth justice is needed across the United States and U.S. territories, we will focus on funding birth organizations serving the South, Midwest, Southwest, Alaska, Hawaii, or U.S. territories during this cycle. As shared in Ms.'s [Pocket Change](#) report, these regions comparatively receive the least amount of philanthropic resources. Furthermore, birth justice and reproductive justice are under attack in many states within these regions, resulting in denials or delays in care for birthing people, among other injustices. We consider the following states in each region:

- **South:** Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia
- **Midwest:** Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri
- **Southwest:** Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah
- **Noncontiguous States:** Alaska and Hawaii
- **U.S. Territories:** American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Is there a minimum or maximum operating budget to be eligible for funding?

Organizations eligible for funding must have an operating budget equal to or less than \$2 million dollars. If your organizational budget *uniquely* exceeded this amount this past year and you otherwise meet the eligibility criteria, feel free to contact Birth Justice Program Officer Sona Smith (ssmith@ms.foundation.org) to confirm your eligibility.

Would you consider funding a volunteer-driven organization (e.g. a nonprofit that is a registered 501(c)(3) and staffed by volunteers)?

Yes.

Can 501(c)(4) organizations apply?

No.

Can current grantees apply?

No. Separate communications will be sent to current grantees about opportunities for renewal.

We have co-executive directors who make the financial decisions. One is a woman of color and one is not. How does this fit into your leadership requirement?

We currently fund organizations that use a co-director model. We will consider applications from organizations using a co-director model, provided that at least one of the co-directors is a woman of color. Our requirement is that at least 50% of your organization's leadership includes women and non-binary people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). An organization's leadership includes people with significant influence or decision-making power (i.e. the executive director, management staff, and advisory committee members or governing boards). If you wish to list the names of multiple executive directors in your application, you may do so in the Narrative Proposal.

How might organizations doing Birth Justice work who are led by non-binary leaders of color fit into this grantmaking opportunity—leaders who have experiences of being read as “women” but don’t identify as such?

Please apply! Our grantmaking focuses on building power and leadership of Women and Girls of Color. We believe this includes Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Middle Eastern, and Asian/Pacific Islander women, girls, and non-binary folks, both transgender and cisgender.

Will Ms. support organization’s of all sizes and stages of growth through this initiative?

Organizations with operating budgets of \$2,000,000 or less are eligible for funding, provided they meet all the other eligibility criteria. Collectively, this portfolio will support organizations at different phases of organizational development, though we will prioritize support for organizations in the emerging, growth, and transitioning stages (defined below). The short description of each phase is inspired by the [Nonprofit Lifecycle Framework](#) which was developed by Speakman Management based on adaptation from Judith Sharkey Simon's *The 5 Life Stages of Nonprofits*.

1. Idea: A critical need or opportunity is identified and strategies are in development for how to act on that.
2. Emerging: Organization's programs and strategies are initiated and powered by a small and committed group of staff and/or volunteers.
3. Growth: Programs begin to establish themselves and often demand is greater than capacity. Strategic division of labor among staff is emerging.
4. Mature: Core programs are established and recognized in the community, resourcing is reliable, and staffing is sufficient and well matched to the work.
5. Transitioning: Hallmarks vary and include: core programs are established but in need of renewal/refresh; executive leadership is transitioning; org structure of evolving quickly. *Stage may overlap with others.*

We acknowledge the limitations of this framework, including assumed linearity, uniformity, and the value placed on hierarchy. However, we use it to help us understand which organizations might be particularly in need of support and resources given where they are developmentally.

Is Ms. open to providing seed funding for a new organization?

Yes. We pride ourselves on being a first funder. We have had grantee partners for years but we were one of the first funders with them. It's important to us that we find emerging work because we know that our role as an intermediary helps boost the visibility of groups to other funders and that this has helped our current grantees gain additional funding.

Application

What questions will we need to respond to in the digital application?

The digital application form that is embedded in Ms. grants portal includes several multiple choice questions about your leadership and community makeup, the region you serve, and your organization's legal status. There are also a few open-ended questions regarding your organization's mission, approach to advancing birth justice, and the constituency you serve and how their input informs your work.

What specifically are you looking to see in the written narrative?

Per the guidance in the Request for Proposals, written proposals should respond to each of the following open-ended questions separately. Applicants will have to upload this portion to the portal as a PDF document.

1. **Organization Summary** - Please briefly describe the work of your organization (e.g., mission, history, current goals and strategies).
2. **Environmental Context** - Please briefly describe the political, historical, and/or socio-economic context in your locality, state, or region that creates the injustices you are fighting against.
3. **Birth Justice** - Please describe what birth justice means to your organization.
4. **Organizational Context** - Please tell us about the stage of development you are in (e.g., emerging, growing, mature, transitioning organization) and describe the current opportunities and challenges you face as an organization. You can touch on internal, external, or both considerations. *(For more information on how Ms. thinks about these stages, see the Programmatic Section below).*
5. **Community Engagement**- Describe the community or communities you serve and stand with, and share how their input is reflected in your work.

What should an organization with both a national office and local presence include in the request for proposals?

We are prioritizing support for efforts that focus on state or local movements and campaigns. As such, we want to see that you have an office and staff people on the ground in a specific city or state and hear about this work. Knowing details about the relationship between the national and state office is helpful and important, too.

Is there a page limit for the Written Narrative Proposal?

We suggest respondents write one to two paragraphs per question, making written narratives roughly three to five pages.

I am having technical issues with my application. Who should I contact?

If you encounter technical issues, such as trouble creating a user account, accessing an existing one, or submitting your application, please contact Ms.' Grants Management team at grantsmanagement@ms.foundation.org.

Programmatic

Can you give examples of the types of organizations or strategies you are looking to fund?

The Birth Justice Initiative seeks to support organizations whose primary efforts show an understanding of the connectedness of birth justice and other issues impacting Black, Indigenous, and other birthing people of color and their families. We fund organizations who represent the full spectrum of experiences and identities including but not limited to preconception health, mental health and wellness, infertility, abortion access and abortion care, comprehensive sex and sexuality education, non-racist culturally affirming and gender expansive healthcare, access to birth workers of color, access to lactation support and services, post-partum health and wellness, grief and loss care and support, incarceration, sexual assault prevention and survivor support services, pregnant and parenting youth, disability justice, environmental justice, food access, safety, education, economic justice, and more. Examples of this work includes—but is not limited to—the following:

- Birth justice organizations whose service delivery is rooted in movement building and organizing, political advocacy, and/or leadership development to increase access for women of color, low-income women, young people, and queer, transgender and gender expansive people to have access to midwifery services, doula support, abortion care, and other reproductive health options in anti-racist, culturally affirming and gender expansive environments.
- Birth justice organizations whose primary strategies build networks and infrastructure to support birth workers of color to increase their knowledge and skills, and advocate for policies and practices that will better meet the needs of their communities through connecting, training, supporting, and organizing of women of color, low-income women, young women, transgender and gender expansive and queer birth workers including but not limited to doulas, lactation consultants, postpartum service workers and midwives.
- Birth justice organizations whose primary efforts include organizing and advocacy efforts that address disparities by working to shift policies and systems that impact birthing outcomes. This can include but is not limited to organizations working towards medicaid reimbursement, shifting regulatory practices for birth centers and out of hospital providers, efforts to change a specific hospital or hospital systems practices, efforts that decriminalize pregnancy and birthing choices.
- Birth justice organizations who use art and activism, media, storytelling and other cultural tools and strategies that center birth justice and are driven by artists and individuals who are directly impacted by birth injustice.
- Birth justice organizations whose work centers Black or Indigenous birthing people, trans, non binary, and gender expansive birthing people, disabled birthing people, incarcerated birthing people, birthing people experiencing infertility and/or are recovering from loss, pregnant or parenting youth and young adults.

Do we need to solicit support for a specific program or can our application be for operating expenses?

These funds are available for general operating support. It is up to applicants to determine the proposed use of the resources.

What is the scope of what can be included as far as advocacy? (e.g. Are we permitted to discuss grassroots lobbying and/or administrative advocacy?)

As you will see indicated in the lobbying section of the digital application form, as a public charity, the Ms. Foundation for Women operates within IRS guidelines for lobbying activity. Ms. Foundation grantees may engage in lobbying activities permissible by IRS regulations. Filing a "501(h) Election Form" with the IRS allows a tax-exempt group to allocate a portion of its activities to lobbying without compromising its nonprofit status.

The Ms. Foundation for Women does not earmark grant funds to be used to influence legislation. However, grantees may use grant funds for advocacy efforts, including direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying, if permitted by their award letter. Applicants will need to select the type of advocacy activities they will engage in in the dropdown menu of the "Lobbying Activity" section.

What kind of work has Ms. funded in the recent past?

The Ms. Foundation invests in and strengthens the capacity of women-led movements to advance meaningful social, cultural and economic change in the lives of women, especially women and girls of color, low-income women, and gender expansive people of color who are most impacted by systemic injustice and oppression. Ms. has [six grantmaking initiatives](#), one of which is the Birth Justice Initiative.

All organizations supported through the Birth Justice Initiative receive general operating support, rather than program specific resourcing. All grantees are implementing birth justice strategies that are rooted in movement building and organizing and connected to the larger reproductive justice movement. Since the Initiative's launch in 2022, we have funded a range of organizations and programming—such as organizations focused on community organizing, midwifery services, and voter engagement among other work have all been supported. A list of our grantee partners is on our [website](#).

Will the programming have to be completed in 2024?

No. The grant period will span two years. Furthermore, grants are for general operating support and do not have to be connected to specific programming.

How long is the grant period?

Two years.

Finance

What is the total grant amount that can be requested?

Organizations are invited to apply for grants ranging from \$50,000 - \$100,000. A grant period will span two years. (For example, an organization awarded \$100,000 will receive \$50,000 each year for two years. An organization awarded \$50,000 will receive \$25,000 each year for two years.) Please note that submitting an application does not guarantee funding. Those that are funded may not be funded at requested levels. Please be assured that every request will be given full consideration.

Will our organization be able to apply for a renewal if we receive grant funding this cycle?

As of now, no. We are awarding one-time grants this cycle. If Ms. receives significant funding for the Birth Justice Initiative over the next two years, Ms. may be able to renew funding.

How many grants does Ms. Foundation anticipate making, and what size grants will be awarded?

Ms. anticipates awarding grants to 10 to 15 organizations during this funding round.

What year's financials do you need?

Please submit the most recent financial documents – i.e., your board-approved budget, 990 (if applicable), and audit (if applicable) – that you have available.

If we did not make enough to warrant an audit or complete the 990 post card, do we qualify to apply for this grant?

Yes. Please submit the financials you share with your board.

We are a fiscally sponsored project. What financial documents do you request we submit?

We would like to see your project budget and the fiscal sponsor's 990 and audit.