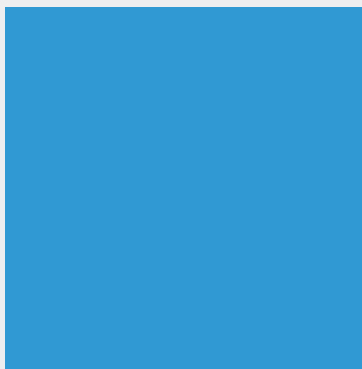
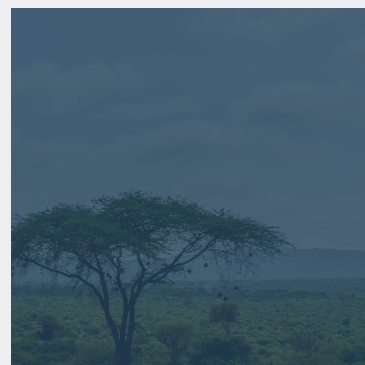
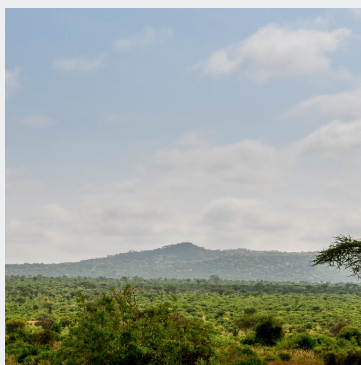
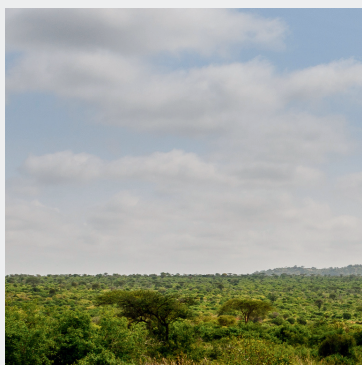




Friends of Liberia

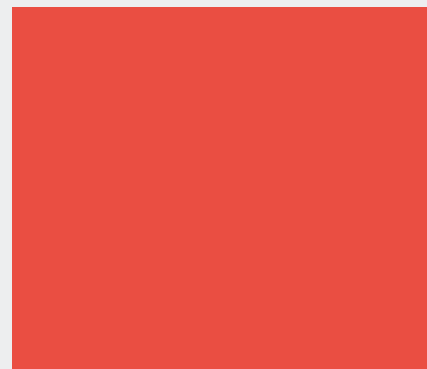
Small Grants

This update shares an overview of Friends of Liberia's Small Grants Committee activities over the past year, highlighting key programmatic changes and our strategic response to significant funding cuts from the U.S. government.



The Small Grants Committee

The Small Grants Program was established by Friends of Liberia as a way for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and other supporters to continue contributing to Liberia's development after their service. The committee awards grants, up to \$3,000, to community-led projects that are identified and implemented by the very communities they aim to serve. Through this initiative, the Small Grants Committee connects the passion and commitment of its members with the needs of local changemakers, fostering long-term partnerships and sustainable impact.



Current Funding Ecosystem

The current funding ecosystem in Liberia is undergoing significant strain following major cuts to U.S. foreign assistance, particularly from USAID, which historically supported critical sectors like health, education, and governance. These cuts were triggered by Executive Order 14169, signed in January 2025, which effectively froze a wide swath of foreign aid programs. The impact on Liberia has been profound: USAID previously funded nearly half of the national health budget, supporting HIV treatment, malaria prevention, and primary care. These programs have been halted or significantly scaled back, leaving hospitals without vital medications and patients unable to access lifesaving care.

In education, over \$40 million in USAID funding for school feeding programs and system strengthening has been suspended, affecting tens of thousands of children. Similarly, USAID-supported governance initiatives—including tax reform and decentralization efforts—have been disrupted, challenging Liberia’s goal of raising \$1 billion in domestic revenue by 2026. The Ministry of Finance has confirmed at least \$51 million in development funding has been cut so far, with over 10,000 jobs at risk. These reductions threaten not only frontline services but also the people and organizations working to implement development initiatives across the country.

Despite the immediate challenges, the funding crisis presents an opportunity for international partners to step up in new and meaningful ways. **Friends of Liberia’s Small Grants Program is playing a vital role in helping to fill emerging gaps by providing flexible, community-driven funding directly to local organizations.** At a time when many large-scale donor programs have been frozen or canceled, these small grants offer a lifeline to grassroots initiatives that are sustaining critical services in education, health, and community development. By prioritizing local leadership and adaptability, **Friends of Liberia is contributing to a more resilient and self-reliant development ecosystem—one that empowers Liberians to respond to their communities' most urgent needs and build a more sustainable future from the ground up.**

Inside the Small Grants Program: What We Fund

Applications can be submitted any time of the year, and are reviewed on a rolling basis. The Small Grants Committee recommends a project for funding during the quarterly FOL Board meetings.

Funding Priorities: The Friends of Liberia Small Grants Committee prioritizes community-led initiatives that are designed and implemented by local Liberian non-profit organizations, particularly those operating in rural and underserved areas.

Funding priorities include:

- Locally designed and led projects that demonstrate strong community ownership, leadership, and participation throughout the project lifecycle.
- Initiatives led by Liberian non-profit organizations with a clear and credible track record of community engagement.
- Projects that address pressing local challenges and propose sustainable solutions in areas such as but not limited to:
 - Education (e.g., school improvements, literacy programs, resource development)
 - Health and sanitation (e.g., hygiene promotion, community health outreach, access to clean water)
 - Youth development (e.g., skills-building programs, mentorship, vocational training)
 - Women's empowerment (e.g., gender equity initiatives, leadership training, non-profit income-generating activities)
 - Environmental protection and agriculture (e.g., climate resilience, soil improvement, sustainable farming)
- Projects that include clear goals, a feasible implementation plan, and potential for long-term community benefit beyond the grant period.
- Efforts that promote equity, inclusion, and community resilience, especially for marginalized or vulnerable groups.

All projects must have a defined budget of \$3,000 USD or less, include committed funding from other sources, verifiable in-kind resources and demonstrate how the funds will directly support the successful implementation of the community initiative.

Projects the Committee Does Not Fund

- Are operated by for-profit businesses or intended for private financial gain
- Are primarily religious or political in nature
- Are one-time events (e.g. ceremonies or conferences) without lasting impact

Budget Items the Committee Does Not Fund

- Nondescript administrative costs
- Consultant fees
- Loan repayment or debt servicing
- Fundraising
- Purchase of motorbikes, vehicles, or large machinery
- Gifts, prizes, or giveaways

Budget items not to exceed 15%

- Salaries or stipends for staff, volunteers, or leadership
- Per diems, travel allowances, or personal reimbursements

All budgets must be itemized and clearly linked to the implementation of the proposed project. Budgets that include ineligible costs will be returned for revision or may result in the application being disqualified.



How We Review and Select Applications

To ensure a fair and thoughtful review process, the Small Grants Committee follows a structured system for evaluating all incoming applications. Here's how it works:

Initial Screening: Each application is reviewed to make sure it is complete, includes all required documents, and meets our basic eligibility criteria—including a clear connection to underserved populations in Liberia.

Evaluator Assignment: Two committee members are assigned to independently review each eligible application.

Application Review: Committee members receive the applications and supporting materials a few days before our meeting. Each evaluator scores their assigned applications using a standardized Evaluation Form and Rubric.

Each application is reviewed using clear, consistent criteria designed to promote transparency and fairness. These include:

- Need – How urgent and relevant is the issue being addressed?
- Reach – Does the project include rural or underserved communities?
- Organizational Capacity – Has the organization demonstrated it can follow through on its plans?
- Budget – Is the budget clear, accurate, and well-aligned with the proposed work?
- Sustainability – Can the project continue after our funding ends?
- Impact – What difference will the project make, and how will we know?
- Overall Strength – A general assessment of the proposal's potential and readiness.

Group Discussion: The committee meets to discuss the top 3–4 applications in detail. During this meeting, the team raises questions, clarifies information, and works toward a shared decision about which projects to recommend for funding.

Board Review and Approval: Once the committee reaches consensus, we submit our funding recommendations to Friends of Liberia's Board for final approval.

Grant Disbursement: After approval, we notify the selected grantee(s), send an official award letter, and process the wire transfer of funds.

Evaluation Rubric

Topic	Definition	1	2	3	4	5
Need	"Need" refers to the project's ability to respond to current and pressing needs of Liberians. Evaluators should utilize their knowledge of Liberia to judge this paired with the organization's ability to highlight the needs for this project in the application materials.	The project shows a complete lack of understanding of local needs, and the application materials provide no evidence of consideration for the needs of local Liberians and the project's target population.	The project's understanding of local needs is limited, and the application materials do not adequately demonstrate efforts to assess and understand the needs of local Liberians and the project's target population.	The project partially addresses local needs but lacks in-depth understanding of the specific context. The application materials show some efforts to identify needs but lack thorough engagement with stakeholders.	The project shows a good understanding of local needs, but there could be more comprehensive research and engagement with local communities and the project's target population identified in the application materials.	The project demonstrates a deep understanding of the specific and current needs of Liberians, considering socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors. The application materials provide detailed evidence of consultations with local communities and stakeholders.
Reach	"Reach" refers to the project's ability to respond to the needs of underserved communities in Liberia such as women, children, elderly, people with disabilities. Evaluators should consider the geographic location of the project for this rating (rural communities).	The project ignores the needs of underserved groups, and the application materials provide no evidence of planning to reach these communities, especially in rural areas.	The project's consideration of underserved groups is minimal, and the application materials do not adequately address how these groups will be included, especially in rural areas.	The project mentions underserved groups but lacks a clear and comprehensive strategy for their inclusion. The application materials could provide more information on how these groups will be reached in rural communities.	The project acknowledges the importance of inclusivity and geographic diversity and provides strategies for reaching underserved communities, but there could be more specific and detailed plans outlined in the application materials.	The project demonstrates a comprehensive and intentional approach to targeting and addressing the needs of underserved communities in Liberia, including women, children, elderly individuals, and people with disabilities. The project demonstrates a well-adapted approach to meet the specific challenges of rural communities in Liberia. The application materials provide detailed strategies and methods for effectively reaching and engaging with these communities.
Organization's track record	"Track record" refers to the history or known reputation of the organization implementing the project. This may be through word of mouth, contacting references, published reviews found online, previous recipient of FOL small grant, the inclusion of summaries, impact and/or data of previously implemented projects in the application and/or the evaluator's opinion based on the application materials shared.	The organization lacks a track record of successful project implementations. No references, reviews, or summaries of previous projects in the application materials.	The organization's track record is questionable in terms of consistency and reliability, with few references and unclear success history. Limited summaries of previous project impact and data in the application materials.	The organization has a decent track record, with mixed references and evidence of moderate success. Some summaries of previous projects' impact and data are present in the application materials.	The organization has a strong track record, with positive references and some evidence of successful project implementations. Previous projects are mentioned with summaries of impact and data in the application materials. The organization has shown some adaptability and learning from previous experiences.	The organization has an outstanding track record of successfully implementing similar projects. Strong references and evidence of past successes support this reliability, with detailed summaries and data in the application materials. Application materials also highlight examples of how the organization improved projects based on feedback and data.
Budget	Question 13: The budget is a required element of the application materials. The evaluator must judge the budget based on clarity, organization, and accuracy, all in relation to the proposed project.	The budget is highly inaccurate, with numerous significant discrepancies in calculations or figures. The budget's lack of accuracy raises serious doubts about its viability and alignment with the project. The budget is poorly organized and lacks a logical structure.	The budget's accuracy is questionable, with several noticeable discrepancies in calculations or figures. These discrepancies raise concerns about the budget's reliability and alignment with the project. The budget's organization is subpar, with several sections lacking clear categorization or order. The budget lacks clarity in some areas, with several expenses or funding sources requiring better explanations.	The budget contains several inaccuracies or discrepancies in calculations or figures, which may slightly impact the overall alignment between the budget and the project. The budget is reasonably organized, though some sections may lack clear categorization or logical order. Minor improvements could enhance its overall coherence. The budget is generally clear, but some expenses or funding sources lack detailed explanations. Minor inconsistencies or ambiguities may be present, but they do not significantly hinder understanding.	The budget is mostly accurate, with some minor discrepancies in calculations. These discrepancies do not significantly affect the overall alignment between the budget and the project. The budget is well-organized, with expenses and funding sources arranged in a coherent manner. Some categories or line items could be better structured for improved clarity. Some line items may benefit from additional clarity or detail, but overall alignment with the project is evident.	The budget is clear, easy to understand and organized. All expenses and funding sources are transparently presented, with detailed explanations for each line item. Categories are clearly defined, and comprehensible. The budget aligns with the project's scope and goals. The budget is meticulously accurate, with all calculations and figures precisely reflecting the proposed project's needs.

Sustainability	<p>"Sustainability" refers to the ability of the project and the project's impact to be maintained after implementation and without funding from Friends of Liberia.</p>	<p>The project lacks a clear plan for sustainability, and there are no evident strategies for sustaining activities and impact without ongoing funding from Friends of Liberia. The project does not prioritize capacity building or institutional strengthening, and there are no evident strategies for ensuring that local stakeholders can continue project activities after funding ends. There are no strategies in place for fostering community ownership or continued engagement in the project's sustainability.</p>	<p>The project's plan for sustainability is limited in scope and lacks clear strategies for maintaining activities and impact. The plan is vague or insufficiently developed. The project's community engagement is limited, and there is a lack of clear strategies for fostering community ownership and maintaining engagement after the project's completion. The project's focus on capacity building and institutional strengthening is limited.</p>	<p>The project's plan for sustainability is present, but it lacks comprehensive strategies for maintaining activities and impact without external funding. The project plan lacks comprehensive strategies for ensuring that local stakeholders are adequately equipped to continue project activities. The project involves communities to some degree but lacks comprehensive strategies for ensuring sustained community ownership and engagement beyond the project's duration.</p>	<p>The project has a plan for sustainability, but some aspects may need further elaboration or detail. The project includes efforts to build local capacity and strengthen institutions, though there may be room for more specific details in the plan. The application materials show a commitment to transferring skills and resources. Community ownership is evident to a certain extent, and there are indications of mechanisms for ongoing engagement.</p>	<p>The project demonstrates a comprehensive and well-defined plan for sustainability. The project prioritizes building local capacity and strengthening institutions to manage and continue project activities after funding ends. A detailed plan outlines how skills and resources will be transferred to local stakeholders. The project actively involves local communities in project design, implementation, and decision-making. Communities demonstrate a strong sense of ownership and commitment to the project's sustainability, and mechanisms for continued engagement are outlined.</p>
Impact	<p>"Impact" refers to the outcome of the project's implementation on the intended and unintended, direct and indirect beneficiaries of the intervention. Evaluators must judge the anticipated impact of the project as it is described in the application materials.</p>	<p>The project's impact goals are unclear and vague, and the application materials do not provide any coherent description of the anticipated outcomes. The project's impact goals lack any mention of a measurement and evaluation plan, and the application materials do not address how impact will be assessed.</p>	<p>The project's impact goals lack clarity and specificity, making it difficult to fully understand the intended outcomes from the application materials. The project's impact goals lack a clear measurement and evaluation plan, and the application materials do not provide sufficient information on how impact will be assessed.</p>	<p>The project's impact goals are generally clear, but there might be some lack of specificity or detail in the application materials, which could lead to potential ambiguity. The project's impact goals have a basic measurement and evaluation plan, with some indicators and methods mentioned in the application materials, though further elaboration is needed.</p>	<p>The project's impact goals are clear and well-described, though there might be minor areas where additional specificity or detail could enhance understanding. The project's impact goals are supported by a measurement and evaluation plan, though there might be room for further detail or clarity in the application materials.</p>	<p>The project's impact goals are exceptionally clear, specific, and well-defined in the application materials. The anticipated outcomes are detailed, realistic, and aligned with the project's objectives. The project's impact goals are accompanied by a comprehensive measurement and evaluation plan, outlining indicators, data collection methods, and tools. The application materials show a robust strategy for assessing impact.</p>
Overall	<p>The overall rating of the project is a summative rating determined by the evaluator that will be used to compare all projects, generally. Note: in addition to this a summative rating will be calculated based on the ratings for each category.</p>	<p>The project lacks fundamental elements, such as clear goals, planning, and alignment with beneficiaries' needs. The project has critical gaps, inaccuracies, or inconsistencies that undermine its feasibility, impact, and sustainability. The project's chances of success are extremely low, and it is unlikely to achieve meaningful outcomes.</p>	<p>The project has some elements in place, but there are substantial gaps in planning, alignment, or feasibility. There are notable deficiencies that could hinder the project's effectiveness or sustainability. The project's potential for positive impact is limited due to unresolved issues.</p>	<p>The project generally meets basic requirements, with goals, planning, and alignment present, though improvements are needed. The project demonstrates some positive aspects but lacks substantial innovation or comprehensive strategies. The project could achieve reasonable outcomes but may not excel due to limited innovation or strategic depth.</p>	<p>The project exhibits clear goals, planning, and alignment, with few significant gaps or inconsistencies. The project has solid elements, with innovative approaches or well-developed strategies. The project is likely to achieve meaningful impact, with clear pathways for success and sustainability.</p>	<p>The project excels in all aspects, with clear, specific, and innovative goals, comprehensive planning, and perfect alignment with beneficiaries' needs. The project showcases remarkable innovation, comprehensive strategies, and a well-defined path to success. The project is poised for significant and sustainable impact, with exceptional strategies and alignment with goals.</p>

Strengthening Our Grantmaking Approach

Over the past few years, the Small Grants Committee has made several key improvements to strengthen transparency, accountability, and support for applicants and grantees. These include the introduction of (1) a three-phase monitoring and evaluation package to track project progress and outcomes, (2) the launch of virtual “office hours” for anyone to connect directly with committee members, and (3) the provision of tailored written feedback along with optional one-on-one virtual sessions for applicants after each funding cycle. Looking ahead, the committee is also developing new resources, such as an open-access database for non-profit capacity building and stronger network building among applicants and grantees with the shared purpose of contributing to Liberia’s development.

Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements

We have developed three (3) separate Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) templates to be completed at three stages of a funded project. These requirements are designed to enhance data collection, reporting, and analysis processes, thereby improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of FOL funded projects.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Template – *After funds from FOL are received*
This template is used at the beginning of the project to outline the project's goals, objectives, expected outcomes, indicators, and data collection methods. This template serves as the foundation for monitoring and evaluating the project's progress and impact.

Monitoring Template – *Mid-point of the project*

The Monitoring Template is used at the mid-point of the project to assess the progress made towards achieving the project objectives. This template helps identify any challenges, deviations from the plan, and necessary adjustments to ensure the project stays on track.

Evaluation Template – *After project is completed*

The Evaluation Template is completed at the end of the project to assess the overall effectiveness and impact of the project. It provides a comprehensive review of what was achieved, lessons learned, and recommendations for future projects.

2024

We received 74 applications for funding in 2024. Of these, 13 had applied for a Friends of Liberia (FOL) small grant before, and 5 had been previous recipients of funding. 61 applications were from new applicants, indicating knowledge of FOL's small grants opportunity is becoming more widespread across Liberia. This also allows us to build a larger network of local Liberian organizations.

The average project cost was \$2,766, with an average of 476 expected beneficiaries per project. Project proposals spanned topics such as construction projects for health centers to tree planting campaigns. Many training programs, including women and girls' empowerment, vocational trainings and entrepreneurship were also proposed.

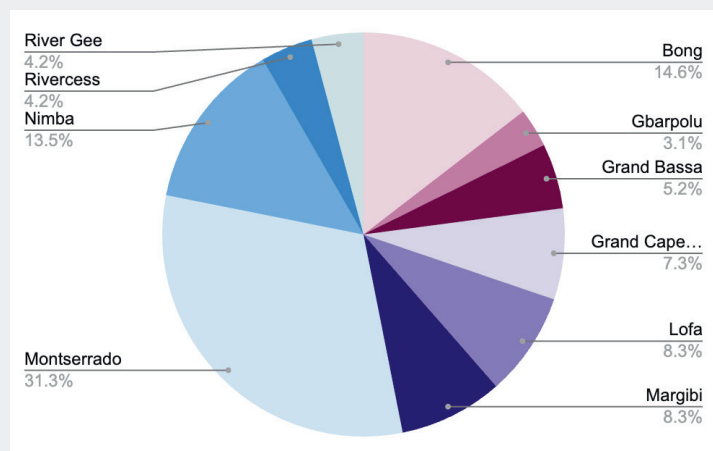
Projects Proposed by Sector:
(some projects span multiple sectors)

Agriculture	1
Economic Empowerment	26
Education	55
Health	23
Social Services	8
Other	8

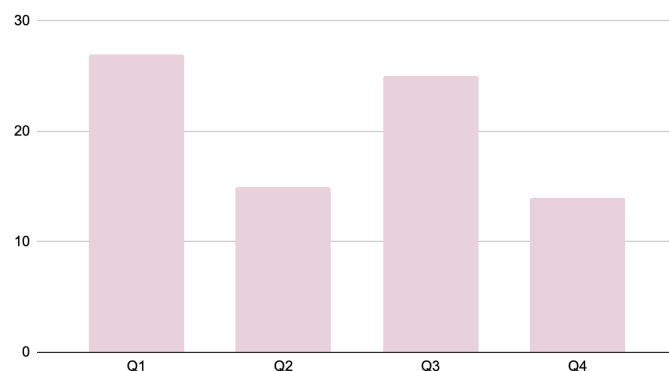
Some of the Organizations who Applied for Funding:

- Gipo Vocational Training Institute
- Joan White Academy
- Grow Action Innovation Network (Gain Foundation)
- Girl Power Africa
- National Youth Rights Association of Liberia
- Creative Arts Institute of Vocational Education –CAIVE
- Foundation for Environmental Empowerment and Development (FEED)
- Faith & Hope Charity International INC
- Progressive Health Initiative Of Liberia (PHIL.Inc)
- Ophelia Hoff Saytumah School
- Learning Squared Liberia
- Kpo'ma Women
- Action For Development Group Inc.
- Clean Eye Foundation Inc.
- Reintegration Humanitarian Initiative Liberia
- Liberia Women and Children Aid Initiative
- Universal Empowerment Missions
- Youth for Better Society Inc
- Youth Transforming Africa Narrative (YOTAN)
- Enlighten Nimba
- Jackson F. Doe Memorial Regional Referral Hospital
- Global Villagers Sustainable Initiative

Project Implementation County:
(some projects span multiple counties)



of Applications Received by Quarter



What We Funded (2024)

In **quarter 1** a Small Grant was awarded to **Educate West Point (EWP)** for the **Early Childhood Development and Afterschool Extended Learning** project. The objective of this project is to strengthen and grow the Early Childhood Development Center and After School Extended Learning program to provide education and updated materials for a greater number of children of West Point. This will be achieved by refurbishing the ECD center and Afterschool Program classrooms to secure adequate space for a healthy, hygienic learning environment.

In **quarter 3** a Small Grant was awarded to **Kpo'ma Women** for the **Women's Rice Mill** project. Kpo'ma Women requested a \$3,000 grant from FOL to support the installation of a mechanized rice mill, construction of a small storage facility, and basic training in business development to benefit a women's farming cooperative and their families in a very remote village within the Salala District in Bong County.

Kpo'ma Women was founded in 2020 by Constance Mulbah, who was born in Liberia and relocated to the United States during the civil war. Constance became a Peace Corps Volunteer working on development in Senegal (RPVC Senegal 2015). Kpo'ma Women's purpose is to provide rural women in Bong County with the tools they need to overcome barriers to economic participation.

In **quarter 4** a Small Grant was awarded to **Help a Mother and Newborn Initiative (HMNI)** for the **Empowerher Journey** project. HMNI works to support pregnant women and young mothers in Margibi County. Through their programs, they provide healthcare education, maternity support, and financial skills training. The "EmpowerHer Journey" project focuses on helping 100 first-time young mothers by giving them the skills and resources to support themselves and their babies. This project also encourages these young women to continue their education and become more self-reliant, breaking the cycle of poverty and improving their future. The total cost of the project is \$11,000 with FOL partially funding the project with \$3,000. FOL's funding covers the training materials; the rest of the funding comes from local donations, community fundraising events, and in-kind contributions.

2025 (so far)

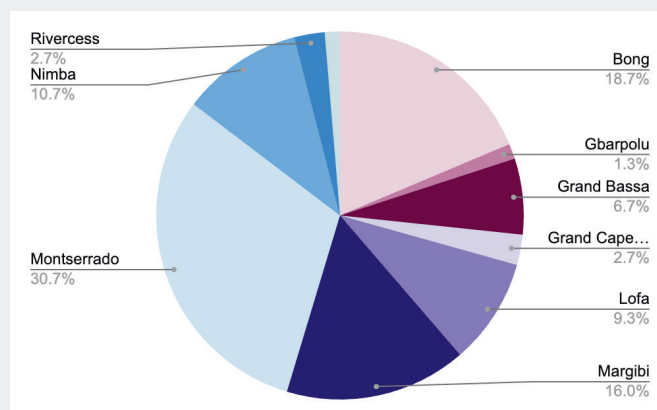
In the first half of 2025 we received 59 applications (Q1: 24; Q2: 30) for a Small Grant. **This increase in applications is likely due to the drastic cuts to funding through USAID and other American funding opportunities.** Of these, 19 applicants had applied for a Friends of Liberia (FOL) small grant before, and 2 had been previous recipients of funding. 40 applications were from new applicants, indicating their knowledge of FOL's small grants opportunity continues to spread across Liberia. This also allows us to build a larger network of local Liberian organizations, which is something we are working on establishing at the end of the year.

The average project cost was \$2,888, with an average of about 400 expected beneficiaries per project.

Projects Proposed by Sector:
(some projects span multiple sectors)

Agriculture	1
Economic Empowerment	19
Education	39
Health	17
Social Services	7
Other	3

Project Implementation County:
(some projects span multiple counties)



Some of the Organizations who Applied for Funding:

- MARVIE FOUNDATION
- Arthur B. Francis Seventh-Day Adventist Elementary, Junior & Senior High School
- Youth Dream for Constructive Achievement (YDCA Liberia)
- Liberia Christian Association of the Blind (CAB)
- Women in Agriculture for Sustainable Development
- Jesus Koazeah Childcare Center (JKCC)
- St. Francis Catholic High School Alumni Association (SFCHSAA)
- Agape National Academy of Music (ANAM)
- Liberia Environmental Agricultural & Research Network
- Liberia Women and Children Aid Initiative
- Hope for Nature Kids (HNKids)
- Billion Dreamers Inc.
- Focus on Children's Future

What We Are Funding (2025)

In **quarter 1** two Small Grants were awarded. One grant supports the **Our Children Future's Menstrual and Reproductive Health Education** project. This project aims to empower 76 adolescent girls (ages 11–18) at Fahnsehi Public School through a comprehensive educational and health intervention. The project will deliver a blended training on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR) and the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), alongside the distribution of reusable menstrual hygiene kits. The initiative seeks to reduce school absenteeism linked to menstruation, promote health awareness, and foster confidence and continued educational participation.

The second award was granted to **Human Empowerment Livelihood Programs Foundation Incorporated's Deep Well Water Hand Pump** project. This project aims to improve health and educational outcomes for 873 students and teachers at Thinker's Academy School System in Montserrado county. The project involves the construction of a deep well and hand pump to provide safe drinking water, complemented by hygiene and sanitation training for school staff. The project is expected to reduce waterborne diseases, enhance student attendance, and strengthen local capacity for ongoing water system management.

In **quarter 2** we saw an increase in strong applications after piloting virtual one-on-one sessions with applicants to share feedback on their applications. We are expecting to fund at least 3 projects from the Quarter 2 cycle in July 2025.

How We Do It

The impact of Friends of Liberia's Small Grants Program is only possible because of the generous support of our donors. These donations are used to fund non-profit organizations in Liberia to implement thoughtful, community-driven projects. FOL and the Small Grants Program are completely volunteer-run, so all donations are used to fund these projects. With each donation, we are not only funding individual projects—we are investing in the long-term capacity and self-reliance of Liberia's local development ecosystem.

With increased support, we can expand the reach of our program to fund more promising projects, offer deeper resources and guidance to applicants, and build stronger networks among Liberian non-profits. Together, we can continue to foster sustainable, community-led development and empower Liberian changemakers to shape their own future and create a more sustainable self reliant development ecosystem in Liberia.

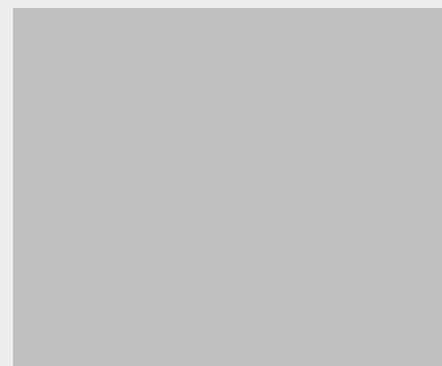
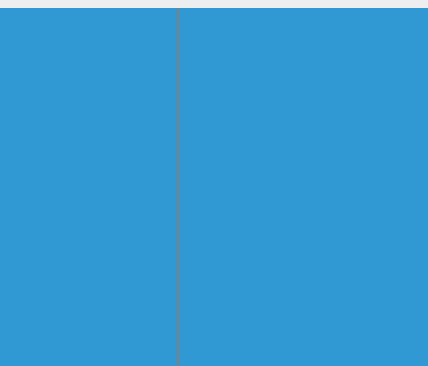
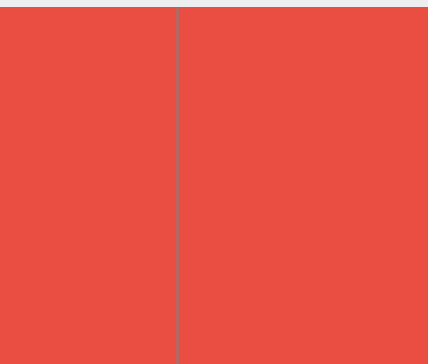
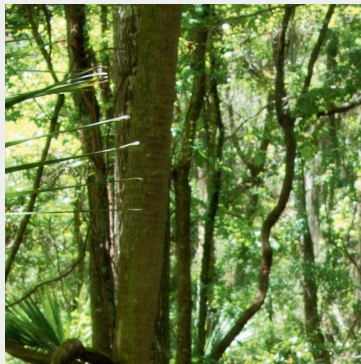
Your Gift Helps Us:

- Fund more locally driven projects across Liberia
- Provide technical support and mentorship to grassroots organizations
- Strengthen networks of non-profits and change-makers in Liberia
- Build a more sustainable, self-reliant development ecosystem

Make a difference today.



We also welcome volunteers to join the Small Grants Committee and contribute to our meaningful work reviewing grant applications, creating and sharing resources for applicants and awardees, and building a network of Liberian non-profit stakeholders.



Thank You

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the donors, volunteers, and partners who make the Friends of Liberia Small Grants Program possible. Your belief in locally led change and your continued support allow us to empower grassroots leaders who are building a stronger, more resilient Liberia. Together, we are planting the seeds for long-term impact one project, one community at a time.

✉ smallgrants@fol.org

🌐 <https://fol.org/programs/small-grants/>