



Invitation to Apply for the Position of  
**President**  
Flint, Michigan

## THE SEARCH

The Ruth Mott Foundation seeks an experienced and visionary nonprofit or philanthropic leader to serve as its next President. Based in Flint, Michigan, the Foundation is dedicated to working with the community to connect people, ideas, and resources for a vibrant and inclusive Flint.

The Foundation fulfills its mission through grantmaking and impact investments guided by a strategic plan that is currently focused on the northern half of the city and four key priorities that were identified by the community: youth, safety, economic opportunity, and neighborhoods. The Foundation also operates and runs community programs at Applewood, the historic Mott family estate, as a vital community asset for learning, engagement, and inspiration.

As of the end of 2024, the Foundation held assets totaling \$271 million and distributed \$9.3 million through its grantmaking and Applewood operations. Of that amount, \$4.9 million supported grants, \$2.7 million funded Applewood programs, and \$1.7 million covered administrative costs. Construction of a new pavilion at Applewood accounted for \$1.9 million in capital expenditures. The Foundation's impact investments accounted for \$2.3 million through program-related investments in 2024. The President reports to a 10-member Board of Trustees and leads a dedicated team of 33 full-time and 7 part-time employees.

This is a unique opportunity for a mission-driven, energetic servant leader who is passionate about community revitalization and equity. Over the past decade, the Foundation has emerged as a trusted and respected leader in Flint, thanks to its strategic focus and deep commitment to community listening and engagement. The next President will be charged with sustaining this momentum and further strengthening the Foundation's leadership role.

Applewood is increasingly important as a community space, learning hub, and platform for external engagement. The next President will continue to thoughtfully integrate Applewood's work with the Foundation's grantmaking strategy to maximize community impact.

In addition, the President must build and leverage partnerships with external organizations and engage in sustained, meaningful dialogue with Flint's civic leaders and residents who are deeply committed to transformative change. Flint is a community where one can truly see the impact of their efforts.

Members of the Board of Trustees will serve as search committee members in conducting the search for the next President. They have engaged the search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this important recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be submitted to the firm according to the instructions outlined at the end of this document.

## ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Ruth Rawlings Mott, the Foundation's namesake, was born in 1901 and raised in El Paso, Texas. As a young woman, she moved east to study physical education and later became a teacher. She eventually returned to El Paso, where she opened her own dance studio and met and married Charles Stewart Mott, a pioneering automobile industrialist and philanthropist.

Ruth Mott made her home in Flint at the Applewood estate, where she raised her family and became an active partner in community life. She emerged as a respected local leader, foundation trustee, and national philanthropist in her own right. Following her husband's death in 1973, she established the Ruth Mott Fund, a pass-through fund that, from the late 1970s through the 1990s, contributed more than \$1 million annually to national organizations focused on the arts, environment, health, and international affairs. This fund marked the beginning of her formal philanthropic journey and laid the groundwork for what would become the Ruth Mott Foundation.

Upon Ruth Mott's passing in 1999, the Foundation was established as the vehicle for extending her philanthropic vision beyond her lifetime. It reflects her deep commitment to her home community and honors the legacy of her husband. Guided by Ruth Mott's enduring values, such as inclusivity and egalitarianism, respect and dignity, civic hope and pride, personal responsibility, and a long-term perspective, the Foundation continues to carry forward her legacy through its work today.

## Grantmaking

The Foundation's early grantmaking reflected Ruth Mott's philanthropic legacy, focusing on arts and culture, beautification, and health promotion. However, following the City of Flint's adoption of its first [master plan](#) in over 50 years (adopted in 2013), the Board recognized the need for a more focused and responsive approach. In 2016, the Foundation adopted a five-year [strategic plan](#), later extended through 2025.

This strategic plan marked a pivotal shift: a targeted, place-based strategy centered on north Flint. This area was selected due to its significant challenges, limited resources, and, most importantly, the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of residents.

At the heart of this shift was a deep commitment to community engagement. From the outset, the Foundation prioritized listening to the people it serves. Before finalizing the strategy, it gathered data from multiple sources, including surveys sent to community stakeholders with questions such as:

- “What do you feel are the biggest problems facing youth (ages 5–17) in the community?”
- “What resources are most needed by the community? By your family?”

The responses revealed four recurring themes: safety, neighborhoods, economic opportunity, and youth. To validate these priorities, the Foundation hosted public forums, drawing more than 500 participants, most from north Flint neighborhoods. These forums provided a platform for residents to share what mattered most in their lives. Ultimately, the Foundation adopted these four community-identified priorities as the focus of all future grantmaking. In 2020, the Foundation explicitly centered racial equity in its grantmaking strategy, recognizing that closing racial disparities is key to addressing residents’ priorities.

The Foundation’s strong connection to community has enabled it to leverage its relationships and more effectively respond during crises, including the Flint water crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Applewood: A Living Legacy in the Heart of Flint

The Foundation complements its grantmaking with Applewood's operations and programs, sharing its beauty and honoring Charles Stewart Mott's life and legacy.

Built in 1916 as a family farm and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Applewood spans approximately 40 acres. The estate includes the former family home and archives, a historic barn and farmer’s cottage, greenhouses, a maintenance building, heritage apple orchard, and 18 acres of landscaped grounds—featuring perennial, rose, and demonstration gardens. In 1951, C.S. Mott donated 32 acres of Applewood’s former pastureland to help expand the campus of what is now Mott Community College.

Through the expertise of its dedicated horticulture, collections, education, and visitor services staff, the Foundation maintains Applewood as a place of inspiration and renewal. Recognizing its responsibility to both preserve and share this unique community asset, the Foundation uses Applewood to advance its mission, vision, and values through civic engagement—hosting convenings, festivals, tours, open days, and outreach programs.

Volunteers play a vital role in bringing Applewood to life. Extensively trained and deeply engaged, they help connect visitors to the estate's rich family and community history. In 2024, Applewood welcomed 17,323 visitors, a 21% increase over the previous year.

Applewood also serves as a dynamic educational resource. Its staff offers customized programs for school and youth groups, covering topics from Michigan history to STEM, and provides materials for educators or leads programs both on site and in the community.

## GOVERNANCE & ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

The President of the Foundation reports directly to the Board of Trustees, which is chaired by Maryanne Mott, daughter of Ruth Mott. The Board is composed of individuals with deep ties to the greater Flint community and members of the Mott family. It is a well-organized, highly collegial body that is actively engaged in ensuring the Foundation's success and impact, particularly in north Flint and through the stewardship of Applewood.

The Board seeks to leverage its grounding in the Flint community and its broader connections in partnership with the next President, who will bring their own experience, relationships, and vision to the role.

The President is responsible for the strategic and operational leadership of the Foundation, overseeing all aspects of its work, from grantmaking to the operation of Applewood, in close collaboration with the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees and Mott Family Office Management Company maintain oversight of the Foundation's investment decisions, ensuring alignment with its long-term mission and financial sustainability.

In addition, the President manages discretionary funds for strategic grantmaking, as determined in consultation with the Board.

The President's direct reports include the Director of Finance and Administration, Director of Communications, Director of Estate Operations, Director of Collections and Education, Vice President of Programs, and an Executive Assistant.

More information about the Foundation can be found at [www.ruthmottfoundation.org](http://www.ruthmottfoundation.org).

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Once a symbol of American industrial prosperity, Flint, like many other legacy cities, has endured the harsh consequences of decades-long disinvestment, deindustrialization, depopulation, and urban decline. Recent history has not been kind to the city the Foundation calls home. Yet, with its mission to work with the community to connect people, ideas, and resources for a vibrant and inclusive Flint, the Foundation remains steadfast in its commitment to the city's renaissance, recognizing that its future may look very different from its past.

The next President will join the Foundation at a pivotal moment, not only for the organization, but also for the city and surrounding communities it serves. This leader will have the opportunity to collaborate with civic and local leaders who are deeply committed to building a vibrant and prosperous Flint. Importantly, the President will work alongside residents whose resilience, volunteerism, and determination to improve their community are nothing short of inspiring.

From grassroots groups tackling blight, to churches cultivating community gardens, to local organizations driving change through civic engagement, Flint is rich with the social capital and civic energy needed for transformative progress.

Thanks to the outstanding leadership of outgoing President Raquel Thueme, the next President will inherit a Foundation with a dedicated, talented, and highly respected staff. Flint's residents and leaders place exceptional trust and confidence in the Foundation, and it is a responsibility not to be taken lightly.

The success of the President will be determined by how well they meet the leadership opportunities outlined below.

#### **Lead in implementing operational and capital plans for Applewood**

The President will collaborate with the Board and staff to update Applewood's master plan and program plan to align with the new overall strategy. As the Foundation positions Applewood to better serve the community, thoughtful planning around infrastructure, staffing, and operations will be essential to advancing its mission.

The Applewood Estate Plan was revised in 2019 to enhance the estate's capacity for visitors, tours, and community events while preserving its historic character. Pieces of the plan were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the President will be expected to revisit it with the Board and staff. The Board has initiated discussions about the need for a new facility to support Applewood's maintenance and horticultural operations, an effort the President would help steward.

A key consideration is Applewood's connection to the renowned Flint Cultural Center campus and a proposed new high school. The campus includes but is not limited to the Flint Institute of Music, Flint Institute of Arts, Flint Repertory Theatre, Whiting Auditorium, and Flint Public Library.

This evolving environment provides a rich context for realizing Ruth Mott's vision for Applewood.

Project updates related to the Applewood Plan can be found here:

<https://www.ruthmottfoundation.org/applewood/about-applewood/applewood-master-plan/>

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### **Further integrate grantmaking and Applewood to build a more unified Foundation**

The Foundation is distinctive in that it not only provides grants and impact investments as a philanthropic organization but also actively manages a historic estate, Applewood. One of the important responsibilities of the next President will be to develop systematic, consistent processes and opportunities that foster alignment and coordination among the Applewood, administrative, and grantmaking teams.

In recent years, significant progress has been made in integrating the operations and programs of Applewood with the Foundation's grantmaking efforts. For example, the Director of Estate Operations and the Director of Collections and Education have worked more closely with the Vice President of Programs and the programming staff to help grantees explore more opportunities to collaborate with Applewood, whether by tapping into its horticultural expertise or drawing on its educational resources. In addition, all staff roles are guided by shared frameworks, including those for community engagement and the Foundation's commitment to advancing racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The next President will be expected to continue and refine this integrative work. Applewood's many unique assets, its archives, landscape, family history, historic buildings, Gilkey Creek, and proximity to neighboring institutions must be thoughtfully leveraged to enrich and strengthen the Foundation's overall mission.

Regardless of their professional background, the President must demonstrate a genuine interest in, and respect for, the diverse work carried out across the Foundation. A willingness to learn about and champion the contributions of all departments is essential.

### **Shape and implement the Foundation's evolving strategic vision**

The Foundation is transitioning from its previous ten-year, north Flint-focused [strategic plan](#) into a new phase of strategic development. Building on a historic and unprecedented commitment to community engagement and investment beyond downtown Flint, the current planning process is being shaped by trustees, staff, and community voices alike. This next chapter offers a unique opportunity for the incoming President to contribute meaningfully to the finalization of the new multi-year strategic plan, while also leading its implementation. The President will be expected to evaluate and analyze the outcomes of the previous plan, ensure continuity of successful initiatives, and help chart a bold, inclusive path forward that reflects the lessons learned and the aspirations of the community.

### **Lead and collaborate alongside Flint's Civic Leaders and Community Members**

The successful President will serve as a visible and passionate champion of the Foundation and an advocate for the organizations and communities it supports. This individual will also have the opportunity to be an influential civic voice in Flint and Genesee County. The President will proactively engage public officials, community leaders, and residents from all sectors and walks of life, ensuring the Foundation remains deeply connected to the community it serves.

Through strategic outreach and relationship-building, the President will position the Foundation as a key voice in public policy and advocacy. By identifying and elevating emerging critical issues, the President will demonstrate the Foundation's independence and influence, convening stakeholders to foster dialogue, collaboration, and action.

Ultimately, the next President will help shape a new Flint narrative, one that honors the city's past, addresses present challenges, and highlights the power of community-driven change.

### **Leverage external partnerships to amplify impact in Flint**

The next President will play a key role in connecting the Ruth Mott Foundation with other foundations, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, businesses, and funding partners that can contribute resources and expertise to advance the Foundation's mission of fostering a vibrant and inclusive Flint.

Whether through participation in affinity groups, national collaboratives, professional networks, or conferences where best practices are shared, the President will actively seek and pursue opportunities that align with the Foundation's goals. This outward-facing leadership will help position the Foundation as a collaborative force in both local and national philanthropic landscapes.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

While no single candidate is expected to possess every skill and qualification listed, the ideal candidate will embody the following qualities. It is also expected that the candidate would either reside in or be open to relocating to Flint, Michigan, or another location within Genesee County:

- Demonstrated and sustained commitment to place-based work for the betterment of people and their community;
- Must have experience in the nonprofit and/or philanthropic sectors and have served in a significant leadership capacity, effectively managing talented professionals;
- Demonstrated experience or familiarity with the oversight of cultural, botanical, or historical properties, such as museums, gardens, or heritage sites, with an understanding of the unique stewardship responsibilities associated with properties such as Applewood Estate;
- Outstanding presentation and communication skills, and the experience and inclination to be an effective spokesperson for the Foundation in the community at large;
- A deep respect for the grantee community and for the importance of the Foundation's strong partnership with the community. Capacity for developing genuine connections with local residents;

- Strong skills in collaboration and teamwork. An enthusiasm for building bridges between and among a range of stakeholders, both internally and externally;
- Deep commitment to the values of equity, diversity, and inclusiveness. Demonstrated success in building an inclusive organization;
- A recognition of the urgency of the Foundation's mission, along with a sense of fun and excitement in doing the work;
- Experience working in close partnership with a governing board;
- Sophisticated understanding of how social change happens, and of the appropriate role of philanthropy in helping to drive change;
- A sense of fairness, inclusion, and humor.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Karen Avery, Partner  
Lehman Robinson, Associate  
Caroline Corry, Senior Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/ruth-mott-foundation/president>

*The Ruth Mott Foundation looks to recruit team members that are as economically, culturally, and ethnically diverse as the community it serves. It is committed to diversity and inclusion in all of its forms, including but not limited to race, color, religion, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, height, weight, protected genetic information, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.*