



Frequently Asked Questions About Our Spenddown

January 2025

Why is the Foundation spending down?

There are urgent needs across all our funding areas — especially for Great Lakes issues. The Foundation’s board felt compelled to direct all our resources to the causes that Fred and Barbara cared about in a shorter time frame in order to address these pressing needs.

When will the Foundation end its operations?

The Foundation will make final payments on all grant commitments by 2034. (There may be some winding down of administrative activities beyond that time.)

Will the Foundation continue to focus on Southeast Michigan?

As in the past, our grantmaking has varying areas of geographic focus:

- Arts and Jazz Education grantmaking will continue to focus on organizations based in Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne Counties.
- Sustainable Business and Democracy grantmaking will focus on Southeast Michigan.
- Great Lakes grantmaking will expand from a focus on Southeast Michigan and Bayfield, Ontario to also consider organizations and activities across the Great Lakes basin that align with our priorities and strategy.

The Foundation has shared that it will work to “future proof” organizations so that they can continue to be strong after the Foundation ceases operations. How will it do that?

We will focus on strengthening grant partners across all our grantmaking priorities with robust capacity-building opportunities. We will also work to encourage other philanthropic entities and individuals to care about the issues and organizations we care about — so that they will support our grant partners after we are gone.

Will the Foundation be making grants for endowment?

Our board’s motivation to spenddown is to put all the Foundation’s assets to work now to address critical needs. For that reason, we will not consider requests for endowment.

How will equity show up in the Foundation’s work — internally and in its grantmaking?

One of the Foundation’s guiding values is to pursue fairness and respect. We work in a region — and within larger systems — that are beset by legacies of discrimination and injustice. The Foundation seeks to cultivate inclusion and belonging in all its relationships, whether with grant

partners, applicants, community members, board, and/or staff. It does this by organizing convenings that bring together diverse perspectives and by supporting organizations through capacity building and project grants to pursue DEI and/or other opportunities to build inclusive tables.

Since its creation the Foundation has funded environmental health and justice efforts in Detroit and Wayne County. In spenddown, our grantmaking in Great Lakes and Sustainable Business includes an environmental justice lens that calls for the “equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, ability or income.” That also means making sure that the people most affected by an issue have a voice in solving it. Funding for Democracy, which is a new program area in spenddown, will help protect access to the ballot — especially for those who have been historically targeted by voter suppression (such as young voters, people with low incomes, and people of color).

How does an organization qualify for a Legacy grant?

Legacy grants will be by invitation only. Foundation staff will contact organizations directly to explore possible Legacy projects. These will likely be made to organizations that have deep, longtime affiliations with the Foundation and the Erb family.

Have more questions about Erb Family Foundation’s spenddown or grantmaking priorities? Please visit <https://www.erbff.org> for more information — or use the “Contact Us” form on our website to start a conversation with a member of our staff.