



Arts Operating Grant | FY2024-27 Guidelines

Arts Operating Grants provide funds to arts organizations that offer year-round, high-quality arts programs and services that support the Council’s mission to “cultivate and advance the arts and creativity throughout Vermont.”

These grants directly advance outcome three of the Arts Council’s Strategic Framework, which asserts that organizations and artists serving Vermont’s citizens build vibrant and creative communities. Therefore, the strongest applicants will be from arts organizations that demonstrate a strong and consistent presence in their community as arts service providers. They deliver quality programming in partnership with civic, nonarts, and/or educational organizations so that everyone in Vermont has access to the arts and creativity in their life, education, and community.

This grant opportunity offers **two levels of funding** (see details below).

Who May Apply

- Organizations incorporated in the state of Vermont with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status
- Groups without tax-exempt status through a fiscal agent. The fiscal agent must be a charitable nonprofit organization incorporated in Vermont as a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code
- Municipal arts agencies with a primary stated mission to serve the arts

That Meet the Following Criteria

- Provide year-round programming/services and will continue to provide year-round programming for the term of the grant
- Provide programming in facilities that are accessible and welcoming to people of all abilities
- Maintain an advisory board that meets regularly to discuss policy, strategic direction, and resource development to ensure sustainability
- Have a [Unique Entity ID \(UEI\)](#) from the federal government
- Have no outstanding reports on past Council grants

Grant Levels

One (1) Year Operating Grant

Funding will be between **\$1,000 (minimum) and \$4,000 (maximum)** in FY2024 (September 2023). Partial awards may be granted; both merit and organization size will be factored into grant award decisions. Grants will not exceed 30% of your operating revenue.

Applicants for whom **ANY** of these apply can *only* apply for a One-Year Operating Grant.

You are an organization:

- with an annual operating revenue of less than \$25,000
- that has operated for fewer than five (5) years and has at least one (1) year of financial data as of December 31, 2022
- that has no paid staff

This program operates on a one-year grant cycle beginning September 1, 2023. Grant amounts are dependent upon federal and state funding and may be subject to change. Grantees are required to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the contract terms by submitting an end-of-year report each year. We intend to reopen this program annually.

Criteria for Selection of One-Year Operating Grant

The following criteria are used by reviewers to evaluate applications:

quality arts programming or services (30%)

- quality programs or services that demonstrate creativity and consistency with the applicant's mission, position in the community, and stated artistic context
- scope of activities that contribute to the artistic development of the general public, participating artist, and/or the art form
- outreach to and/or inclusion of Vermont artists
- fair and appropriate compensation provided to artists

response to community and audience (30%)

- programming and services that are relevant and accessible to the community
- programs and practices that address barriers to participation for underserved participants (e.g., economic, geographic, demographic, physical, and cultural barriers)

sustainability and organizational capacity (30%)

- capacity to manage organizational operations and resources through grant period
- clear organizational structure with job titles and descriptions for staff/volunteers and board members
- active efforts to reflect your community's diverse membership in its staff, volunteers, and board
- solid business plan with annual implementation goals
- sound fundraising plan
- marketing plan that reflects understanding of audience

evaluation and measurable outcomes (10%)

- existence of future-looking organizational plan covering the length of the grant period
- a plan to measure achievement of organizational goals and outcomes
- an improvement mindset to strengthen programs and operations

Grant Levels (continued)

Three (3) Year Operating Grant

Funding will be between **\$3,000 (minimum) and \$9,000 (maximum)** each year for three years beginning in FY2024 (September 2023). Partial awards may be granted; both merit and organization size will be factored into grant award decisions. Grants will not exceed 30% of your operating revenue. **A minimum 3:1 match of nonfederal funds is required.**

Applicants for whom **ALL** of these apply can apply for a Three-Year Operating Grant.

You are an organization:

- with an annual operating revenue of \$25,000 or greater
- that has operated continually for a minimum of five (5) years as of August 31, 2023
- with at least one half-time (or half-time equivalent) paid staff member and will retain at least one half-time (or half-time equivalent) paid staff member over the course of the grant

This program operates on a three-year grant cycle beginning September 1, 2023. Support for the subsequent year will depend on the partner's ability to fulfill the terms of the grant contract and on the Arts Council's ability to maintain the program budget at the same level. Grant amounts are dependent upon federal and state funding and may be subject to change.

Grantees are required to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the contract terms annually by submitting an end-of-year report each year. Continued eligibility will be determined when the end-of-year report is filed.

This program will reopen for applications in FY2027. Applicants who do not become grantees in this round may apply for Arts Project Grant support in FY2025 (2024). Arts Project Grants are available on an annual basis.

Criteria for Selection of Three-Year Operating Grant

The following criteria are used by reviewers to evaluate applications:

high-quality arts programming or services (30%)

- high-quality programs or services that demonstrate creativity and consistency with the applicant's mission, position in the community, and stated artistic context
- range and scope of activities that contribute to the artistic development of the general public, participating artist, and/or the art form
- outreach to and/or inclusion of Vermont artists
- fair and appropriate compensation provided to artists and staff

response to community and audience (30%)

- programming and services that are relevant and accessible to the widest range of participants
- programs and practices that identify and address barriers to participation (e.g., economic, geographic, demographic, physical, and cultural barriers)

- active efforts to engage positively underserved participants and/or communities (e.g., low-income, New American, at-risk youth, BIPOC, individuals with various disabilities, LGBTQ+, etc.)
- demonstrated commitment to accessibility and inclusion

sustainability and organizational capacity (30%)

- capacity to manage operations and resources as reflected in organizational stability, fiscal position, strong leadership, and sound practices
- active efforts to reflect your community’s diverse membership in its staff, executive officers, and board and intentional inclusion of varied viewpoints
- demonstrated ability to maintain diverse revenue sources, realistic budget projections, and an effective fundraising plan
- sound marketing plan that reflects understanding of audience

evaluation and measurable outcomes (10%)

- quality of long-range plans
- clarity of organizational goals and outcomes and a plan to effectively measure progress
- a continuous improvement orientation that includes board and staff and incorporates self-reflection and feedback to strengthen programs and operations

What We Do Not Fund

Since Arts Operating Grant funds are provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, grant funds **cannot** be used for: capital construction, the purchase of permanent equipment, the offset of previous operating deficits, fundraising events, food and beverages, lobbying expenses, travel abroad, programs in which artists are not appropriately compensated, or activities that are primarily religious.

Application and Deadline

The application deadline is **May 8, 2023, at 11:59 p.m.** Applicants will receive email notification of decision by the end of August 2023. Applications must be submitted through the Council’s [online granting system](#). If you require an alternate format or assistance to access the application, please send an [email to Meredith Bell](#).

Review Process

Eligible applications are reviewed by a panel of arts professionals. Panelists may come from outside Vermont. Submission of an application does not guarantee funding. Errors and omissions might affect a panel’s evaluation of the application, so please follow instructions and prepare the application carefully.

Get Ready to Apply

- New users need to [register in our grant portal](#). Register early in case of technical issues.
- Get a [Unique Entity ID \(UEI\)](#) from the federal government. The process can take a couple of weeks. You may apply before obtaining a UEI, but an award cannot be made until the UEI is established. [Click here for more information](#).
- Begin preparing required documents (see list below)

Required Documents

Uploads must be PDFs no larger than 5 MB.

Organizational attachments:

- brief biographies of key staff or volunteers
- organizational staff or volunteer chart
- list of current board members with terms of service
- strategic plan/current organizational planning document that covers the grant funding period

Financial attachments:

If your organization has an **annual budget of \$500,000 or more**, upload:

- board-approved financial statement or audit for most recently completed fiscal year

If your organization has an **annual budget of less than \$500,000**, upload:

- profit and loss statement for the most recent closed period
- balance sheets from beginning and end of P&L period

Programmatic attachments:

- two (2) **samples of public education and program materials from within the last year** (e.g., reviews, performance schedules, exhibition catalogues, workshop schedules, etc.)
- one (1) **publication** (e.g., poster, brochure, program, etc.) from your organization that demonstrates how you use **accessibility symbols**
- no more than three (3) URLs or PDFs of **work samples that best demonstrate the quality of the organization's artistic activity**. (This could be a sampling of the work of artists you've hired and worked with; video/audio footage from past events; images showing a gallery space or show; etc.)

Access Compliance and Nondiscrimination Policy

The Vermont Arts Council is committed to supporting entities that maintain an environment free from discrimination based on race, religion, color, creed, national origin, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic bias, disability, citizenship, veteran status, or other category protected by applicable state or federal law.

Arts Council grant recipients who receive federal or state funds must be in compliance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the ADA Amendment Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-325) which became effective on January 1, 2009, and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design along with 2010 ADA Title III regulations for nondiscrimination.

Questions?

Inquiries about the Arts Operating Grant program can be made by sending an [email to Kathy Mulvaney](#) or by calling 802.402.4409. Inquiries about using the online application system can be made by sending an [email to Meredith Bell](#) or by calling 802.402.4478.