

Charity Grants: Frequently Asked Questions

General

What is the Masonic Charitable Foundation?

The Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) builds better lives by enabling opportunity, advancing healthcare and education and promoting independence for freemasons, their families and the wider community.

The MCF is one of the largest grant-making charities in the country supporting freemasons and their families as well as charities across England and Wales.

Where does the Foundation get its money from?

Our work is funded solely through the generous donations of freemasons under the United Grand Lodge of England, their families and friends.

What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest and largest non-religious, non-political, fraternal and charitable organisation. Members are expected to shape their lives according to five core principles: integrity, kindness, honesty, fairness, and tolerance.

How much does the MCF donate to charities each year?

We donate over £5 million each year to local and national charities.

How many enquiries does the MCF Charity Grants programme receive each year?

We receive approximately 2,500 each year and we fund around 400 charities a year.

Eligibility

What does the MCF fund?

Our current funding categories are:

- Creating the best start in life for disadvantaged children and young people
- Reducing isolation in later life
- PhD studentships researching degenerative diseases
- Care services in the hospice sector

Who can apply for a grant?

The MCF only supports charities registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales, or the relevant Central registry of the respective Guernsey, Jersey or Isle of Man's government.

Do you fund individuals?

The charity grants department does not fund individuals. Grants to individuals are only available to Freemasons and their families and are made through our Masonic Support department.

Do you fund projects and charities outside the UK?

No. At the discretion of the Trustees of the MCF we award emergency grants to support the relief efforts responding to floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters in both the UK and around the world. It is not possible to apply for funding in this area.

Are there any geographical restrictions?

Yes – our main charity grants programmes are only for charities and projects in England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Can we apply if we are a new organisation?

You must be able to send us audited or independently inspected charity accounts which have been published on the Charity Commission website with your application. We also expect organisations to be able to demonstrate a track record of service delivery.

We don't have our own charity number. Can we apply using the charity number of a head office?

Yes – but only if you have written permission to do so from your head office.

If you are part of a larger or a national charity, with the same charity number, and legally governed by the same board of trustees, we require your larger/national charity to provide written permission which must be sent in with the application.

Does our charity need to have its own bank account to be eligible to apply?

Yes the charity is required to have its own bank account for us to transfer the payment. We will require proof of BACS details before the payment will be authorised.

We are under the threshold for needing having independently examined or audited accounts – can we apply?

No, unfortunately we cannot accept any application without a full set of independently examined or audited accounts.

You are funding our organisation already; can I apply for another grant?

No – organisations can only have one large or small active grant from us at a time.

Our application was turned down. How soon can we apply again?

If your small grant application was declined, you must wait until one year from the date of the rejection.

If your first stage large grant form was declined, you may apply again in the next round. However if you are declined during the second stage of the large grant application process then you must wait until one year from the date of the rejection.

We have received a grant from the MCF in the past. When can we reapply?

You must wait until two years from the date that your previous funding ended. The grant ends 12 months from the date of the last instalment. For example, a one year grant awarded in 2018 ends in 2019; the charity would be eligible to reapply in 2021.

We have been declined for a grant in the past. When can we reapply?

If you have been declined for a first stage Large Grant you may apply again in the next grants round.

If you have been declined for a second stage Large Grant or a Small Grant you can reapply twelve months from the date of declination.

We are a Hospice, can we apply to the Large or Small Grant programmes, as well as the Hospice Grant programme?

As the MCF has two dedicated hospice programmes, this unfortunately prevents you from applying for a Large or Small grant.

We have been in operation for several years but have recently merged with another charity and therefore have a new charity number. Can we still apply for funding?

You must have one year's published accounts as the merged organisation; these must match the ones submitted to the Charity Commission.

Application Questions

Do you have deadlines?

Visit our application deadline page.

How much can I apply for?

For the small grant programme, grants can be £1,000 up to £15,000 over 3 years.

For the large grant programme, grants are available between £10,000 and £80,000. However the average grants generally range from £20,000 to £60,000.

We encourage organisations to apply for the amount and length of funding they require, and that is appropriate and proportionate to their financial position. As a general rule, we would not tend to fund more than 15% of an organisation's income per year.

Occasionally we may offer a grant for less than the requested amount but we will only do this in consultation with the grantee during the application process.

What length of funding do you offer?

For the small and large grant programmes, grants are available for one year up to three years.

Do you give unrestricted funding?

We provide unrestricted funding in our small grants programme only.

What costs can be included in a large grant? Do you allow overhead costs to be included?

Yes. A full breakdown of the project costs must be entered into the appropriate section of the form.

Do you fund new/pilot projects?

Yes, we do fund new/pilot projects.

It is important that you can demonstrate the need and demand for the service and that your organisation has the capacity to deliver the project.

Do you fund salaries?

Yes we do. If applying for a large grant, the role must be integral to the project.

For the large grant first stage application, I have two projects for consideration and can't decide which to put forward for funding. What should I do?

We would always suggest choosing the project which is most needed by your organisation at the time and which you feel fits closest to our themes.

Can I attach more information to my application?

Yes. You can attach up to two supporting documents. We welcome an impact report, pilot evaluation or anything else you feel would be relevant to your application.

If I include a prepared project proposal, do I still have to complete the form in full?

Yes. The entire form must be completed in full.

If I send in a full set of accounts, do I still have to complete the finance section of the form?

Yes. The entire form must be completed in full.

I don't know how to fill in the finance section of the form. What should I do?

Please visit our financial information guidance page for further information about how to complete this section.

In addition, your finance worker, accountant/auditor, council for voluntary service or other support agency should be able to assist you as we use this information to help us assess the financial strength of your organisation.

If you have a question about the wording of a question then you would be welcome to call us for clarification.

Can I post or email my application, or should I submit it online?

We cannot accept postal or emailed applications, all forms are online only. There will be a 'Submit' button for you to click once the application has been completed.

How will I know if you have received it?

You will receive a copy of your application immediately as receipt by email. A personal acknowledgement will then be sent by email once the application has been initially reviewed. This will be sent to the email address you gave us in your application. You may need to check your spam filter to find the emails.

If you haven't heard from us within seven working days of submitting your application please call to check whether we received it.

If changes occur to our organisation after we have applied, do we need to inform the MCF?

Yes – please make sure that you keep us updated of any important changes that may affect the outcome of your application. This is especially important if your contact details change, or if the person who submitted the application leaves your organisation.

Do applications require the support or a reference from a Freemason?

No – your charity does not require a connection to a freemason.

If you are a freemason who is interested in referring a charity for a grant, please do not hesitate to share our website with the organisation or give them our contact details so we can advise them on how to apply.

My application fits both the Children and Young People and Later Life areas. Which one should I apply for?

You should apply for one and not both of our target areas. If your work supports both children and young people and older people, then you need to apply for just one of these areas. We suggest you choose the one which best fits our criteria.

Assessment Questions

How are successful grantees selected?

Charities go through a rigorous assessment process before being selected for support. We assess applicants on several criteria: the need being addressed, whether the activities effectively tackle this need, the charity's financial situation, the capacity and sustainability of the organisation and its project, reach and potential impact, how results are monitored, etc. Because we are funded by Freemasons across England and Wales we aim to reflect that in the grants we make and try to have a good geographic spread of grants.

Once the applications have been assessed, a shortlist is presented to the relevant local Province and our Charity Grants Committee for a final decision. The Committee includes those with experience in the voluntary sector and it meets 3-4 times a year.

Do you prefer projects/organisations that work with a large number of people?

Not necessarily – when considering the impact of the project we take into account both the numbers of people that are reached and the depth of the project's intervention to those involved.

Will you come and visit us during the assessment process?

During the assessment stage, you may receive a visit from a member of staff or one of the members of the Charity Grants Committee. The visit will be pre-arranged and will include a discussion of your application, your budget, your organisation's accounts, fundraising strategy, and the governance and management of your organisation. We will expect to meet with staff, and beneficiaries if appropriate.

How long will I have to wait for a decision?

For a large grant first stage application we aim to give you a decision within 4 weeks.

For the small and large second stage grant applications, please refer to the grant rounds dates on the deadlines page.

If we are successful, what will be expected of us?

We will ask you to sign a grant agreement detailing what both organisations have agreed to do and will also ask you send in proof of your bank account details in order for us to authorise the payment. We will arrange for you to meet with local freemasons for a presentation and to secure any publicity opportunities.

Over the duration of the grant, your organisation will be required to complete yearly monitoring reports to show what impact the grant is achieving. In addition, a member of staff, member of the Charity Grants Committee or volunteer representative may conduct a monitoring visit.

On occasion, we may also ask your organisation to speak at one of our events to raise awareness of the topic and the work we are doing together.

Do you provide feedback on unsuccessful applications?

Due to the high number of applications we receive, we do not usually provide tailored feedback in the rejection email. However, if you wish to receive further feedback on your application, please email the Charity Grants Team at charitygrants@mcf.org.uk. Feedback will be provided in a single written response and may take up to 4 weeks. Due to limited resources we cannot enter into continued dialogue about applications, or discuss them further on the phone.

The main reason for not funding projects is that we receive many more applications than we can support, which unfortunately causes us to turn down many of the charities that apply to us.

My query is not answered here, where can I get further help and advice?

We are always happy to help with any questions you may have. Please contact us by email at charitygrants@mcf.org.uk or call 020 3146 3337 to talk on the phone. Our office hours are 9am–5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am–4pm on Friday.

Further eligibility guidelines are available on our application resources page.