PANEL RESULTS & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

To ensure an impartial and transparent application review process, CAC convenes an online panel of arts and cultural professionals who evaluate and score eligible applications. Project Support applications are reviewed via independent, written reviews where panelists provide scores and comments for CAC and all grant applicants.

PANEL RESULTS

Panelists score each application based on the Funding Criteria—**Public Benefit, Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy and Organizational Capacity**. Panelists use the following framework: *With an emphasis on Public Benefit, has the application demonstrated the funding criteria?* Panelists submit scores between 1 – 10 points based on CAC's funding criteria.

- **Applicants that provide strong evidence that the funding criteria are met are recommended for funding.**
- Applicants that provide weak evidence that the funding criteria are met are not recommended for funding.

For more details regarding the panel scoring process please refer to page 2 of the Panel Guide.

Grant amounts are determined by the panel score and adjusted according to the total amount of funding allocated for 2027 Project Support grants.

PANELIST COMMENTS

The panelists who reviewed your application are listed on your application feedback page. Panelist biographies are included in the Panel Guide. Panelist comments are presented in no particular order.

QUESTIONS?

Cuyahoga Arts & Culture is here to assist. Please contact:

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PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: 10K Movement

Project Title: 'Lords of the Land' Hip Hop & Street Dance Festival

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

There are many examples that the organization is responding to this section--facts are shared, language is sound, ideas are grounded in community. The evidence provided shows that the organization has and will continue to meaningfully connect with its local community, while also extending nationally (i.e. traveling participants)

Demonstrates strong public benefit through providing mentorship and workshops as part of a public festival that connects the region to a wider dance community.

This project successfully demonstrates how LoTL weaves together the strengths of diverse participants--local and international, young and old--in a way that benefits each while showcasing the talent of Cleveland youth. It makes a positive contribution while enabling participants to also contribute their best with "...excellence, athleticism, and artistry..."

The free or low cost entry, along with the range of targeted participants including youth, makes this a project with significant potential for public benefit.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The organization does a good job at showing the history of hip hop, while also presenting a need for preservation. There is evidence of multiple engagement points---workshops, battles etc-- while also providing passive (viewing) and hands on experiences. More information on how they will reach outside audiences (ex. folks not currently in the hip hop/POC community) would help show stronger evidence of inclusion. Great photographs that show impact!

Appears to build capacity of local artists while bringing in established outside artists.

The project not only teaches excellence, it also elevates the genres within this dance discipline through showcases, partnerships, and the ambassadorship of the participants.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The budget line for staff stipends is small. How is staff being compensated for their work producing the event?

Budget and description reflect strong capacity by the organization.

The budget is explicit, reasonable, and reflects the five-year's of success of 10K Movement in executing this event.

With such a wide variety of participants and partners and an accessible format for the community, I would like to see how feedback is gathered and responded to. The goals are clear and heavily supported, but I would also like to see specific measures of success mentioned from both an organizational point of view as well as participants.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Academy For Dramatic Arts

Project Title: From Seed to Spotlight: A Youth-Led Reimagining of Little Shop of Horrors

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

AFDA's summer production engages with children, their family, and audiences in the Olmsted Falls/Berea area to provide quality arts programming to their community. They make sure each student who auditions has a part and is included in the production.
They mention that they hope to provide programming that dismantles cost barriers and that all students can participate no matter their background. It was not clear based on the application in the program was free, or they had scholarship options available for those who need it. Would clarify out of pocket cost for participants.

This project greatly explains how the public will benefit through community involvement and support which in turn will positively impact the community youth. Mentioning alumni support shows how impactful this organization has been in the past and continues to be.

The application clearly defines its community as youth in grades 4–12 and their families from surrounding communities. The organization demonstrates meaningful connection through longstanding community relationships, partnerships, co-creation, inclusive engagement, outreach, and an established network. These efforts show that the project will meaningfully engage and benefit its intended community.

AFDA very clearly demonstrates public benefit with an all-inclusive approach to its connection to the community. Everyone who is interested in participating is provided with a role with the 2027 production. Financial barriers are removed to prevent obstacles for engagement. Alumni return to lend their support. A vital partnership with the LGBT Community Center of Cleveland will expand outreach and act as an educational tool. A productive way for high schoolers to spend their summer!

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

They chose Little Shop of Horrors for next summer's performance to engage with themes of identity, influence, and transformation - all that can be important for nurturing young artists. In addition, all students are included in the full theater process (stage design, costumes, etc), and the theater will partner with the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland. The student curriculum is intentionally thought out and planned.

The applicant does a great job of recognizing its community and explaining how this project will build and strengthen artistic and cultural vibrancy through every stage of the production from building sets to the final performance. The partnership with the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland as well as recruiting alumni for volunteer positions also strongly shows the project's commitment to creating an intergenerational sharing and learning experience.

The project is relevant to and shaped by the community throughout the planning, development, and production of its plays. The organization provides free arts programming and creates inclusive opportunities for actors, stage crew members, volunteers, and alumni. Everyone who auditions receives a role, while alumni return to train and support current participants. This community-centered approach encourages creativity, artistic growth, participation, and belonging.

The founder of AFDA has 35 years experience in theater arts. Pictures on the group’s website speak to the exuberant flavor of the producions. The kids appear to be having fun! Reiminagnng the show to expand upon its meaning of identify is a worthwhile endeavor wothy of support.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Would be interested in learning more about full staff capacity and volunteer engagement. For example, who are the core staff students will be working with to learn the show? Will they have rehearsals and who will be leading them? More details on the full staff would have been a nice addition to this grant.

The organization provides a clear plan for managing the project. Its budget is detailed and includes projected income from ticket sales, along with expenses for marketing, outreach, professional artists, set construction, and in-kind contributions. The founder and artistic director brings more than 35 years of experience, and the organization also involves qualified staff and returning alumni in the production. Together, these details show that the organization has the experience, staffing, and financial planning needed to carry out the project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Achievement Centers for Children

Project Title: River Rock Adult Day Program: Increased Access to Inclusive Arts and Cultural Experiences

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 8.2

2027 Grant Amount: $6,400

PUBLIC BENEFIT

While the organization provides substantial evidence regarding its direct audience, it would be helpful to include information on other audiences impacted by the work, such as family members or partners.

Organization demonstrates clear commitment to inclusivity and accessibility for community members. It is unclear to me whether there is an inherent cost to participate in the program.

The proposal makes a compelling case for the need for services that are scarce for the community ACC serves.

This program focuses on a section of the population that is often overlooked and under resourced.

The expansion to make space for adults clearly shows the organization listens to the community. There are a wide variety of opportunities for clients to creatively express themselves and there seems to be careful thought to making sure there is something for everyone.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The proposal provides evidence that the organization is generating a wide range of opportunities for its audience.

Program is relevant and responds to the needs expressed by program participants. I am also glad to see that the organization is exploring dance on-site movement classes as a partnership with Cleveland Dance Project. I hope that as that collaboration grows that their budgeted fee can also grow.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

A couple of the optional questions had the same responses. While the information is substantive, redundancy is not effective. The budget indicates specific spending (join the band & Cleveland dance). Clearer descriptions about these programs in the narrative would have made this application stronger.

Based on the information provided, the organization seems to have strong capacity and infrastructure to carry out the program.

ACC's expertise in serving their community and in the arts provide a sound foundation for success. That also includes their staff and facilities capacity including at Camp Cheerful.

The organization looks to have a strong history of support for the program and dedicated staff. There seems to just be some instability in the budget with the only other listed income coming from revenue.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: America Asian Pacific Islander Organization

Project Title: The Indigenous Voyage to Hawaii

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 6.6

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The project is very clear about the communities they would be presenting to and including, with very strong themes for their performance. Focusing on the vast history of Hawaii and the people who have made it home, they hope to also uplift the voices of AAPI individuals who now live in Ohio to tell these stories through art. Thoughtful and diverse curation.

The application could be strengthened if there were more information on the organization's importance and who it serves in both the Mission Statement and its Overview and History. The additional information at the end of the application provided great context that could have fit here: that the organization is trusted and called on for its support of and cultural knowledge of Asian and Pacific Islander communities.

The public benefit is clear in the project's intention to bring AAPI community members together, but the response falls short in explaining how it will actually connect with community members and foster belonging for all people. The narrative leans heavily on historical and cultural background rather than describing the concrete actions or strategies that demonstrate this commitment.

They identify their intended community as Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and broader Northeast Ohio audiences, and they mention social media, personal invitations, and a possible library partnership. However, the response focuses more on describing the cultures and explaining the value of hula than demonstrating an established relationship with the Cuyahoga County community.
I would want to know:
* Who within the local community helped shape this project?
* What relationships have they already established in Cuyahoga County?
* How will they reach people beyond their current members and social-media followers?
* What specific steps will make the experience welcoming and inclusive?
The library reference helps, but it needs to be clearer whether this is a confirmed partnership, a proposed venue, or simply an outreach location.
Northeast Ohio has a very small population of people of Asican and Pacific Islander descent. The organization is dedicated to not only entertaining the public with performance, but also educating the program with historical background and even tracing the genetic origins of the people of Hawaii.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

As the organization was created to not only serve the AAPI community in Northeast Ohio, but also to platform the individuals who represent it. The organization hopes to collaborate with Manivic's Hawaiian Dance Company, though it would be helpful to learn more about the full scope of the project and all artists involved as well. Overall the project covers a breadth of art forms to share the vibrant history of Hawaii, and the AAPI individuals from the region.

The project presents a meaningful cultural experience through storytelling, music, and dance, and the participating artists bring relevant experience. However, the response focuses primarily on describing the performance. More information about the planning process, artistic collaboration, and how the project will be implemented would have strengthened the application.

The organization meets the criteria for two of the four bullet points: *Incorporating a process of reflection to ensure that programming is relevant to or created with its community.
*Identifying opportunities to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging through its work, while complying with all applicable anti-discrimination law.
We don't have enough information to judge its overall capacity or whether there's a team supporting the group.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Lacking detail on the team. Would like more information on the executive team, board, and artists who would be performing. There was information about Manivic's Hawaiian Dance Company, but doesn't paint a picture of what staffing looks like for this project/organization.

The team's qualifications are clearly demonstrated, with strong credentials from Manivic's Hawaiian Dance Company and collaborating performers, including over 25 years of combined experience and status as an approved Ohio Arts Council Teaching Artist. The response could be strengthened by clarifying the specific roles and responsibilities each team member will hold in the planning and execution of the project, rather than focusing primarily on their backgrounds and credentials.

The application provides limited information about the organization's history, leadership, and project team. It would have benefited from identifying who will manage the project, the roles and experience of the board or committee members, and how responsibilities such as outreach, finances, volunteers, and event logistics will be handled. More explanation of the project expenses and how the grant funds will be used would also provide greater confidence in the organization's capacity.

The project is very small but this organization has managed to survive since 2015. It's hard to tell how strong the group's financial position is. The request is for nearly half of the project budget and the number of people to benefit is small. This would be the area where the proposal appears to need the most help in strengthening when applying to other funders that may not be as flexible as th Council.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: America SCORES Cleveland

Project Title: Cleveland SCORES' Power of Poetry

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 8.2

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The project summary is difficult to follow. It is unclear whether the programs—Power of Poetry, Scores, and Poet in Residence—are meant to be connected or are intended as separate, standalone initiatives.

The combination of poetry and soccer is unique. Program is inclusive and engages diverse students and caregivers.

SCORES does a great job of defining its community and how that reaches beyond the poet-athletes to their families, communities, supporters, and networks.

Free access and open to the public provides significant public benefit. Strategic placement in communities with historically less access adds to that benefit.

This is a well-structured, accessible program that offers a wide range of opportunities for students to grow.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The integration of sports and writing is dynamic; however, understanding how these two mediums are relevant to their community is unclear.

It is unclear how school staff and community members are recruited to serve as writing coaches. The supporting curriculum looks strong.

The combination of soccer and poetry is brilliant, the benefits mutual, and outcomes well-defined. Do you have a specific tool or practice you use to measure outcomes? I'd also be interested to know if you ever combine the soccer and poetry to engage the body in the art like dance. I am very impressed with the depth of the experience for each of the young people participating.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Good evidence of who is involved. It would have been good to provide key players and their backgrounds (such as the curriculum director).

Clear capacity based on organization's history.

There is no doubt in my mind that America SCORES has the experience, expertise, and infrastructure to successfully execute this event. You did a great job of making sure the reader understands your prowess and the depth of this program for the over 300 applicants. Since this grant is a fairly small percentage of your budget, it would be great to note any of the funding already committed and and also if there is some longevity in your partnerships. For example the XX Foundation who has been supporting the program since it was first launched (although I am not sure how many years this has been taking place).

The supporting data highlights the positive impact this program has on participants. It seems to have a large backing from those involved and the community. I would be interested in seeing measured goals from previous years.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: American Hungarian Friends of Scouting

Project Title: 71st Annual Hungarian Festival

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 8.6

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The organization and event hopes to engage the Hungarian-American community and celebrate their cultural heritage, while creating an opportunity for the broader Greater Cleveland community to learn more about Hungarian arts and culture.Through a variety of crafts, cultural experiences as well as performances from the Hungarian Scout Folk Ensemble, audiences can engage with the culture. The project is accessible and engaging, using interactive ways of connecting with art and culture like through music, food, and activities for all ages.

The applicant clearly showed public benefit by offering cultural learning opportunities alongside performances, demonstrated how outreach through multiple community groups and discounts encourages wider access, and how public feedback helped shape the festival to reflect and keep the community's interest.

This projects intention to bring together the largest population of Hungarian-Americans and welcomes the greater community to their celebration of culture is a great public benefit. Allowing for feedback on events through surveys is a commitment to providing events that support the communities values.

The application clearly defines [community] and provides specific evidence of connection through partnership, co-creation, outreach, prior relationship, or support material.This demonstrates that the project will meaningfully benefit and engage the intended community as its has for many decades.

The application addresses how the group has evolved over the years with feedback from the community it serves. The Festival encompasses multiple celebrations of artistic expression and allows the community to participate as audience members or by direct practice in art making. Expanding empathy for different ethnicities is to be supported.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Would be interested to learn more details about what specific art forms, artists, or performances structures would be used at the event. That said, the festival has a wide breadth of activities to ensure that all patrons can engage with this event.

The applicant's additional information, noting that Cuyahoga County has one of the largest Hungarian-American populations in the United States, was a strong case for support for the festival's value to its community.

The project is relevant to and shaped by community, as
shown by its dedicated and collaborative community, involvement during its planning development and execution. The plan engages diverse voices and uses arts and culture to deepen participation and belonging.

Impressive that the senior dance group got first-place honors for choreography this past May. Their achievements as described in the Organizational Overview do reflect “the organization’s longstanding commitment” to cultural preservation and community engagement. Celebrating a distinctive culture benefits everyone.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The team structure is clear, and well describes how they work with volunteers, the artists, as well as their expertise. Would be interested in learning more about festival leads, performers, or volunteer structure, but there is enough of an overview of how they hope to manage the event.

The project is relevant to and shaped by its direct community, as
shown by it’s planning team consisting of board members, scout parents, volunteers, community partners, and more.The plan engages diverse voices and uses arts and culture to deepen participation and belonging.

Founded in 1958 and the Hungarian Festival is in its 71st year. Longevity speaks well to capacity. it claims that feedback over the years has contributed to its development.
It would be helpful for the group to better understand how to build project budgets. As the totals stand now, projected income is slated to be $45,000 higher than the expenses. With such a surplus, this might lead potential funders to wonder why their support is needed. Despite that, the final score is to support funding.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: American Lebanese Community Council

Project Title: One World-One Garden

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 6.5

2027 Grant Amount: $3,600

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The ALCC will inform the public about Lebanese Culture and Heritage.

The applicant provided limited information about the target audience for their programmatic efforts. Further, the application did not provide strong evidence of community input or engagement in guiding the work of the organization. General mention was made of bringing "community" together without a strong demonstration of understanding who that community is, or how it's needs tie to the efforts of the ALCC.

I had difficulty understanding how the organization defines its community and how it engages with its defined community. To what degree are the Lebanese Cultural Gardens and Lebanon Day aimed at the greater Lebanese diaspora community, and to what degree are they aimed at the general population that visit the Gardens and Lebanon Day? I wanted to see more detail about HOW the org connects to its defined community beyond its care for the Lebanese Gardens and the logistics of planning Lebanon Day. I found the information relating to Public Benefit to be fair.

It seems that there is already a great community following and engagement with the Lebanese Cultural Gardens, and the expected turnout of people is very high and shows clear benefit to those in the area and any visitors. Hiring performers and vendors creates opportunity throughout the community and beyond.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I would like for the ALCC to include more information and pictures about One World Day to further showcase the event, such as the types of vendors - food, arts and crafts, performers, etc.

I found the responses relating to Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy to be fair. In the future, the organization could use the support material attachments to demonstrate with more detail the range of artists and cultural professionals who are engaged in designing & caring for the Lebanese Gardens and those who are engaged in Lebanon Day.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

All of the planning is centered on an artistic experience rooted in Lebanese culture, which creates celebration for the direct culture as well as education and exposure for those outside of the culture.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I found the information related to Organizational Capacity to be fair. Future applications could be strengthened by not repeating information in separate sections. This org shared similar info about the Board President in the Org Overview & History, in the Project Summary, and in the Team Description. Sharing new and different information in each section of the application allows reviewers deeper insight into how an org achieves its stated goals.

The organization seems very capable and supported to do this event and continued work.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: American Slovenian Polka Foundation

Project Title: 63rd Thanksgiving Polka Weekend and 38th Polka Music Awards

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.2

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The proposal provides evidence that the organization delivers public benefit not only to its core audience but to a broader community as well.

Clear deep ties to polka aficionados and the Slovenian community in Cuyahoga County. I appreciate that the festival is attempting to reach new audiences and would like to know more about how that is being done.

Not only does this proposal demonstrate the community cohesion this project supports, it also demonstrates that the group is welcoming and planning for the audience of the future. This includes free admission for people under 18, access for people with disabilities, people from different backgrounds and more.

There are a lot of statements of public benefit without supporting information, such as members of the festival team are networked within the active communities, the music is welcoming especially for women, children, special-needs individuals, and seniors, and workshops that are hosted as an educational component. How are members of the team involved in their community? Why is the music especially welcoming for those groups? What is the format of the workshops, and can anyone participate regardless of their knowledge of the Cleveland-Style Polka? I would like to have more background information on the general statements in the application.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The programming appears relevant to its core audience. Given efforts to reach beyond the core polka community—"small but growing numbers of LGBT and BIPOC attendees"—it would be helpful to include details on the specific outreach strategies used to engage these groups. The intergenerational programming is a strong highlight.

Celebrates a style of music that is unique to Cuyahoga County. Competitive pay for musicians.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The program offers multiple opportunities to engage with the dance and music which are part of the festival including the jam session. These activities foster skills development, the creation of an artistic community, and preservation of heritage.

It looks like many arts and cultural professionals are hired to participate. The professional practice opportunity for amateur musicians during the All-Star Jam Session is interesting, I would like to know more about the artist's experience with this program.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong evidence of organizational capacity.

The organization clearly has had success with the event in the past. However, it is surprising to see from the website that there is little to no information on the 2026 event. Increased marketing might help the event to reach new audiences and to share the history of this artform.

The CSC grant would make a significant contribution to the budget and to the project's feasibility. Given the number of years the program has existed and the ways it has adapted, I have confidence in the Museum's capacity to create a successful event.

What are the main goals for this program? How has it evolved over the years? What ways is the sense of belonging being implemented? I don't have a clear answer for these from the proposal. There is a lot of information provided but I would like to see a focus on what goals the funding would support.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

CUYAHOGA ARTS & CULTURE
Public funding. Strong nonprofits.

Organization: Arts Renaissance Tremont

Project Title: The Spark of Influence: ART's 35th Spring Concerts

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 8.8

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The program is reflective of the community they serve, and also makes sure to engage the diverse needs of the community. Through accessible musical performances in their neighborhood, the application does a fine job of outlining why and how they hope this program reflects their community.

The applicant provides a solid description of the community it serves and clearly demonstrates public benefit through its free, accessible programming. This is made stronger through its notes on the benefits of cultural engagement and intergenerational interaction, the stage intentionally reflecting the community it serves, and its partnerships with local schools.

Spark of Influence directly benefits Tremont residents and the greater Cleveland community by providing free and accessible arts and cultural programming. Its focus on creativity, civic engagement, cultural experiences, and intergenerational interaction responds to the interests of its community while supporting connection and community building. Its longstanding relationships with community partners also strengthen collaboration, outreach, and engagement with diverse populations.

That music series free is an obvious public benefit, as noone can be discouraged from attending due to cost. The public will gain from experiencing a thoughtfully assembled series of different kinds of performances in a welcoming space.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Artistic curation for the event is engaging and clear. There is a wide range of genres and styles represented through their music programming. The structure of the series is clear, and also reflects the community they will be hosting the event in. Being mindful of the wide range of populations in Tremont, the project makes sure to make the program accessible (whether it's arts education collaborators or the physical accessibility of the space).

The project is shaped by a planning committee of arts professionals, community members, partners, and volunteers committed to maintaining a meaningful arts and cultural experience in Cleveland.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Partnerships with local schools through the Arts Renaissance for Kids initiative and Tremont West Development Corporation help connect the programming to the community. The involvement of people with experience in community engagement, arts administration, and event planning also supports a relevant and engaging project.

The attachments illustrate the vibrancy of ART's work nicely. Variety is highlighted in an engaging way. The scheduling of tried and true concerts---like the holiday performance---also speaks to the organization's responsiveness to the community.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Staff and volunteer capacity is very clear and concise. Delegation of responsibilities, expectations of volunteer staff, as well as how the grant would support the project is very direct. Their team, collaborators, and artists are highlighted well. The application does a clear job of highlighting how leadership and organizational changes

This application demonstrates a strong organizational capacity through its teams experiences in winning awards, decades of service, and variety of talents to ensure there is a great public benefit.

The organization demonstrates the capacity to manage the project through an experienced planning committee, established community partnerships, volunteer support, and a budget aligned with the proposed programming. Team members bring relevant experience in community engagement, arts administration, and event planning, providing a strong foundation for successfully carrying out the project.

Survival is ART's best testimony to its capacity, after the unfortunate passing of its founder and the uncertainly that followed the pandemic. Community interest has kept the group going. That it is managed by a group of knowledgeable and dedicated volunteers is remarkable.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Association of African American Cultural Garden

Project Title: Juneteenth Celebration

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application and samples show an array of offerings that will provide meaningful public benefit.

A unique organization and space. I appreciate the explanation of the organization's community as spanning geography, identity, and affinity.

You have demonstrated that the Garden is an important and hard-won part of your community.

For the benefit of the public, there is a wide variety of programming that can cater to a diverse audience with an accessible format. The Children's Village portion is a nice addition to specifically cater to the youth. I would be interested in reading examples of some of the activities and programming.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The organization has a strong legacy and clear cultural relevance. It would be worth clarifying whether there's an ecological component as well — if so, future applications could be strengthened by explaining how the garden functions as an ecological space that supports the community.

I feel like the specifics of the music, storytelling, and art aspects of the event could be more emphasized in the event's promotion and budget as integral to the event itself. I would also like to see more information on how the arts components of the event are chosen. From the application, it looks like the event will have the same featured band in 2027 as 2026 (Kevin Conwell & the Footprint Band). This may be important for the event, but as a reviewer I would like to know if this band was brought back due to community demand, etc.

The program for the festival demonstrates a weaving of significant cultural activities (e.g. libation ceremony) with opportunities for artistic expression including the Children's Village.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Very strong team! The budget only reflected expenses. Adding income is needed for panelists to assess the budget holistically.

The budget does not indicate other sources of income outside this grant, as only the expense side was provided. I am unclear on whether the project has diverse funding sources.

The community-rooted team you describe gives the reader a real sense of the breadth and expertise of your participants and partners. I'd like to see more about other support for this project, beyond CAC. This could be accomplished by adding an income section to your budget. There you could not only show the cash contributions and any commitments already received, but also reenforce the value of the in-kind contributions of your leaders in the project.

From the application, it looks that the amount requested is a significant part of the project expenses. It would be good to know what the alternative plan is if these awards were not funded.

There is a large team with lots of experience behind this event. The goals are clear, but I would also like to learn what success means for this event, how it is measured, and what evolves from year to year.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Association of Asian Indian Women In Ohio

Project Title: Children's Day Event and Special Need Kids Event

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 5

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Children's Day Celebration hopes to platform the talents and artistic diversity of India; that said the application does not clearly state how they hope to plan for this at the event. They target community is identified, but does not dive deeper into how they hope to engage these individuals.
There are clear details on the organization itself, but not about the event, which would be helpful in understanding funding needs.

The intended public benefit and inclusive audience are clear, but the community connection and outreach evidence are broad.

Engaging children in cultural activities, especially those that instill a sense of pride in their own ancestry, has great value. The event is free to the public, which demonstrates a sense of welcome and inclusiveness.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Would like more details on what specific art forms or events will be presented at Children's Day. Though they share that children will be able to showcase their talents, it is difficult to understand how this event will serve their broader community.

The proposed celebration appears relevant and culturally engaging, with performances, art exhibitions, music, dance, and interactive activities. However, the application would have benefited from more specific information about the planned programming, participating artists or cultural partners, and how the community helped shape the project.

We're not given enough information to gain a sense of the group's artistic and cultural vibrancy. The description Children's Day could benefit from more details about the days components. Are there learning opportunities? Do the children perform? If so, do they dance, sing, play instruments? There's a reference to an art exhibit. Who participates? Is it invitational or can children volunteer to have their work put on dispaly?

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Application is very clear about the organizational structure and history. Staff and volunteer roles are well thought out, and is organized to support their community and mission. Their accounts and finances being stored with the Cleveland Foundation is an extra detail that communicates the organizations stable position.

On their application, the total budgeted project income is only $100 more than the amount requested, which doesn't equal a 1:1 match in funds. The applicant's budget document shows expenses, but doesn't include a breakdown of their total budgeted project income to show where they plan to get their required matching funds. For future applications, I would encourage them to include the full budget breakdown, making sure to include in-kind volunteer hours.

I was unable to determine if this organization has the capacity to fulfill their project, there is vague strategic planning and implementation of the event.

They identify 25 volunteers and several areas of expertise, but do not provide specific names, qualifications, assignments, or a clear delivery structure.

Impressive work in how this group serves the needs of women through services. There are 10 or 25 volunteers. Some assistance in building a budget would be helpful to them. (The numbers don't add up preperly in #12).

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Babel Box Theater

Project Title: Cinematic Live Theater Production Workshop

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.4

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The organization demonstrates strong evidence of public benefit.

I can see how this project is of benefit to the theatre, but it is unclear the benefit that is provided to the participants in this workshop outside of receiving training to further participate directly in future productions by the same theatre company. It is also unclear whether the company has recruited or identified specific participants yet for this workshop, or whether there is a demand for this workshop from the communities identified in the application.

There is a virtuous cycle of public engagement in this project. Participants/volunteers will have access to free instruction led by skilled artists from the field, a technically advanced theater setting, and a chance to connect for the long-term with the Babel Box. It would be helpful to see how this training could lead to paid opportunities at Babel Box and beyond. Forgive me if I misunderstand, but it looks like the plan is to engage the participants as volunteers after completing the program. I am not sure what "credit-bearing" means. Actors Equity credits? It is very important that we create models that value artists with fair pay.

Free access is a significant benefit, however the nature of the program narrows the amount of public able to participate.

This is a very clever approach to a modern problem of constant digital access. It's a very useful workshop that could apply to most anyone and it's incredible to offer it for free. I like the specific plans for representation on marketing materials and attention towards encouraging socializing with free food during breaks. The benefits of the program, especially using it as a workforce pipeline, is very well thought out.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The organization demonstrates a thoughtful approach to building the capacity of arts and culture professionals, with clear efforts to ensure diversity.

The technical aspects of this theatrical work will expose trainees to opportunities in an ever-expanding field.

I like seeing that guest artists are brought in to share their knowledge. There was a mention of bringing in local community members for casting roles. I see a lot of friends and family are used as well, that could be an area of growth to include more local artists that are not already familiar with the organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

A strong team!

This is a powerhouse team with loads of technical and artistic experience and a home in which to make this work happen. The program addresses accessibility on multiple levels and understands the need to create not only a work environment, but a place that nurtures individuals and their community and their talents. Have you thought of accessibility from the perspective of physical differences? If so, it would be great to include that detail.

The team seems very passionate about this project. There is a lot of good reasoning stated as to why this is such an important project to offer, and I would be interested in specific examples of what students have accomplished as a result from participating.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Balance Point Studios

Project Title: Books & Bikes

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Balance Point Studio is giving back to the community by combating the literacy crisis by giving books and literacy classes to the neighborhood. They are also engaging with health benefits through the bike giveaways. Balance Point Studio partners with local organizations and libraries.

I appreciated the specific focus of this applicant's proposal, which is well aligned with the organizational mission. Specifically targeting Black youth in a particular Cleveland neighborhood because of the historic underinvestment this geographic area has endured.

The Public benefit of this organization's project is strong. The org has built relationships with numerous orgs to promote the project. In future applications, a list of these orgs would strengthen the narrative even further. The org has a well-defined community for the project and works to spread the word about its opportunities throughout this community.

The overall planning and description of the programming is vague. I am curious about the partnerships mentioned and if they are already established or need to be built. I am also curious about how the intended audience will be reached to ensure attendance and participation. More clarity on community partnerships and engagement would be helpful.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Balance Point Studio is engaging the community with artistic programs such as creative writing, public speaking, etc.

I especially appreciated the explanation of the planning process, which included consultation with educators, cycling advocates, and youth serving organizations.

The org has done a strong job of identifying opportunities to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion through the project.

It is clear that the need is present and addresses the gaps in access both artistically and culturally.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org did a weak job of detailing the organizational capacity in the application. I was interested in more details about the project. How often do participants meet during the three-month period? For how long each day? There is also an inconsistency in how many people are served. In question 4 (total number of participants), the number 100 is listed, yet in 5 (Project Summary), the org has stated that "up to 60 youth and young adults" will be engaged. The sample attachments could be more illustrative of the project details. A pdf of letters of support from past participants would strengthen future applications. Flyers or other information that is used to recruit or explain the details of the project would be nice to see as well. Then, in Box 12, the total Project Expenses are listed as $12,000, so the org does not expect to realize enough income to cover the project costs. Further, the attached budget only shows the breakdown of expenses and shows no details about the income that will cover the expenses.

I am curious how progress will be measured and if this programming is intended to be consistent vs. a one-time event. More information about already established partnerships would help give clarity to feasibility and capacity.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Baldwin Wallace University

Project Title: BW Summer Arts Programs

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Baldwin Wallace University offers a Summer Arts Program to grades 4-12, which includes 500+ students, which is also a good marketing strategy for future prospective students.

The evidence of Public benefit is strong. The organization does an excellent job of understanding, listening to, and being inclusive of its defined community. I particularly like the sentences that address participants' accommodation needs and the invitation to share pronouns.

Clearly, research-informed programming and an established relationship with outreach programming.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This reviewer appreciated the applicant's articulation of its inclusive practices, including strong representation of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ educators and team members. Further, being open to the specific needs of campers regarding accommodation requests indicates an intentional accessibility and openness at the heart of the program.

The org has done a strong job of showing the artistic and cultural vibrancy of the project by detailing the number of university student artists who are involved along with faculty leadership.

Amazing that working artists are employed with this programming.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The project team is well constructed and poised to provide a solid educational experience rooted in scholarly experience. The previous iterations of the Summer Arts Programs, including the evaluation work taking in the input of past participants, speaks well to the feasibility of this project and eventual success.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The organization did a strong job of showing organizational capacity by listing the faculty involved in the planning and execution of the project.

This is clearly a large and all-hands-on-deck team to ensure the feasibility of programming.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Beachwood Arts Council

Project Title: Sunday Sounds

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 6

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application could be strengthened by more clearly describing its community, including what it defines as diverse, and including more information on the selection of performers, since they're included as members of the community who are being served. The application also notes that it receives requests from the audience, but could be strengthened by sharing how they're gathering and implementing that feedback to reach their goals. However, the attached article helped show the range in performances that wasn't fully demonstrated in the written application.

The application explains that Sunday Sounds is free, accessible, and intended to reach people who may not otherwise be able to participate in arts and cultural experiences. It also provides a strong outreach plan through schools, affinity groups, city communications, media, and community publications. However, the application would have benefited from more specifically identifying the populations or communities experiencing barriers to access and explaining how the series responds to their needs.

Free concerts produced throughout the year.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

In discussing the variety of musical genres produced by the group, it might be helpful to provide examples of past performances or series to bring more specific details of the group's capacity. Details on diversity would have been helpful.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

This application did not provide a planning process to ensure it's success.

Impressive history with the start of the Council dating back to 1964. Dedicated volunteers oversee all aspects of producing the series.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Bedford Historical Society

Project Title: Speaker Series

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 4.75

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Bedford Historical Society is preserving the legacy and history of the community for future generations.

Applicant provided very little information regarding the topics the speakers series would cover, how those topic areas were arrived at, or how they fit into the larger interpretive goals of the Historical Society. Additional information regarding the process of program development and community input would have been much appreciated.

The organization did a fair job showing public benefit. The word "diverse" was used twice in the application, but the org did not offer any evidence or proof of diversity in topics, speakers, or audiences. In future applications, one of the Support Materials attachments could be a list of speakers/presenters over the last several years that illustrate a diversity of gender, race, identity, cultural history, and topic, etc. The organization could also show how it listens to, engages with, and responds to its defined community as it recruits presenters for each season.

Very limited information and detail on programming. More information on who the intended speakers are, as well as what subjects they will be covering, would be helpful in understanding who is being reached and impacted by this series.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The org did a fair job of showing its artistic and cultural vibrancy. The programming is relevant to its defined community, but more detail about the speakers and topics over time would show how the org is engaging a diverse team of presenters and topics.

More information on who is being reached would be a benefit to the application and would be helpful in understanding the overall purpose of this series.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Insufficient information was provided regarding the development and implementation of the speakers series to determine organizational capacity and/or project feasibility. The application would have been stronger with additional information provided regarding target audiences, program development methodology, and evaluation measures.

The org did a weak job showing its organizational capacity. With 1,000 characters available, it did not take the opportunity to share details and qualifications of the team members who plan, run, and publicize its events.

I am curious to know how many people are on the team and what the programming and outreach plan is. It is hard to know if this is a feasible program due to the lack of overall detail.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

CUYAHOGA ARTS & CULTURE
Public funding. Strong nonprofits.

Organization: Bellaire Puritas Development Corporation

Project Title: Jefferson Rocks West Park Concert Series

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The organization shows evidence of knowing its audience well and a clear interest in broadening its reach. It would be helpful to include how the audience is involved in the organization's process—for example, do they have input on musical performance choices, or are surveys used to gather feedback?

Event is indicated as one of the organization's most well attended, and in demand from the community. I understand what the applicant is looking to convey here, but I think naming the data would better support an argument for public benefit: "people back to Lorain Avenue as patrons on the future. The final benefit of the concerts is safety. Crime is commonplace in public areas that are widely used by people. Date has continually proven that holding events in parks is an effective way to deter crime."

This project's multiple threads weave together to form a greater public good for the neighborhood and community by engaging merchants, residents, and visitors.

Free access to the public is a significant benefit and the accessible structure of the concert series provides public benefit to many.

The concerts are described well as events that benefit the community in each of the ways that the organization has highlighted as current issues. There is a lot of supporting data on the diverse community and reach of these events.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The organization demonstrates evidence of providing diverse experiences for a wide range of people, reflected in the variety of musical performances and activities offered. Additional information on marketing—specifically how information will be distributed—would have strengthened the proposal.

Appreciate the diversity of musical styles represented over the years.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The emphasis on having something for everyone with the variety of music and specific area for kids, plus the intentional marketing strategies of physical and digital materials, shows a dedication towards creating a sense of belonging.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Including income figures in the budget would make it easier for panelists to assess.

Application shows diverse funding sources, but there are expenses referred to in the application (adverstising, staff coordination) that are not listed in the budget. Listing those as in-kind would give me a better understanding of the various resources already in place to help support this event.

The event is thoughtfully planned, addressing all elements necessary to executing a safe and deeply connected event centered in music representing many peoples and backgrounds. It would be helpful to include more detail in your budget including information about other income sources.

There seems to be a complete list of roles for team members, but no individuals listed plus a mention of staff changeover. I'm curious if there's a focus on retention and what the staff history and qualifications are. I'd also be curious to see what feedback is received from attendees and how it affects the event each year.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: BigHearted Blooms

Project Title: Flower Design Workshops in Urban Neighborhoods

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

BigHeartedBlooms helps people fight against isolation and loneliness. As a result, BigHearted Blooms plans to have workshops in urban neighborhoods.

The organization did a fair job of showing Public Benefit. While the aspirational narrative mentions a commitment to diverse participation throughout different neighborhoods and the photos in the PDF attachment reflect that, a stronger application might include a complete list of locations from a recent year and whatever participant demographics could be gathered.

I appreciate the "meet them where they are" approach. There seems to be an already established relationship and partnership with the community and local community spaces. 30 workshops creates a lot of opportunity for engagement. The workshops being accessible to all ages is great.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

BigHearted Bloom wants to bring flower design to diverse groups at no cost to participants.

Really interesting organizational mission and focus. I appreciated BHB's awareness of its audience demographics and intentional geographic focus in its programmatic expansion efforts.

The organization did a fair job of showing artistic and cultural vibrancy. A more complete list of facilitators and teaching artists, in addition to those mentioned, would have been helpful to illustrate how the org is engaging a diverse team of arts and cultural professionals.

I appreciate the reference and context to already successful engagements. There is evidence of diverse cultural vibrancy, and the programming is rooted in artistry.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The applicant did a wonderful job outlining the workshops, both their design, promotion, and utilization. The proposal would have been strengthened with additional information regarding the gifting of completed bouquets to the community. What does that process look like? Are the workshop participants coached in this area or given guidance on where these artistic creations should be distributed? This seems like a crucial part of the overall program, and some additional context/background would have been appreciated.

The org did a fair job showing their capacity. The narrative mentions a staff person's responsibility for increasing diversity. What does that plan look like? Are there measurable goals and deliverables?

Clear evidence and efficiency of already functional workshops.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Brecksville Theatre

Project Title: The Brecksville Theatre's Traveling Education Series

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.6

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Great effort of bringing theatre to communities where they are!

The broad range of sites and connections makes this a strong, community-centered project.

The application describes programs at a diverse section of locations, but exact public benefit is difficult to ascertain because the exact locations, and populations with access to those locations is difficult to understand.

Outreach programs are a wonderful way to bring new experiences to the community, and I love that this will introduce theater to a young audience. The details shared about the partnership with Laura's Home and available IDEA Scholarship helped show how the community is engaged, I'd be interested in seeing more examples.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Who is responsible for managing the study guides and following up on performance outcomes? While the application includes several statements about tailoring programming or partnering with local organizations to make content inclusive, accessible, and relevant, it doesn't explain how these goals will be achieved in practice — how will they adapt the play, what materials will they provide, and how will pre-performance meetings be structured?

Love the emphasis on live literature-based musical theatre, demonstrates clear commitment to expanding reach to diverse audiences and delivering an artistically excellent program.

This project respects both the community benefit and the artistic integrity of the production increasing the multi-layer impact of the dramatic product.

The benefit of arts engagement is mentioned, yet there doesn't seem to be much of a focus on participation from the youth as much as them being an audience. I'm curious if there has been a request

for a more hands-on or interactive experience. Or what the response to any feedback from the surveys in the past has been. What ways has the program evolved or pivoted to meet the needs of the community?

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The project benefits from a strong leadership team. Ticketing is a reasonable and valid budget item, but the proposal would benefit from clarifying the rationale behind it and outlining any provisions for participants who may face financial barriers to attending.

The expertise and experience in theater and education are clearly demonstrated in this proposal. It is encouraging to see that the artistic staff are prioritized in th budget, although it would be helpful to have greater detail here.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Broadview Brecksville Heights Community Chorus

Project Title: The Inclusive Stage: Expanding Demographic Diversity in Choral Performance

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 9.2

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The project's goal is to feature, uplift, and highlight the diverse community they serve through the chorus. There is an intention in broadening the music and programming they've chosen, to be inclusive of the variety of POC and/or immigrant voices they serve. There is also an intentionality of choosing musical genres that are diverse for their repertoire. Collaborations with other organizations highlight this decision. They have taken a look at their community, and are clear about how they hope to create a cultural bridge for all the communities they represent.

The application successfully showed that their community — including historically underserved audiences — will benefit from being introduced to more culturally diverse performers. However, the "Important - A Declaration If you can keep it" attachment was really confusing, and without context, it was unclear why it was included.

The application clearly defines its current and intended community and uses regional demographic context to explain the need for the project. Through its partnership with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra and intentional recruitment of African American, Latino American, and Asian American professional musicians, the project moves beyond inviting diverse audiences to ensuring they are represented onstage. This directly addresses an identified cultural gap while supporting belonging, artistic visibility, and broader community engagement.

Thoughtful outreach to diverse musicians, recognizing that engaging them has a strong impact on the audience. Evidence of sincere efforts of outreach with recruitment cycles evidently being successful previously.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The intentionality on creating programming that is diverse and inclusive is clear. That said, would be interested to see more examples of what they hope to program to enact these goals.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Building a cultural bridge through music. New work presented for the 250th with an exemplary message about the history of enslaved persons.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Team and leaders are clearly stated, and how they hope to manage programming is deliberate.

This applicate demonstrate a strong commitment to providing their community a cultural experience and insuring the communities engagement

Very strong growth and leadership per the narrative. Evidence of stability in group's evolution, particularly with the changes in leadership over time. Well articulated narrative.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Brooklyn Heights Service Clubs

Project Title: Brooklyn Heights Art in the Park

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Application shows a strong history of programming in the target neighborhood and understanding of scaling said programming and overall reach.

It is incredible that this project has remained free & accessible for community members while also paying local artists.

This application excellently demonstrates commitment to public benefit, especially with regard for your immediate community. Free programming ensures that at least one significant barrier to entry to local youth isn't a factor in their ability to participate. Encouraging participation from members of both your community and your participants' networks of support demonstrates commitment to building and strengthening relationships and community resilience. A little bit more information about how you market and recruit participation would strengthen this section even more, even though I understand that this has been a neighborhood institution for decades that likely maintains strong word of mouth and presence of mind in the neighborhood.

The growth of what started as a volunteer/parent initiative, especially within the last decade or so, clearly indicates that a great community need being met and reciprocal support for their partners. I would have liked little more detail about the community's identity and affinity; for example, this would have been helpful in understanding how much of a barrier lift a free program is for this particular neighborhood based on its socio-economic background (not dismissing the fact that free programming is always great in general, though!)

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Application demonstrates effective process in engaging arts professionals, both staff and guest artists with a diverse range of practices, and a good mix of educational and hands-on programming.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

In future applications, I would like to hear more about how the artists recruited and selected and what input they have as far as the programming. Otherwise, I think the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of this program is strong.

Grateful to see that you're able to (and prioritize) paying guest artists!

One of the strengths of this organization cultivating and supporting their growths seems to be it's deep and diverse community and artistic partnerships.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Proposed programming feels responsive to a wide variety of input and overall org capacity / focus is well suited to execute proposed project.

The organization's team shows capacity to execute this project due to their professional and artistic backgrounds.

Information about how the organization has evolved, actively responded to community feedback, and evaluates success would strengthen this application immensely.

Good to see the Director has deep geographic and personal connection to the project. Seems like there some room for growth with the other team members as maybe not as much experience; would have liked to learn more about the board and their relationship with Village's Community Services Dept and how they are engaged to support such a small team administratively etc.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Building Bridges Murals

Project Title: Nothing Gold Can Stay

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Specific proposed concept demonstrates strong understanding of local landscape and community. Direct efforts to engage target populations are evident, as is wider impact and visibility for public.

This application clearly demonstrates a project that was developed alongside the community it is intending to serve. It is clear to me that this organization understands the region and population is hopes to serve.

Your mission clearly aligns with the tenets of this grant opportunity. The ways you connect with and support your artist participants and identify the partnerships and physical spaces for the murals demonstrate your commitment to community- and relationship-building and accessibility and inclusivity.

Project seems very intentional in working with at-risk youth with its layered approach. Appreciated that there's career support from both ends of the spectrum; for youth in job readiness programming and the artists in residence. This holistic approach is key to engaging and sustaining community relationships and benefits with arts and culture

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Strong engagement efforts proposed to identify and work with artists and community. Mission of programming is responsive to community need and centers on impactful outcomes.

I would have liked to hear more about the 3 selected mural artists, or what the process for selection was. I do appreciate the organization's commitment to fairly compensating the artists at all levels.

Again, this organization demonstrates strong intentionality in the project's theme of restorative justice which seems relevant to its community but also engages them in telling their own story. For an organization working with at-risk youth, this narrative of hope and pride seems especially important and inspiring.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The applicant provided a thorough overview of their community which was important to understanding the context; especially appreciated the statistics provided. I did wonder if there was any community input in decision to create a mural in the first place; this information would provide some helpful context in their planning approach.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Direct connections via partnership with local social service orgs - would like to possibly see more detail on establishing and building those connections. Overall strong understanding of process to successfully complete proposed projects.

It is clear that the organization has grown throughout its life and continues to seek partnerships that increase its service capacity.

You provided helpful context in your organizational overview and history -- I'd be grateful to learn more about how things have evolved and changed since 2008 (I know it hurts to say, but that was almost 20 years ago!) -- and especially what your goals are for 2027, and how you plan to evaluate success for this particular project.

There seems to be a good variety of backgrounds needed for intersectional project like this one but would like to see a little more detail regarding experience.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Building Heights

Project Title: Heights Middle School Shorts

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Building Heights includes grades 6-9 within the community. They also have students premiere their films to the general public.

The organization did a fair job showing public benefit. While it is a deeply engaging project for its participants, the total number of young people served is quite small. I had to visit the FAQs page on the org's website to learn about the costs of participation. This information could be addressed in the narrative along with information about the number of participants who qualify for scholarships each year.

Seems to be well established in the community and is answering a need that is present. I appreciate the process for students to gain skills in submitting stories. This project contains a degree of professional development starting at a young age.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Building Heights gives middle school students the chance to create films, learn about the industry, and travel to Los Angeles.

The org did a fair job showing artistic and cultural vibrancy. A more robust list of teaching artists could have been provided, with names, credentials, and appropriate experience listed. I was wondering if the teaching artists reflect the diversity of the participating students. And what are the demographics of participants over the last several years? A list of instructors is available on the website, and it would be great if it were included in the application.

Rooted in the arts and theatre.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The project plan was well articulated and straightforward; I especially appreciated the role of cameos from local elected officials. Increasing the chances of their attendance (or their staff) at the premiere events. This would be wonderful for the student filmmakers and also a great engagement strategy for local government with this project.

The org did a fair job showing organizational capacity, and I was wondering who does the long-range planning, fiscal oversight, and organizational management. Who sets goals, measures progress, and evaluates processes, and how is that accomplished?

Staffing and support seem to be strong and organized.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Canalway Partners

Project Title: Towpath Trail Lantern Parade 2027

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Canalway Partners preserving greenspace for the public of all ages to enjoy with various free events is important for the community.

This application was strong in its community partnerships with artists, volunteers, participants, and program partners. The activation of these partnerships over the past 5 years demonstrates a wonderful programmatic manifestation of Canalway Partners' mission of connecting people to place.

The organization did a strong job of illustrating the Public Benefit of its project, especially with the highlighting of the accessibility of the trail for participants and observers.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I am not quite understanding the full philosophy of the Lantern Event, but Canalway Partners conducts other events that are important to the community.

The application would have been strengthened by an acknowledgment of historic inequitable access to, and use, of outdoor spaces by certain members of the community. Mention of physical accessibility (via a paved path) was appreciated, yet reflection upon other communities that might need specific and intentional outreach and engagement to bring into the parade (and larger work of the org) would have strengthened the proposal.

The org did a strong job of showing the artistic and cultural vibrancy of its project. The Call For Artists and the By The Numbers attachments were smart choices.

I appreciate the incorporation of hiring artists as well as partnering with other organizations to implement the various creative interactions.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org did a strong job of demonstrating organizational capacity by listing the specific duties and responsibilities of each staff member listed. One suggestion for future applications, which did not affect the score, would be to decide the best place to list information and not repeat it in other sections. Panelists read everything. Decide where information is most relevant.

Seems to be very well organized and supported, especially since this is a recurring event.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland

Project Title: Fatima Family Center - Embracing the Arts for Youth

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The applicant provided good evidence of meaningful connection with its community.

Given that the Family Center already has a strong presence and has developed trust in the community, they already have an audience who will benefit from these services.

Defining affordable tuition would be helpful to understand public benefit.

This is a wide variety of creative opportunities to provide access to. These guest artists will be creating core memories for these kids and setting such a good example for what being a professional artist looks like. I really like that there are multiple chances and venues for participants to showcase what they have been learning, and for the community to see how impactful a program like this can be on the youth.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Including information on the 5-year strategic plan with input of 76 community residents, shows that the organization is responding to the needs of their community. Their cultural professionals and offerings both provided opportunities for educators and students alike.

Great answer to first criteria; "Fatima Family Center is implementing a 5-year strategic plan that invited in, and listened to, input from 76 community residents. Based on this input, the center prioritized the arts programs and community exposure for seniors, youth, and families."

Given the population you are serving, it would be helpful to add some culturally-specific organizations to the list of your partner arts organizations.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong team! More images would have been good to include.

Budget reflects investment in artistic professionals.

Catholic Charities is a large organization with a substantial infrastructure. It is exciting to see them prioritizing programming for the arts. The specificity of your budget is terrific.

This program seems to have a long history of strong support and an excellent team behind it. I would be interested in seeing how progress is measured and ways the program has evolved over the years. I wonder how many future artists come from it!

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District

Project Title: Cedar Fairmount Summer Festival

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.2

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The description of the community served is vague. What are the relevant demographics? Is the group intergenerational? Who are the artists, and who are the visitors?"

Application does not indicate that organization is strategically being inclusive, or thinking about who is in the community.

This project is a great example of integrating the arts into an initiative to strengthen the community with resources for housing and other social and economic needs.

Free public access create significant public benefit. In addition, the wide range of vendors should attract a meaningful cross-section of the community.

This clearly is a large-scale event that gives local artists a platform to present their work to the community and way for the community to engage in the arts. There is not much data on the direct impact this event has had on the community or participants over the last 21 years.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

While the application effectively outlined the event's logistics (how, who, and what), it fell short in describing community impact. Characterizing the event as a 'well received summer event' does not provide panelists with meaningful insight into what engaged the community or how.

It would be helpful to have more information about the "Art Professionals Section" of the budget in order to evaluate this question.

In question nine, you state that this is arts-driven event. However, there are no artists or arts organizations listed as part of your team. Including them in addition to the performers in your project summary would help strengthen your program and case for support.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Local arts festivals are so important to highlight arts and culture to the larger community that otherwise may not seek out those experiences. I think more detail is needed on what the process of reflection is and how the program is catered to be relevant to the community.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The budget was minimal, offering little insight into the operational details of the event.

Organization has clear diverse funding and capacity.

The program has longevity and community support. Matching funds from the SID make the budget highly feasible.

There is a general goal stated that this is a celebration of music and art, but I would love to see more specific goals and what success looks like for this event. The process of measuring progress and evaluating how to make this event more impactful seems to be missing.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Center for Employment Opportunities

Project Title: Exploring Incarceration Trauma Through Art Therapy

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 8.4

2027 Grant Amount: $4,950

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Strong evidence of public benefit, not just for participants, but for all those involved.

Clear understanding of community, the specific challenges they face, and why art programming is beneficial to the community and the wider public.

This is a beautiful program that taps into shared humanity and reenforces the value of each person participating.

This program serves a specific population who's long-term outcomes and well-being directly affect the overall health of the population. There is significant public benefit to this work.

Programs like these, especially since it was developed directly in response to participant feedback, are so important to show the community that they are cared for. I especially like the individual attention given to participants and their involvement in deciding workshop themes.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

There is evidence that the program is both relevant, engaging and restorative.

Great answer to first criteria: "The project was developed in response to participant feedback and ongoing conversations with justice-impacted individuals who identified art as an important outlet for self-expression, healing, and personal growth."

It would be helpful to better understand precisely what arts are being incorporated into therapy. Is this a writing program, visual arts, music, dance, or? The samples look like there is a focus on visual arts, but I am left wanting to know more.

Reflection and response to feedback seems embedded in the program. I would like to see more examples of how it affects the planning process.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The image samples were underwhelming and did not provide sufficient evidence of artistic vibrancy.

This program sounds like an extremely accessible, comfortable place for participants to be. It would be helpful to see supporting data and specific feedback.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cesear's Forum

Project Title: Frank D. Gilroy's The Subject was Roses

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 6.6

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

While the organization touches on how it connects with its audience and community, particularly through the production team, these claims lack sufficient substantiation. Despite the amount of text devoted to this topic, the actual mechanics of that connection remain vague.

The applicant missed an opportunity to address this criteria in their answer to question 7.

Community involvement is listed at the role of one of the team members. It would be helpful to understand what this entails. Ceaser knows their audience intellectually, I'd be interested to know about other commonalities.

The emphasis on providing work that allows participant's "art to mature" really solidifies the impact that shows like this can have on not only the audience, but also those involved. While it is necessary to have programming that introduces the community to theater on the ground floor, it is also important to have a venue for more in-depth experiences. Not having shows that are the 'norm' invites a group that may have a more niche interest but not as many opportunities to gather.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

While the organization speaks to the importance of experimental theater, the proposal offers only a vague elaboration of why it matters and how it engages audiences.

The company offers experimental work and fills a niche in the theatre scene. The critical review helps support this and the project builds the capacity of arts professionals.

This project includes and respects artists, including students, for the value they bring to the production and to developing a dialog with the audience. This is reflected in the description of the team.

I like seeing the list of previous participants and groups, there is definitely an intentional sense of belonging created. Inviting students to build up their portfolios is a wonderful capacity builder.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The staffing plan and budget both appear reasonable

600 attendees and 4,000 in ticket revenues comes out to $6-$7 a ticket. Organization has a strong team, but budget might need to be revisited.

Having a stable home is one of the biggest challenges for an organization like Cesear's Forum, and that is in place with Kennedy's Down Under.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: City Club of Cleveland

Project Title: 2027 City Club Authors in Conversation Series

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 8.4

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The organization provided good evidence of public benefit.

Organization has strong understanding of its community and creates regular opportunities to design its programming with community members. Organization also has strong and wide list of rotating partners.

City Club's many years of producing this series has been a great benefit to students and other community members.

This project offers a mix of both paid admission and free to participate. It also encourages multiple forms of access, which strengthens it's public benefit.

An opportunity for the community to have an in-person, moderated dialogue on difficult topics sounds absolutely wonderful. In the age of technology where hateful messages are purposefully presented first to boost engagement, being able to have a face-to-face, honest discussion is so refreshing. I also love the range of information-gathering from committees, local non-profits and teachers, and social media interactions.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Impressive list of partners! The list shows how the organization engages with an array of audiences.

Application outlines how the opportunity translates into benefits for authors: "Authors tell us that City Club forums are an important contributor to the national public dialogue. We cover the cost of travel and housing for writers and partner with local independent bookstores to host onsite book sales (last year we sold 1,238 books)."
Unclear to me whether authors also receive a fee for speaking, which would strengthen this criteria.

The Series provides an important focus on supporting and elevating the work of non-fiction writers. I would like to hear more about how the series touches and/or benefits writers based in the Cleveland

area. Are they included in planning? Do they get any special access to the speakers? If so, that would be great to include.

Giving a platform to non-fiction authors and intentionally inviting community members that may not seek this type of event out themselves shows a strong focus on inclusion. The additional marketing and supporting data really shows that the organization goes above and beyond to make this series as impactful as possible.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

A strong team!

I'm impressed with what the staff and committees are able to accomplish. This series has a very wide reach without diminished impact. Time is clearly taken to go through all steps of the planning process with the core values in mind.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Arts Education Consortium

Project Title: CAEC — Providing Valued Connections & Useful Service

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8.25

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

CAEC has a significant number of community partnerships. Especially valuable is their continued collaboration with CMSD.

Strengths: The community is defined broadly, with member organizations, 3,000+ education staff and teaching artists, and county leaders serving seniors and people with disabilities. The outreach list is extensive and includes organizations serving inner-city neighborhoods (Karamu House, Foluké, Julia de Burgos, Kulture Kids). Venues are public and described as accessible, and all five sessions are in Cleveland.

Survey data is especially helpful, as well as letters of support. There is a clearly demonstrated desire and capacity to serve public good and develop relationships with partners through membership in the Consortium.

I love the focus on helping others work on the work! What a way to make your impact even more expansive.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Building the capacity of arts and cultural professionals is a central focus of CAEC's programming, and their survey illustrates how member organizations value these networking opportunities. It is encouraging that CAEC has a marketing strategy designed to make its programming more inclusive. At the same time, the application could benefit from additional information about how CAEC fosters belonging during their events. It would be helpful to learn how their commitment to belonging extends beyond marketing and presentation topics.

The project directly builds capacity for arts professionals through sessions on narrative writing, funding, advocacy, K-12 integration, and collaboration. Topics are timely and relevant, and the "Smart Collaborations" panel and CMSD update fit member needs. The Program Committee draws on diverse, respected organizations.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

There is considerable attention to community building and feedback as evidenced by survey data, and well-defined profiles of partner organizations and professionals within the program.

A great show of a diverse staff and arts partners.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Budget is strong and balanced. There seems to be adequate oversight within the organization and good diversity of artistic disciplines represented on the board. I was curious to understand if there is additional staff outside of the Executive Director, and what roles the other people in the "Describe your Team" section had. I can see $1200 in the budget paid to arts and culture professionals so I was curious to know who those individuals were or what their roles were exactly.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Asian Festival Inc

Project Title: Cleveland Asian Festival

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Strong public focus and ethos on reaching wider Cleveland community. Clear connections to other area orgs and development via community feedback.

It is clear from this application that many different community organizations have a voice in the Cleveland Asian Festival, and that there is deep dedication to authentically representing the variety of cultures involved in the festival. This event seems like an excellent way to drive engagement and revenue for local businesses and nonprofits in Cleveland's AsiaTown

The significant growth of participation in this event over the years and the robust list of collaborating organizations with representatives engaged in the project demonstrate commitment to making this event accessible to many facets of northeast Ohio's Asian community. Some additional information/history regarding how the event has evolved over time beyond growth in attendance would be helpful in strengthening your case for how you've listened and responded to your community and built and strengthened relationships. For example, you say that performance aspects of the festival have been informed by survey data -- what changed? What did you learn about what your community wants and how did you adjust accordingly?

If done well, festivals are a great opportunity to reach a wide, diverse audience. The application provides high level detail on the types of communities engaged in the planning and performance to provide a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. But would like to know more about the open channels for communication, especially with such a large population being served. Surveys were mentioned but wondered if there was anything else

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Wide breadth in performing arts schedule, good detail on artist selection and org structure to manage selection process focused on diversity and recognition. More detail on local artists / rationale for different art forms and connection to culture & community within wider programming schedule would be welcome.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The mix of amateur and nationally recognized performers show a strong commitment to artistic and cultural vibrancy by this organization.

Incredibly robust performance opportunities will be featured representing a wide variety of artforms and cultures. No concerns about the ability of the team to administer the festival -- given that you're managing so many volunteers, I'd be curious to know more about the executive team and/or the structure of how so many volunteers are managed effectively.

An amazing opportunity to experience a variety of arts/culture at one location!

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Clear picture of committee makeup and representation of many cultures and art forms within the naturally wide focus of the festival. Strong understanding of funding landscape and connections to nonprofit and for-profit orgs.

The planning committee seems diverse, qualified, and well-organized.

You've shared some information about ways you've captured data in the past, but information regarding your specific goals and methodologies for measuring success for this year's festival would strengthen this application.

The section about the team lists a couple of associations/groups but is unclear if their involvement is through sponsorships or if they make up the performance and executive committees.
It is nice to see the performance committee chair has such long experience with the festival

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Clinic Foundation

Project Title: Cleveland Clinic's Performing Arts Program: Impacting the Hospital Environment

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 8.6

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Cleveland Clinic Foundation has a strong connection to its community. They appear to have the key ability to respond to the needs of those they serve, and they are committed to providing access to various members of the public. I especially enjoy learning about their focus on bringing local, specialized talent into their Arts & Medicine program.

Public benefit is clearly described. Musicians are trained to adapt their music to the audience and foster belonging. They work to enhance well-being in a stressful environment. CCF also conducts surveys to determine audience impact.

This project brings in diverse musicians spaced throughout the year at significant times.

The reach of this program is impressive, especially to those who may not otherwise have opportunities to engage with live performances. I also appreciated the intentionality around adapting performances to meet the needs and interests of those present. I was hopeful to hear a bit more about how participants might be engaged beyond experiencing the performances themselves. Are there opportunities for deeper interaction, feedback, or relationship-building that could further strengthen the program's community impact?

I can see ample evidence that the applicant is actively listening and responding to its community, with the musicians' adaptability, the intentionality behind scheduling around heritage/specific dates, and the survey result saying that the majority of respondents would love more of the program.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I do appreciate the Cleveland Clinic Foundation's mission to bring the arts to their patients, but I am not clear on their capacity to build artistic talent in their community beyond exposure. Their focus seems to be on strengthening relationships and musical performance. I didn't see much emphasis on audience engagement or developing new talent other than auditioning potential new musicians.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The Artistic Vibrancy of the program is evident through the inclusive performances and styles of music, instruments, and performers. I appreciate that they employ musicians-in-residence who are hospital-trained and local.

Paid musicians. Paid cultural workers. There is a range of musicians from diverse genres.

Love the variety of arts and culture on the docket for this! The project is designed to meet people where they are and create moments of connection and comfort during what can often be challenging circumstances.

From the supplemental materials and the narrative, I can see that the applicant engages a wide range of artists from different genres and cultural backgrounds. I can also see from the survey that a wide range of people in the community are benefiting from

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Based on this proposal, I am also not too confident in their ability to achieve a strong financial position given the increasing budget cuts they have been facing. While they are dedicated to bringing in performers who can showcase a variety of cultural events, most of their application focused on the compensation of a limited number of staff members and performers, which could impact the recruitment and retention of staff members from differing backgrounds. I also didn't see much focus on growth beyond their current goals to provide arts access to their community.

Cleveland Clinic has clearly built a strong and sustainable Arts & Medicine program. The roles and responsibilities are defined, and the organization's long history of integrating arts into healthcare gives confidence in its ability to successfully carry out the project. Thank you for demonstrating plans for evaluation and research around the program's impact. As this work continues, I would be interested in learning more about how participant feedback and outcome data are used to inform future programming and measure longer-term success.

I can see evidence that the applicant has retained a qualified staff to administer the program, while the qualifications of the musicians are not as clearly explained. While I can see that the applicant is diligent in its data collection and analysis, I can't find information about success metrics that show goal setting and measuring progress.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Comedy Festival

Project Title: The 20th Annual Cleveland Comedy Festival

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 7.5

2027 Grant Amount: $3,150

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Wide focus in program development and clear artist/performer selection process. Lacks clarity on accessibility as a ticketed, venue-specific event schedule.

It was interesting to read about the festival's journey through various venues. I like that it utilizes neighborhood space rather than only traditional theatre venues.

Trajectory of this project's growth is clearly driven and demonstrated by building and strengthening relationships with community partners and other local entities. You've implemented community input and resources throughout -- e.g., hyper-local marketing, keeping submission fees low, expanding your reach to youth education through the Class Clown Comedy Workshop, low-cost ticket options, etc.

Appreciated the application highlighting their usage of neighborhood venues and low-fee to lower economic barriers and targeted promotions and access to public transit to diversify participation. The application did an excellent job at defining their community, especially for folks who unfamiliar with organization and the region. They provided the good detail to under connectivity and inclusivity but would like to have had a little more detail about the inter-generational outreach mentioned in the previous section.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Capacity-building programming and overall program development with community focus are present. More information on how decentralized venue approach can create connections to individual communities would strengthen application.

I appreciate that this festival builds up upcoming regional talent alongside national headliners, and has a dedication to equitable pay. This application mentions underrepresented demographics, but I would have liked to hear more about the programs for these comedians.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

You've demonstrated a clear commitment to serving artists in addition to the community, and also to ensuring that comedians from different backgrounds, experiences, and specialties are incentivized meaningfully contribute to the success of the festival. While you've generally described the team involved, more detail about who specifically is involved and what their roles are would provide additional clarity.

Love that they are providing free headshots and video recordings!
It's clear given the legacy, history, and intentionality of the program that the program has rich and deep meaning from those who participate

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Clear organizational history showing adaptability to sustain and grow programming over many years. More information on current leaders / organizers and their connections to the community would be helpful.

The team is currently made up entirely of volunteers. I am curious if this is something the festival sees changing in the future, and what their plans are to set financial goals for the future.

You've implemented a robust strategic plan that outlines exactly what needs to be done by whom and when it needs to get done. You've provided an excellent historical overview -- I'd be grateful to learn more about your specific goals and measures of success for the 20th Annual Festival.

Not enough details on the team's qualification outside of being comedians or fan. Would have liked a little more from a professional/operational standpoint.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Composers Guild

Project Title: Creativity: Learning Through Experience XXXV

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 7

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The focus of this programming may be somewhat limited by artistic discipline, but clear efforts are made throughout to remove barriers and promote connectivity across communities and experience levels.

The emphasis on personal connections and strengthening networks within classical music for young musicians is excellent. I also appreciate the dedication to sharing the project digitally for people who may not be able to attend performances in person.

While I have no concerns about the artistic and experiential value for young people of having the opportunity to collaborate with professional composers, additional information would be helpful regarding the project's accessibility and inclusivity. There are certainly elements of this application that provide quality evidence of ways you've worked to make this project accessible and inclusive: e.g., youth participation in the program and attendance at the culminating concert being free, and paying students, teachers, composers, and accompanists involved. I'd appreciate more context for your claim that "the Cleveland Composers Guild has consistently reached out to faculty and students from diverse communities that are often underrepresented in the field of classical music." Earlier in the narrative, you describe of the program that "applications...are sent to the preparatory level faculty of music schools and private studios in Cuyahoga County." While the location of the concerts has been at a school that serves a diverse socioeconomic group of students, that doesn't tell me anything about from where you're recruiting and receiving applications for participation, or with whom you may be collaborating in order to strengthen community partnerships and networks to reach students who may have barriers to accessing your program. To be clear, I'm not suggesting that your efforts to make participation accessible and inviting to more of your community are invalid -- more detail would, however, significantly strengthen this core tenet of this funding opportunity.

Would have liked to see more detail on participant recruitment aspect of this project/ working with teachers. In particular, there wasn't enough detail to understand how they work with the teachers to engage diverse population(it was mentioned in passing) or how relationships are cultivated with the teachers.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This programming effectively leverages its existing organizational membership base as a tool in promoting arts and culture to youth and the general public. More information on feedback, program development, and community outreach could be helpful in better defining this approach.

Paying students for their work shows excellent commitment to artistic and cultural vibrancy.

What a wonderful opportunity for young people to gain professional training and exposure at such a young age; really appreciated that they pay the participants as well

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Long-term involvement from organizational members appears as a strength in the success of this programming. The overall budget / scope / reach all align well towards general feasibility.

It seems that the organization has carefully vetted composer members to provide the best experience for the young musicians.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Contemporary Chinese Culture Association

Project Title: Cultural Performances for the seniors and the general public

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 7.25

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Fostering connection between generations and cultures, diverse reach of program settings.

This application clearly defines the community and the outreach goals of the project. I would be interested to hear more about the senior centers and how they are selected/what those relationships are like.

While helpful context, this project summary reads more like a historical overview than a description of the current project. Specific examples of partners you expect to collaborate with for this project (with the assumption that many are senior centers, festivals, public events, and celebrations where you have performed before) would provide greater detail regarding how you've built and strengthened relationships in the community.
That said, you've provided an excellent overview of how you've evolved over time to meet a specific need grounded in strengthening relationships within your community.

Great description of their community but would have liked more detail on how they're connecting with their community, including how the students are engaged/recruited and, I am assuming, the teaching artists/volunteers

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Clear focus on cultural value via performance as means to communicate history/vibrancy. More details on specific program planning would be helpful, ie types of music/dance/etc.

While the application mentions a vibrant collection of performances and artists, it is not clear to me how performances and artists are selected for specific events.

There's a lot of good detail on type of art forms presented in this application and there seems to be a broad range with something for everyone. However, there is no detail on how, arts/culture

professionals are involved outside of the names listed in section 8. It would be nice to hear more detail "who" and "how" from a planning and engagement side in this regard.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong reach and program history, association with school clear connection to student participation.

The CCCCA volunteer leadership team seems to be very accomplished, dedicated, and experienced. With 29 years of experience in the organization and 13 specifically with community events, I am confident they will be able to continue executing this program.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

CUYAHOGA ARTS & CULTURE
Public funding. Strong nonprofits.

Organization: Cleveland Grays Armory Museum

Project Title: Unwritten History- A Grays Lecture Series

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 6.25

2027 Grant Amount: $4,215

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Cleveland Grays Armory Museum plans to reach its community through multiple channels. I would be interested in learning more about the specific partner organizations who will also promote the events. This could make the intended audience clearer.

I would like to see more detail about how the organization is working to engage students and other groups outside of its normal audience. Evaluations are mentioned; it would be nice to see a summary of past evaluations.

I'd love more information on the lecture series and why this is an important topic for your community. The project summary needs more detail on subject matter and focus on how it was determined to fit their communities needs.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate that the organization is committed to growing its audience and encouraging them to propose future program topics. Future applications could benefit from more information on the content of the lectures and how the Cleveland Grays Armory Museum approaches outreach to speakers. It is challenging to assess whether the lectures promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging without knowing more about their topics and leaders.

No topics, or speakers are listed, so relevance and quality are hard to judge.

Not much is said about how speakers are selected. Who are they or from where are they recruited? Are they experts, amateurs, or a mix?

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

In the future, it would be helpful to include the budget by itself as a separate pdf. Right now, it is easy to miss at the end of the larger attachment. Additionally, the project expenses are greater than the income which makes me wonder how the Cleveland Grays Armory Museum plans to pay for the difference. It would be helpful to provide context about how the organization intends to use the "other projects expenses" line.

Roles are clearly assigned (President, VP, Executive Director, bookkeeper). Staff have prior experience running this series with CAC funding. Goals include attendance growth and evaluation completion.

Budget looks great and the organization has a strong history and well-organized staff.

I think the planning strategy is too general right now. I'd love a more focused lens for engaging a specific subset of the community. Yes, you are for all, but who will benefit the most from your programming and how will you attract and get them in the door?

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Inner City Ballet

Project Title: Ballet as an Expressive Art

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The organization makes ballet more inviting to its community by shifting the focus away from strict adherence to classical dance technique and instead focusing on building emotional awareness and creativity. It is clear that they hope to have an impact on their students' lives far beyond one program.

The organization's history shows deep community roots.

Nice to see people of all ages included in the program. Would like to see a more substantive answer to #7 - how will you connect with your community?

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Inclusion and belonging are central to Cleveland Inner City Ballet's work. It is a bit confusing whether the Ballet as an Expressive Art program is intended only for youth dancers or includes dancers of all ages as the former is mentioned in question 5 and the latter in question 6. Additionally, it could be helpful to include more information on any reflection/evaluation processes to see how the organization intends to incorporate community feedback and grow.

The concept is clear and appealing: ballet technique as emotional expression, through classes, workshops, and showcases. Pairing technique with storytelling is relevant to youth development. The founder and history show a long commitment to dance education for underserved children, and the USA Today recognition adds credibility.

No detail is given on how the program engages with people of various backgrounds.

I love the specificity of the program. It allowed for a thoughtful explanation of the impact it would have in the community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Cleveland Inner City Ballet has a long history of investing in its community. The example of online offerings during the pandemic shows their ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges. Beyond this, the application could benefit from further information about the organization's team and qualifications. In response to the question starting with "Describe your team," it would be helpful to know exactly who is on the team and their relevant backgrounds. While the budget is balanced, the image submitted is slightly blurry. A pdf rather than a picture of the computer screen could make it easier to read.

The organization has operated for about 27 years and adapted through the pandemic.

Names of at least one team member would be helpful, or some details such as: how many volunteers? How many instructors, etc. Budget looks reasonable.

Great job at recruiting a vast and diverse team to plan, run and measure outcomes of the program.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Leadership Center

Project Title: The Power of Art: Enriching Leadership and Learning in Cleveland

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Wide array of programming, clearly developed over many years and serving a large and varied audience.

This application shows a strong public benefit, from their affinity groups for leaders from specific backgrounds, to their engagements around the city, to their core tenants of civic engagement.

You've provided a robust overview and history of how this project has grown and evolved over time, and its scope certainly aligns with the tenets of this grant program. Some additional information about specific plans for this year would be helpful in getting the full picture, but you've laid out a compelling case for connecting participants with numerous arts experiences and institutions in the region. I know you only have so many characters, but perhaps a specific example of the ways you've outlined how you recruit, connect, and partner with historically underrepresented populations would strengthen your case even further. It's clear throughout this application, though, how you demonstrate your commitment to your desired outcomes.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Valuable focus on arts and culture within larger business landscape of Cleveland. Programming is clearly designed to foster arts learning for non-arts professionals, but would be good to hear more about the artists and arts spaces themselves.

The "Arts Day" programs show a dedication to local artistic vibrancy by integrating arts and cultural institutions into leadership development.

I'm curious to know more about the differences in arts and culture experiences across the demographics you serve. How does the art day experience differ for youth vs. college students vs. adults? Have you changed what those experiences look like for those different constituencies over time? Are the expected outputs and outcomes different, or are the outcomes you've outlined the desired output regardless?

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Appreciated the the programming is co-designed with the artists and institutions. Seems like a very holistic approach, including the the very fact that Art Days even exists within a Leadership program; bravo to the team on that! For context, I would have liked some examples of type of programming to come out this program since it seems to have a lot of different components/moving parts and outcomes.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The process to build and evolve their programming via feedback and connection is evident, responsive to evolving nature of arts landscape and focus on public good.

The Cleveland Leadership Center's application demonstrates that it is a strong, capable organization with the capacity to meet its members needs AND continue to grow and change with the times.

Thank you for outlining the outcomes around which this project is structured! You've outlined some great opportunities for gathering and reviewing feedback.

Since this isn't an arts/culture mission organization, would have liked to understand who from the team or advisory committee brings the arts/culture expertise or if that is mainly gained through the co-creative community partnerships.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Neighborhood Progress

Project Title: Public Programming at Shaker Square

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

CNP's history of events and planned programming show that they are committed to the Shaker Square community. They clearly endeavor to use art as a vehicle for neighborhood development.

The 2024 visioning process convened 1,800+ residents, businesses, and leaders, and programming is explicitly tied to that plan. Little detail on how the Vision Plan changed the programming itself.

Very cool project to engage a space that needs development. Bringing two different communities together is a great case study in the power of the arts.

I think there is great benefit to the community! Great way to bring people in. I like the idea of bringing folks in and activating the square. I love that they brought up how the businesses around the square would benefit from the visitors.
I also would love more information on how you will ensure that folks from both sides are encouraged and invited to come in. I'd also love to hear more about how the communities needs are reflected in the specific programming.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Engaging "more than 1,800 resident businesses, community leaders, and neighbors to develop a shared vision for the future of the Square" is an excellent example of ensuring that programming is relevant to its community. The organization clearly prioritizes its community members as thought partners rather than solely relying on them to show up at events.

The vision plan and feedback from the public is especially encouraging. I would have liked to see the vision plan as an attachment, but it was easy to find online!

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Optional section paragraph about CNP's previous experience with grant-funded projects was very helpful in establishing organizational capacity.

No measurable goals or past attendance data beyond the 50-300 range for feature events. No evaluation methods are described. Board and staff diversity are not discussed. The match sources and in-kind split can't be verified here.

History of grant management is helpful to see. Staff profiles are appreciated.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Philharmonic Orchestra

Project Title: A Community Orchestra in Support of the Community

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 5.5

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Direct community focus via org partnership - lack of current determination of selected org and program specifics is an obvious hurdle in this application. (org appears selected, but is not named and does not appear to be a collaborator in the development of this application)

This organization shows strong public benefit through their centralized location and the accessibility of their concert. I am impressed with their connections to other local nonprofits and the way they use their platform to education and advocate for their missions. This application also shows an understanding of where their accessibility and diversity falls short, and a commitment to growing in these areas.

While I appreciate the value of this project as a community benefit, it is difficult to evaluate this application fairly due to elements of the project that remain unconfirmed or unknown. You have only described and not named the organization you intend to work with, and it's not certain that this will be the organization with which you'll collaborate. I appreciate that you've taken the time to acknowledge the reality of where planning is with this project, but rushing an application before you can clearly articulate how the funds will be utilized and stewarded is not best practice.

Love that they will have musical program that ties into the mission of the partner organization; I think it goes a long way in showing intentionality for the partnership and sends a stronger message to the audience.
I understand the exact partnership is still being planned(and appreciated the candidness in this area) but having some examples from past partnerships would be helpful in understanding what a successful partnership model looks like for this organization, particularly for section 7. It was little hard to get full understanding of what this program will look like outside of the music selection.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Clear value in accessible and community-oriented music programming, and accessible membership and community for musicians in orchestra.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

This organization clearly engages a team of highly qualified arts and cultural professionals, from their musicians, to staff members, to board of directors.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Capacity appears present, but again the lack of clarity around what organization this application will foster partnership with and what that programming will look like leads to more questions than answers. Appointment of new music director may be the explanation behind this, but would recommend submitting a more complete application in the future.

This application clearly outlines the orchestra's 90 year history and ability to weather challenges and changes.

I appreciated that this application provided detail on the administrative and operational capacity of the team.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

Project Title: Healing Art Therapy Programming for Survivors of Sexual Violence

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The frequent use of statistics throughout the application illustrates that the organization clearly understands their community and takes time to invest in knowing them on an even deeper level. It was helpful to see the statistics comparing the organization's client base to the population of Cuyahoga County.

Free services for adult and child survivors, with locations placed in Black and underserved neighborhoods. Paid survivor participation in a community needs assessment with the Center for Community Solutions shows listening and responsiveness.

This has clearly demonstrated intrinsic benefit to the community.

Thank you for being clear and kind about the overrepresentation due to demographic and gender breakdowns.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The community needs assessment clearly shows that the organization prioritizes the perspectives of the art therapy participants in shaping future care. Compensating these survivors for their participation in the feedback process shows an added layer of respect that is often forgotten. Additionally, choosing their art therapy locations "to meet survivors where they are and increase connection to communities of color" shows an intentional approach to accessibility and inclusion.

Evidence-based rationale for art therapy, and a qualified, licensed art therapist (MFA and master's in art therapy, 15 years). Staff reflect the populations served, and the application cites ongoing cultural humility training.
Weakness: the application describes few artistic activities, themes, media, or artists. There is no reflective process tied to programming and no professional development in the arts.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Community needs assessment is awesome! Major props for including actual demographic data in the application as well!

I'd love more information on what types of art therapy and creativity starters your team uses.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Only 60 participants are projected, and one art therapist is a staffing risk. 50-year track record, 70 staff, CARF accreditation, and a 9-therapist Trauma Services team.

The team looks outstanding. Kudos for looking to arts and culture as a way to inform healing and therapy.

The team is a great asset! Highly qualified.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Repertory Orchestra

Project Title: Cleveland Repertory Orchestra Season Five

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 7.5

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Strong community focus in development and promotion of programming.

This application clearly defines CRO's commitment to their community through amplifying underrepresented voices in their musicians, composers, and audiences.

While I understand some things are in flux, it's generally best practice to know where and when your programming is happening in the narrative of the application. While you've outlined your artistic planning thoroughly in your summary, this narrative would be strengthen much more by focusing on how you're building relationships and partnerships in the community -- how are you building your audience as an organization entering just its fifth season? Are there venues with which you are working in hopes of establishing partnerships that strengthen access to your programming? You've shared that you "serve an audience equally diverse." Tell me more about that, and what drives your decision-making when opportunities arise to "challenge our audience." You've provided a few helpful details in this regard, e.g., your performances are offered free of charge and you've partnered with venues across Cuyahoga County. That's great! Who are they? Beyond the music you're programming, I'd be grateful to learn more about other initiatives you're taking on or aspire to in order to build your audience as you grow and evolve.

Would have liked to learn more about the partnership and relationship building aspect in trying to reach more diverse communities.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Clear accessibility and cultural value in org mission to promote new and diverse music / performing arts.

The artistic and cultural vibrancy is clear in the organization's carefully thought-out programming and the move to give musicians an honorarium starting in 2024-25.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Appreciate the approach of this organization in making orchestral music more accessible to diverse communities through programming since there are a lot of historic barriers with this type of music. Would have liked to learn if there is a community feedback loop that helps inform

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Proposed programming feels responsive to a wide variety of input and overall org capacity / focus is well suited to execute proposed project.

The organization's team shows capacity to execute this project due to their professional and artistic backgrounds.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Shakespeare Festival

Project Title: Free Shakespeare

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 7

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

It is admirable that Cleveland Shakespeare Festival continues to produce free performances, especially when theatre tickets have become much more expensive on average. I also appreciate that the organization has a budget line dedicated to ASL interpretation. In future applications, it could be beneficial to provide additional information about the organization's marketing strategy. It is clear that Cleveland Shakespeare Festival values accessibility, and it would be helpful to provide more context on outreach to specific communities.

Several venues are outside the county. Broad reach. Free, outdoor performances at 12-15 venues across Cuyahoga suburbs and Canal Park, with volunteers inviting passersby. Highly accessible.

Audience may be niche, but nice to see an effort made to make the performances engaging and contemporary. It would be nice to see some evidence of marketing or PR that shows the organization is actively engaging the community. Simply offering free performances is not necessarily an indicator that the community is invited and welcomed.

I'd love more information on how you choose productions based on your communities needs! I love Shakespeare and would like to know which stories resonate with your audience the most.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate how Cleveland Shakespeare Festival is committed to a more expansive view of casting. The application could benefit from additional information about how the organization measures progress and incorporates audience feedback.

Team member bios are appreciated. I would like to see more detail about how talent is selected and how the artistic direction is handled, especially since the work is progressive.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

25-year history, a clear timeline, and a board with legal and theater expertise.

Capacity seems adequate and budget looks good.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland TOPS Swingband

Project Title: Big Band Music PRESENTATIONS For The gENERATIONS

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 7.25

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Strong history of wide programming reach and active schedule, with focus on bringing programming directly to core audience. Definite value in an exclusively senior band performing for an exclusively senior audience, but does limit overall public reach potential.

This organization clearly has a deep, vested interest in serving senior homes and connecting to others of their generation. It seems to me from the application that work is actively being done to connect with orgs around the Cleveland metro. I would advise to continue growing the intergenerational aspects of the work of the TOPS Swingband--whether that is inviting students to play, encouraging the senior centers to tell their residents to invite family members to the concerts, or building connections with other community organizations.

Please take a moment in the future before submitting to revise for spelling and copy editing errors. Don't let typos distract from your narrative!
You've identified a clear need amongst the seniors you serve and responded in-kind, and have found several ways to make your programming accessible and inviting to folks who may otherwise have barriers to enjoying and experiencing live music, including and especially at senior centers in geographic areas or serving low-income seniors historically excluded from arts access. I'd be eager to learn more about how your marketing team goes about searching for and identifying new performance opportunities, and I think this application would be further strengthened by more information about how you build relationships and connect with the young people who participate in intergenerational programming.

For a smaller organization, the sheer number of concerts and attendees is truly impressive. With seniors often being a "forgotten" community in many aspects, it is refreshing to see an organization by and for seniors.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Value in both org ethos of travelling programming and historical preservation of genre, as well as community value in composition of band itself via retired musicians.

This Swingband creates an impressive opportunity for professional musicians and music educators to continue engaging with their art as they age. It also helps residents of senior centers engage with cultural vibrancy.

You've outlined a clear path to creating a vibrant artistic experience grounded in making sure that your programming is directed toward folks who might not be able to access such experiences without your work. Well done!

I appreciated that this application addressed past panelist comments regarding engaging more youth and addressed the logistic hurdles of working with schools/youth. And kudos to TOPS for their work in schools through the NEA grant; it is impressive but also, unfortunately, very needed with the cuts in arts/culture education.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong history of past programming and tons of experience. More clarity on proposed performance schedule / defining audience would be valuable.

This application includes a note that TOPS is exploring work with military veteran facilities. I would love to hear more about that project, and other opportunities for expansion in the coming years.
As an additional note, simply because I wasn't sure where else to put this, I do want to point out that I noticed several typos in this application. I am not docking any points for this, but want to encourage you to be mindful of this in future applications for ease of the panelists' reading.

I'd be curious to know more about your goals and how you measure success -- do you hope to build capacity to perform more? Is there a ceiling for what's feasible in terms of performance opportunities? No concerns about the capacity of your team to effectively administer this project.

I appreciated that this application addressed the artistic and administrative expertise of the team (including the over 1,200 years of professional music experience!).

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Treatment Center

Project Title: "Rhyme & Rhythm: Let It Ride!"

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 6.75

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Clear org history of engaging diverse populations and offering accessible programming. One-time performance has limited reach, and promotional efforts to maximize reach are unclear.

This application shows a clear understanding of and collaboration with its community, for both its participants and audience. The programming has been created thoughtfully to be inclusive and relevant to the young people it aims to serve.

Your project summary provides a robust overview of how the project will run -- thank you! Some additional context would have been helpful at the beginning. Going from the organizational overview and history to the project summary, you gave me great detail about the project itself, but it wasn't clear *who* the project is for until I read the rest of the application. This isn't to say that the narrative isn't strong or compelling, but write with the expectation that the person reading is being introduced to you, your mission, and your work for the first time.

It was a little unclear in the application how the relationship is developed and built with the students who were part of the program. It it would have been helpful to have more detail on the partnership with Sparrow's Fortune.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Unique focus on music and poetry, diverse curriculum proposed. Goals of programming and development could be explained further - how are outcomes measured, etc.

This project shows high artistic vibrancy for both the young people who will be participating and the adults who will be facilitating. The team is highly qualified and the organization's previous works are impressive.

It was a little unclear in the Team section if this made up the administrative team or the programmatic team/art professionals (i.e. the artists working with the youth directly) or both.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Instructor qualifications clear, larger org personnel / structure missing. This application mentions a wide array of current and proposed programming that offers exciting possibilities, but I'm left with many questions about its development, larger org goals, measurables, and reach.

It is obvious from the application that this project is organized and well-thought-out and that team at Cleveland Treatment Centre has the capacity to deliver on its goal.

You've clearly outlined your goals and deliverables for this project. Thank you! No concerns about the capacity of your team so effectively administer this project and ensure it serves your organizational mission. I'd be curious to know more about how you evaluate success in relation to those goals -- who will be involved in determining what success looks like?

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Uncommon Sound Project

Project Title: CUSP Concert Series

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 7.5

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate how CUSP offers pay-what-you-can ticketing and is focused on connecting with the Goodrich-Kirtland Park neighborhood. Future applications could benefit from additional information on specific ways that CUSP reaches out to this community. "Outreach activities" are mentioned in the organization mission statement, and it would be great to learn more about what these entail.

Pay-what-you-can ticketing removes financial barriers

The project appears to meet a need within its own community of musicians and artists. I would like to see evidence of creative or substantive marketing and/or outreach efforts to include the neighborhood. Offering free events is not in and of itself an invitation to engage.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The project incubation program and concerts with shared bills are excellent examples of the organization's commitment to helping its community of artists develop. Additionally, it is clear that CUSP has grown significantly since its founding in 2017. It would be helpful to have more information on how the organization measures its progress and includes its community in any reflection processes.

Description of the team only names one person. Obviously there are others - who are they? How are the artists selected?

Pay-what-you can admission is a great way to still receive earned rev without being limited. I'd love to see stronger detail about neighborhood outreach and how local residents influence programming.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The scope and scale of the work are especially impressive given that there are two employees.

Eight-year track record and a qualified, long-serving managing director.

Overall capacity seems adequate. A bit more detail on the budget would be helpful - especially for large line items like the amount paid to artists - how is that calculated? Total for marketing seems low.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Winds

Project Title: Cleveland Winds 2027 Season: Concerts & Community Festival

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The framing of Cleveland Winds' community as concentric rings was helpful in understanding who they serve and how they do so.

Nice to see effort made to include women and POC composers. Program with local schools and university is also great!

Programming that is intentionally including underrepresented composers shows true cultural vibrancy. Loved that performances could be beneficial to all across generations. I'd like more details about participating festival ensembles and the final program.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Cleveland Winds goes beyond the classical canon to perform work by emerging artists, including pieces by composers of color and female composers.

Exceptional pedigree: American Prize winner, commissions, premieres, and named composers, including Black composers. Side-by-side performance with students builds artist capacity.

A little more detail on the team would be helpful - how are the musicians selected, who leads the board, etc.

Moving the festival into a neighborhood venue could broaden participation since you'd be going to where the audience is instead of expecting them to come to you. Love the lorain mentorship model!

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The organization's commitment to continued growth is evident in their multi-year capacity building work. They have a strong foundation with clear goals for the future.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

17-season record, a founder-led artistic vision, and an active capacity-building effort: bylaw revision and a new Executive Director.

Budget seems a bit unusual - what is the $14k in-kind? Amount paid to artists seems low.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Women's Orchestra

Project Title: The Cleveland Women's Orchestra's 92nd Anniversary Community Concert

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The letter of support from the Cleveland Sight Center helped emphasize how audience members benefit directly from the Cleveland Women's Orchestra's free ticket initiative. I also appreciate how the rehearsals are open to residents of the Judson Manor Retirement Home. In the future, I would like to learn more about how they define "convenient locations" and what efforts are made to engage diverse populations of musicians beyond gender and age.

Nice to see some explanation of marketing efforts covering traditional media and online advertising.

Paid young artist intership program is a great opportunity.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The Young Artists Internship Program is a great way to help the next generation of professionals build capacity, especially when paid training opportunities are rare. Future applications could benefit from additional information about how the organization receives and implements feedback from its constituents.

Distinctive mission: the country's longest-performing women's orchestra, with a paid Young Artists Internship Program that builds emerging artists' leadership.

Bios of key staff are appreciated. I am curious to understand how the music director is selected and historically how that position has been filled and what the role entails.

I'd love more details about the distribution of the free tickets and how partner feedback would inform concerts.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Cleveland Women's Orchestra has a very strong history and its mission is clear. I appreciate the descriptions of the "well-established activities for success" and identification of who is responsible for each role.

91-year track record, defined board roles and committees, and an established Severance partnership.

Amount paid to artists looks great. Capacity seems adequate and the budget is well thought-out. A process for evaluation would be nice to see.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cleveland Youth Wind Symphony

Project Title: Northeast Ohio Band Invitational XXIII: Concert & Master Class Series 2027

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 6.67

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Public benefit most evident in reaching wide range of youth musicians, single ticketed performance won't reach widest range of general public, but obvious efforts made to keep event accessible and well promoted.

You've identified some elements of this project that reflect this funding opportunity's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, e.g., keeping concert tickets under $20 and prioritizing recruitment from students and schools representative of population historically excluded from arts access. I'm curious to know more about accessibility re: participation in the program -- what is the cost associated for the student musicians, and how does your financial assistance model work? This is certainly a remarkable artistic opportunity for the students involved and I have no qualms with the value and impact of this artistic experience -- I'm just left with some logistical questions about barriers to participation, particularly when the students you hope to reach -- "the most gifted high school woodwind, brass, and percussion musicians in Northeast Ohio" -- may already be facing hurdles to participation beyond your specific program.

To better understand the relationship and connection with their community, it would be nice to learn a little about the process in selecting the schools with which CYWS partners with and how they work with the schools to select the students.
I appreciated the mention to address the gaps in diversity against the schools population.
Appreciated the mention of their new masterclass; this provided even further detail of their commitment to diversifying their reach. Additional clarification would be helpful in understanding if they're trying to reach new audiences by opening to anyone (i.e. adults) or if this is to deepen access with youth.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Strong focus on specific discipline and elevating opportunities for participants + connecting youth to wider professional art community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Good notes on strategic planning, development, and overall evolution of programming. Capacity is evident.

The team leading this program seems very robust and appreciated they invested in social media consultant when that's something many organizations don't prioritize. Would have liked to learn more about how coaches are recruited and number on staff.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Club Dominicano De Cleveland

Project Title: 2027 Dominican Cultural Festival: Celebrating Heritage, Arts, and Community

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Free public event offers clear benefit, community oriented and community-based.

This festival is connected to community by both cultural identity and geography. The location and family-friendly nature of the event allow it be accessible to many members of the public. I would love to hear more about specific artists, businesses, or community partners that have been involved in the growth of this event and organization.

You've identified an accessible space for this event that can accommodate a diverse group of people -- exactly as you've intended! You've also implemented several ways to ensure that participation in this event is inclusive of the community in several ways, both for participants and for artists and vendors, e.g. making attendance free and building relationships with local vendors and artists. Overall, knowing you're working within a character limit, some specific detail throughout would make this application even stronger. What are some of your specific outreach efforts? How do you determine which performers participate?

For me as an out of town panelist, the applicant provided very useful context in the "Optional" section as to why this particular event was significant for their community, given lack of other representation in the region.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Good variety of programming and clear cultural focus throughout. Obvious wide range of programming, focusing on / detailing a few specifics would help make application more tangible.

This application mentions music, dance, and cultural traditions, and intentionally creating spaces for cultural exchange and representation. I would love to know more about the specific musicians, dance troupes, or cultural traditions that will be highlighted at this festival. It is also not clear to me if performers are compensated for their participation or if is more of a partnership situation.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Clear understanding of events planning and overall capacity. Good connections to other orgs and overall arts/culture landscape.

This application shows a strong tradition of strategic organizational capacity. The approach seems collaborative, allowing many volunteers and partners to use their strengths to promote a culture of belonging.

You've outlined a robust team of support that makes this event happen! Some additional specific detail about the strengths and experience of some key volunteers would strengthen this even further. Additionally, I'd be eager to know more about your specific goals for the festival this year and how you evaluate success and engage with feedback. How do you know what to keep and what to change year over year? How is community feedback engaged with when planning begins for the next year's festival?

Seems like a large part of the success of this festival can be attributed to the diversity of organizations and community members involved the planning committee. It would be nice to learn a little about the types of organizations involved and if there is involvement outside of the Dominican community in the process.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Colors+ Youth Center

Project Title: The Art of Cosplay - LGBTQ+ Performing Arts

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The survey response statistics indicate how Colors+ Youth Center values intersectionality within the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, I really appreciate how they provide opportunities for families to be involved in their programming and subsequently "correct misconceptions, increase understanding, and celebrate differences." They are clearly committed to supporting their kids and teens beyond their direct involvement in programming.

This agency works with agencies in the community to serve youth that would otherwise not find a place to express themselves in a manner of their choosing.

Response to needs/desires in the community is intrinsically demonstrated. Offering this program to teens is especially important.

Love the variety of activities connecting literature to art.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

It is especially remarkable that "100% of youth report a sense of belonging when attending Colors+ programming."

Through multilevel program, they bring the glamor and joy of Cosplay and Drag to all ages - stories of diversity, inclusion, and celebration

Providing demographic data in numbers is exceptional and makes the application stronger. Providing names and bios of team members is also very helpful.

Free programming, regular youth and family surveys, representative literature and opportunities for creative identity exploration solidify the evidence a strong connection to the community served.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

In addition to the helpful information about the drag artists' qualifications, the organization could include context on how the project is supported administratively. There is a budget line for administrative personnel, and that makes me curious about how these people also provide support. Additionally, the application could benefit from further explanation of Colors+ Youth Center's "more sustainable, community-based operating model."

The leadership appears to have performing and community building experience

Budget looks great - amount paid to artists is in line with expectations and the marketing line item also looks realistic.

Clearer detail about workshop scheduling, admin responsibility, and arrangements for final performances would strengthen this section.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Community Cup Classic Foundation

Project Title: They Played Where? A History of Cleveland's Prominent Negro League Baseball Ballparks

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Community Cup Classic Foundation partnering with the local library is not only important for this event, but for future events as well that will engage the community.

This reviewer appreciated the applicant's desire to share the history of the Negro Leagues and its players. However, limited information was provided regarding audience/community input in the selection of the two new programmatic offerings (guided tour via app and in-person presentations). As the application states, this organization has been delivering online presentations for a number of years around this topic, and it would have strengthened the application to provide information, data, or narrative evidence of the ways in which its existing stakeholders were involved in this next programmatic iteration.

The organization did a strong job illustrating the Public Benefit of its project by clearly defining all the subsections of its community and by placing this project within a historical context of local history.

It is confusing to me if these are an event, digital programming, or a scholarship opportunity. It is also unclear how the targeted audience will be reached.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This project brings forth a positive image of the history of that area and reinforces self-determination for the community, especially for young people.

The org did a strong job of showing the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of its project. The attachments showing the locations to be highlighted and the possible components of the presentations were quite effective in illustrating how well thought out the project has been.

There is evidence of cultural vibrancy with the history and connection to the sport of baseball, but the artistic vibrancy is lacking detail or integration of artists/designers.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Additional information regarding the development of the self-guided ballpark tour app would have been appreciated in this proposal. This project involves the successful integration of historical research, imagery, and technology, and specific information about development milestones would have helped strengthen the case for this portion of the project.

The org did a strong job of showing the Organizational Capacity to successfully create the elements of this project. All components of the project, from content to logistics, were addressed.

There seem to still be gaps in how this will be fully executed, especially if an app needs to still be developed and created.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Community Life Collaborative

Project Title: Exploring and advocating for social and environmental change through Garden View Gallery programs

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 8.25

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Wide range of overall org programming with clear public intent. Public exhibit focus is effective programming in reaching wide audience.

It is clear that this organization understands and works with its community. The proposed programs and partnerships show an understanding of their community and a desire to be accessible to those within it.

What an exciting project! I applaud you for augmenting existing programming so that you can utilize existing resources and systems to get new programming off the ground. You've provided an excellent outline of what the programming will look like artistically -- I'm eager to learn more about how you're recruiting and promoting participation in the new programs. I totally understand the rationale of building connections carefully within existing networks -- this being the case, I think this narrative would be further strengthened by outlining your specific goals and outcomes for this project, especially as a new program. How will you measure success, collect feedback, and reflect in ways that allow you to refine the project in the future?

The number of events and partnerships is very impressive for a fairly new organization with grassroots origins! Kudos to the team addressing such diverse community needs using a model rooted in inclusivity. The definition of community seemed a little broad, which makes sense given the range and scope of the organization's mission but that makes me wonder if this a more general description versus the target community for this particular project. The next section about connecting with community seems to narrow in on youth.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Clear presentation of programs and artistic value in each. Connection between artists and community has strong potential.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The proposed partnerships show a strong sense of artistic and cultural vibrancy, both in the chosen partners and the planned events for the community.

This sounds like a very complex project but the the application did a thorough job of explaining the type of artistry/artists engaged and why which really helped to understanding the project and goals overall. The art approach seems to tie it all together

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Active event schedule and clear capacity to execute programming, detail on promotion approach helpful.

This organization shows a history of partnerships and successful events. I would like to know more about the parameters for measuring the success of this and other projects.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Connecting for Kids

Project Title: Music Therapy & More 2027

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.25

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Connecting For Kids will conduct its programs with local libraries, which will help with accessibility. The music therapy will help children as well as parents/caregivers.

This is a long-standing program that has served many residents of the area. Mention is made of participant feedback shaping the volume of programmatic offerings, but not their design. More formal evaluation support (qualitative or quantitative) would have been appreciated when tied to the music therapy approach of these sessions.

The organization did a strong job defining the Public Benefit of its project by clearly defining its community and the geographic spread of its presentations to be inclusive.

Great plan for multiple locations to create reach and accessibility. The sessions seem to be very short.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The music therapy programs will assist children with autism (diagnosed or not diagnosed) with motor skills, communication skills, etc.

This reviewer really appreciated the acknowledgment of the intersectional areas identified in the proposal between disability and socio-economic class. This gave me confidence that a mindful approach had been taken in determining the sites for programmatic expansion to truly target underserved communities in the region.

The org did a strong job illustrating the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of its project by detailing how the presentations are created and by listing the professional training and experiences of everyone involved in planning and presentation.

Incorporating music into therapy bridges many gaps, especially by making it open for families. Programming supports many demographics and lifestyles.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The organization did a strong job of showing its organizational capacity by detailing how it was able to expand the program offerings with prior funding and the plan to continue the increased number of offerings.

Evidence of successful programming for many years with staffing and organizational leadership.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad

Project Title: Cuyahoga Rail-to-Trail Arts & Culture Program: Integrating Art and Natural Science

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 7.25

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

CSVP's commitment to accessibility is clear in its free programming and collaboration with community partners. Details like coordinating bussing and using art supplies that are "inclusive of varying physical ability" show this value in action.

Coordinates directly with Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) schools, local community development corporations (CDCs), youth-serving nonprofits, and senior centers. Utilizes ADA-compliant train cars, and selects park disembarkation points featuring paved, flat, and highly accessible trail loops. Art supplies are customized to be age-appropriate and inclusive of varying physical ability.

The section on defining community is hard to follow, it appears to possibly have been copied from another document with headings or other formatting. Needs to be presented more clearly in this application.

More detail about the lesson sequence and selected instructors would be helpful.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application could benefit from more information on how the educational program content promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. It is very clear that CVSR prioritizes these values in their decisions to work with various community partners and throughout the process of providing accessible transportation, but I wonder how they manifest in the actual moving classroom activities. Additionally, it could be helpful to include any context on how the organization receives and implements feedback from its community.

Need to define who the key individuals are, not just the roles. Nice to see efforts made toward ADA compliance. Section describing the team cuts off mid-sentence.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Love that we are eliminating barriers by ensuring rail access, ada compliant cars and accessible trails! Naming participating schools and senior centers might help give us a better view of who you are serving and what parts of the community you are focusing on.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

CVSR clearly has a rich history and strong leadership. The Organization Overview and History section could benefit from more details on how the arts and culture programming specifically has evolved. While the general historical context is interesting, more information about arts and culture programming could shed light on this specific initiative's place amidst a suite of events like the North Pole Adventure.

Well staffed

Budget looks reasonable, but could use additional line item detail on how figures are calculated. Again, staff information would be helpful in assessing capacity.

I really appreciated the defined scale of this project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Darl Center for the Arts

Project Title: Art to Wear 2027

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 5

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Darl Center for the Arts' Wearable Fashion includes local artists as well as national artists to the center.

The organization does a weak job describing the public benefit primarily because it did not share a specific Project Summary. It would be helpful to know how participants are chosen, when and how the wearable art is created, and how many artists participate. When defining its community, the organization discusses solely the neighborhood in which the Center is located, with no mention of the community specific to the project.

Great strategy of outreach to follow current momentum. It seems that it was well supported last year, with room for growth.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Darl Center for the Arts continues to bring arts to the community.

The organization does a weak job illustrating the artistic and cultural vibrancy of its project because no details were shared about the participating artists and no recent history of previous performances was shared.

Data of over 40 artists and volunteers executing the programming is great artistic vibrancy.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

This reviewer had difficulty understanding the type or nature of the event proposed for funding. My understanding is that it might be a dance, musical, or visual arts offering of some sort. The challenge of understanding what the programmatic offering would be makes it almost impossible to determine whether the proposal meets the grant criteria or whether the project can be implemented successfully. Future applications would be strengthened by a more basic description of the project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The org did a weak job describing its organizational capacity in a convincing way. Section 2 (Organization Overview and History) was left blank with the note "DO THIS SECTION."

I appreciate the sharing of lessons learned and how those lessons are being implemented into strategy. The application lacks information on organizational size to understand capacity, but having supporting information that last year was successful is helpful for context.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Deutscher Musik Verein

Project Title: Jagerfest 2027

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 6.5

2027 Grant Amount: $2,070

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Variety in event schedule offers wide reach, clear focus on main event and attracting wide public audience.

This organization is clearly closely connected to its cultural community and expresses a collaborative nature within among other German cultural organizations. I would have liked to hear more about how they plan to engage the geographic community they serve who may not otherwise be aware of Blaskapelle music.

I would encourage you to consider means of connecting with and building your audience outside of social media content. While your presence on social media is certainly relevant in helping build public awareness of your mission and your programming, there are probably more efficient and effective ways of building your audience that puts less of the onus on your audience to find and discover what you do. You mentioned that you've collaborated with other German cultural groups -- that's an awesome start! Perhaps there are opportunities to collaborate with other cultural groups that share your geographic footprint, or who put on similar events throughout the year. Building relationships in your community is, in practice, closer to community organizing than it is to public relations.

I appreciated the application providing the context of the history of German culture in the region and how their music is connecting past with present, regardless of heritage.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Clear value in genre preservation and specific cultural focus. More detail on development of programming and shaping focus would be welcome.

This all-volunteer group shows artistic vibrancy through their commitment to their craft. The application mentions that the performers represent multiple generations. I would like to hear more about how the musicians are recruited to the ensemble.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

I really appreciated that this organization mentioned their self assessment work and the challenges and opportunities to reaching wider audience. In the same way the application mentioned strengthen relationships with other German culture groups, it would be nice to hear about other possible relationships and partnerships for the organization to reach their goal of expanding their community and audience.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Plenty of experience and focus, feedback systems present as well. Good understanding of event planning needs and overall marketing approach.

This application shows a long history of the organization and a group of capable volunteers who can execute the festival as outlined.

The application provided good insight on the administrative and programmatic elements of planning the Jagerfest, along with the team's background and experience.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: DOC Studios

Project Title: Bridging Generations Through Story

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 7.5

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

DOC Studios caters to the inner-city youth of 18yrs old and up, and the events will be held within 3 Senior Centers.

Truly appreciated the potential public benefit of this project. Taking live theater to local seniors in an intentional move to combat isolation and foster belonging through interactive shows. Promises a culturally significant arts experience for the youth actors to develop a piece with this particular senior audience in mind and allows for real ownership of the power the arts have in building relationships in the community.

The organization does a fair job of illustrating the Public Benefit of the project. The partner orgs/host locations that have already made commitments show strength in covering diverse areas of the community, but more information about the community that is being included in the planning would have strengthened this application. The application talks about the project being intergenerational. More detail on specifically how the younger participants would gain from interaction with older audience members would have been helpful. Show more than just younger artists performing for an older audience.

"Intergenerational theatre programming" opens up great community engagement. More information on what senior citizen centers will be reached, or if there are already established partnerships, would make the overall benefit and outreach clearer.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

DOC Studios will engage in live and interactive theater with the audience.

The organization has a strong team of experienced professionals in place to create what seems to be a new project. No history of previous programming of this kind is mentioned.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Artistic and creative-focused, but lacking in knowing if the intended audience has a need or desire for the theatre element. Unclear on cultural vibrancy.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

This reviewer appreciated the clear project plan and feasible goals of the project. The personnel involved have the requisite experience to provide meaningfully engaging arts instruction to youth participants and demonstrate an awareness of both audiences/participants historically marginalized from theater/film. This project works to repair this past harm.

The organization does a weak job of showing the level of its organizational capacity beyond the qualifications of its artistic team. I'm wondering if there is a board. No website with basic information was referenced in the application. Who handles general management and fiscal oversight? Also, in the project budget, the $2,500 of In-Kind Revenue from the two lead artists is not reflected on the Expense side.

Clearly a very seasoned and experienced staff.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Downtown Cleveland Alliance

Project Title: Sketch the Square

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $3,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Providing free art supplies and employing a veteran teaching artist to lead the program makes the event accessible and appealing to people from many walks of life, regardless of their art experience. I also appreciate the focus on a "just show up" approach that prevents participants from having to plan in advance or set aside money to participate in the event. Moving forward, it would be great to have more information on the organization's "business, government, and philanthropic partners."

Sketch the Square, a free, bi-weekly public arts program. Offers the opportunity for the public to participate in an arts program.

Section on defining community mentions partners - who are they? There could be more concrete details about how the community is defined and engaged. The physical availability of the space is a start, but how is the public engaged otherwise, through marketing or other platforms?

I think the personalized guidance from a local artist is super helpful when offering sketching through watercolor to people who are just walking by and deciding to participate. The drop in format does make it approachable but it does give me pause.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Future applications could benefit from additional context on how the Downtown Cleveland Alliance receives and implements feedback from its community. While they mention that "planning for 2027 is driven by operational insights from our ongoing 2026 cycle," I am interested in learning what this means beyond the choice of location.

One artist involved as the leader of the sessions.

Identities of staff are not described or discussed - some explanation of how the staff roles are filled or what qualifications the team has would be helpful.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

I like that there is free instruction and supplies but worry about the no registration requirement and what that will do to participation numbers. I'd like a clearer process for encouraging participants to join and gathering participant feedback to ensure the communities role is shaping the program.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The description of how the Downtown Cleveland Alliance chose to host Sketch the Square in Public Square, especially the consideration given to inclement weather plans and proximity to public transportation, shows excellent strategic planning. Additionally, the staff's "combined 15 years of elite operational, guest relations, and high-volume logistics experience" proves that they can create the operational systems necessary to elevate the guest experience.

Budget looks reasonable. I would like to see how the admin and amounts paid to artists are broken down.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: East Cleveland Farmers' Market Preservation Society

Project Title: Food Forest Development and Community Use

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 2.75

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Public benefit possible in overall context, program specifics unclear.

I am not sure how this organization engages with its community, or how it truly even defines its community beyond residents of the county who have an interest in learning about land and food. The application mentions inviting community members by posting flyers in public locations, but does not detail specific examples of these locations, or reasons for connecting with those specific partners. It is also unclear to me how this organization builds relationships with and connects to its community.

I don't disagree that this project aligns with the tenets of this funding opportunity, but not nearly enough information has been provided in order to adequately communicate the need, outputs, and intended outcomes of this product. Any grant application should be written with the assumption that the reviewer is engaging with you and your work for the first time with no prior knowledge.

It would helpful to have a little more information or examples in the project summary to fully grasp the scope of the project.
This seems like an opportunity for partnership as well and would be nice to hear how organization may use to advance their mission/this project to better understand the community benefit

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Context missing to understanding cultural landscape and program intents / outcomes.

This application lacks detail on the cultural vibrancy of the project. I would have liked to see specifics about the practitioners' experience, what they hope to bring to Cuyahoga County's cultural scene, and how they promote DEIB through their work.

Because this sounds like a tight knit community, wondering if there's any feedback loops with the community participants as a way of connecting to their needs. Specifically wondering if the focus of the

project is based on any community input or a more broad offering. Overall, there is not a lot of information to help understand the cultural and artistic vibrancy of the project.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

This application is missing a lot of info in order to understanding the proposed programming and goals. Capacity could be present with a better understanding of the proposed activities, but currently appears not present.

While this application mentions the two lead members of their team, it is lacking detail about their qualifications. There is also no information in the application about how goals will be set or measured.

It was unclear from the narrative if this is one day project with planning time built(given the start/end dates) or if this was a series of workshops.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Edward E. Parker Museum of Art

Project Title: A Family Affair Intergenerational Art Program

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 6.25

2027 Grant Amount: $3,150

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Specific programming is somewhat unclear, but potential benefit of intergenerational focus is exciting.

This application shows a strong connection to their community partners and ongoing feedback with program participants. The organization is committed to an inclusive, supportive environment.

This narrative provides some good baseline information -- across the board, more detail would strengthen this application immensely. What are the logistics of the intergenerational art program? If project choices and themes are selected from questionnaire feedback, how are you incentivizing participation? How often will the group meet? Other than posting flyers, are there initiatives you undertake to increase community awareness of your program offerings? You're creating a great artistic opportunity for members of your community here -- just tell us more about how you're going to make it happen!

The application mentioned that they have participants from other neighborhoods and recurring participants; it sounds like they have been doing some great grassroots outreach!
Would have liked to learn more about the intergenerational aspect; I could not tell if this was strictly due to the age range of participants or if these intergenerational participants were collaborating on the art work together.
Love that there is opportunity to sell their work, especially for vulnerable populations mentioned in the application. That sounds very rewarding.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Missing info in detailing specific program activities, planning, outcomes, measurables, etc. makes gauging vibrancy difficult, but the general context of the museum setting seems oriented towards traditional fine art.

The opportunity for students to sell their artwork is an amazing way to promote artistic and cultural vibrancy!

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

If I'm understanding the application correctly, it sounds like feedback forms inform the project, which I love! However, it would be nice to learn a little more about that process and how it works, for examples what types of "creative projects" the organization is getting the feedback on. Given the organizations mentioned, it would be helpful context to know if the creative projects also reflect African American/African diaspora art forms and styles.
Would also be helpful to know if the instructors are ongoing volunteers or if their engagement is project based.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Experience present, but lack of detail throughout application implies lack of capacity.

This team seems highly capable, with organizers who have a long history in the art and/or administration.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Empowering Epilepsy

Project Title: Empowering Through the Arts

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8.25

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Empowering Epilepsy is dedicated to creating an inclusive community for its participants and helping them connect through art. Future applications could be strengthened by including information about the organization's outreach strategy.

Art Therapy helps the individual develop a supportive network to socialize, connect and engage

Community is well-defined by nature of the organization's mission. I am curious to understand how clients and/or participants are invited to the program, if it's through referrals, word of mouth, traditional marketing, etc. I would also like to know if there is a process for feedback from participants.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Empowering Epilepsy promotes a strong sense of belonging through its work, especially as they "tailor tasks to each individual" and provide "a supportive network." I would be interested in learning more about how the organization gathers and incorporates participant feedback.

Classes follow a reflective structure: a goal, creation, and sharing. Tasks are tailored to each participant's functioning.

Descriptions of team members is appreciated. I would like to understand if there are efforts made to engage individuals in various neighborhoods, economic backgrounds, etc.

This project really connects creative expression with the needs of people living with epilepsy. Adapted tasks and peer sharing help create a sense of belonging for these folks and reduces isolation. I'd like more information about recruitment and transportation.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Empowering Epilepsy's staff members possess the professional and lived experiences necessary to lead the organization.
It is challenging to evaluate the organization's financial capacity because the budget only includes expenses, not income. This makes me wonder how Empowering Epilepsy will fund the project beyond a CAC grant.

Founder-led since 2014, with its own headquarters since 2022 and eight monthly support groups. Qualified team, with a past CAC grant.

Budget looks good and there seems to be adequate oversight. $2,000 in the budget for social media and website but no mention of how those tools are leveraged for the program.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Environmental Health Watch

Project Title: Fresh Fest Cleveland 2027

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Environmental Health Watch is clearly committed to the Central Kinsman/Lower Kinsman neighborhood, and their planning strategies ensure that "the festival is not only for the community but also shaped by the community." There are a variety of ways for community members to participate, and the organization frames Fresh Fest as only one part of many ongoing initiatives to strengthen the community.

Excellent inclusion of community members as artists, vendors, volunteers, and partners, and the application describes shared planning and a shift in the neighborhood's narrative.

Benefit to the community is clearly demonstrated through the mission of the organization and the project itself. Impressive audience numbers is also a strong indicator that the public wants this program. I would like to know how the program is marketed, there isn't much detail given.

This is such a unique value proposition with long term benefits. I love that you include the community in the planning leading to much needed outcomes.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

While this application is very thorough, it could be made even stronger by including more specific examples of the arts and culture activities. For instance, they mention that these aspects of the event "celebrate the diversity of Cleveland's communities," and it would be great to learn more about how the individual activities do so in a way that complements Environmental Health Watch's overall approach to community engagement.

Good range of artistic disciplines involved - I appreciate seeing some of the team named and their qualifications described.

When describing who is helping plan the project, I'd love more detail on the staff and community members history and special skills.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Community Development Strategy document is helpful in showcasing the impact of Environmental Health Watch's work.

Highly organized team to execute program.

Budget detail is lacking here. $150k paid to arts and culture professionals is amazing - but how is that broken down? Who is getting paid what? It would be helpful to see what the request from CAC is actually being used for directly, other than simply making up part of a very large overall budget.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Esperanza

Project Title: STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) Summer Camp

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Specific educational targets have large public benefit, very accessible approach overall. Smaller target audience, but high value outcomes help lift overall impact.

This application clearly demonstrates a connection to, respect for, and partnership with the community to serves. They demonstrate a comprehensive and integrative relationship with other service providers in their community, and are culturally responsive to the Hispanic/Latino population they serve.

This project strongly aligns with the core tenets of this funding opportunity, emphasizing inclusivity and accessibility through community partnerships and networks to deliver your mission effectively. Project activities and desired outcomes are clearly articulated! You've built a trusted community institution that employs lots of strategies for making participants feel welcome, e.g., bilingual staff members, shared identity, and more. One consideration that would make this application even stronger:
1) since this funding opportunity is arts and culture focused, more detailed information about the arts elements of the camp would provide helpful context with regard to assessing the artistic and cultural vibrancy of the program. In that same vein, you've provided a great overview of the team that will make this project happen -- what can you share about the arts and culture expertise on your team?

The application provided the necessary detail to understand the partnerships, structure and execution of the program. It sounds like there is a strong feedback loop to reflect the community needs in real time.
They provided great context to understand their community and their community's needs, and why a project like this is so impactful.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Clear definition of arts programming within larger program/curriculum.

The collaboration with mentors and facilitators shows a commitment to artistic and cultural vibrancy, and the exposure of various STEAM careers ensures the vibrancy is carried on to the next generation.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

There is a lot of good explanation of the project overall but I would have liked more detail or examples of how arts/culture is being integrated.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Very evident understanding of program operations and overall capacity.

This application clearly shows a highly qualified team and a system of program growth and development year over year.

Excellent overview of criteria for setting goals and evaluating success.

It is clear this organization understands the importance of evaluations and other data collection; I appreciated them going into detail on how they accomplish this. They did an excellent job in describing their team and operations.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Euclid Symphony Orchestra

Project Title: Spiritual Echoes Concert: Refining the Concept

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 7.5

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Overall focus on effective arts programming for public. Great detail on development of programming to better serve audience.

This application shows an understanding of the organization's community, as well as an awareness of demographic gaps. The application notes that the Spiritual Echoes concert attracts a younger and more racially diverse audience. However, I would love to know more about how these groups have heard about the programming (marketing efforts, community partnerships, etc.), as well as any efforts to retain and include them in future programming beyond the gospel concerts.

You've provided a great overview of how this project has evolved over time, illustrating how you plan to refine the project in its next iteration based on what you've learned from previous experiences. Utilizing existing, trusted community networks to build new audiences is an excellent way to prioritize inclusivity and accessibility as this concert series continues to grow and evolve, and data you've captured backs that up. Some considerations:
- What specific outcomes are you hoping for with this "refocusing"? How will you measure and evaluate success, and define what success looks like when evaluating a program that's entering its 4th season?
- Beyond church connections, are there other institutions/partners you can begin or continue to build relationships with to help further grow your audience?

I appreciated the application mentioning how they would like to diversify their audience in both age and ethnic background, followed by exact steps on how they plan expand their community. I appreciate that this entire project is an attempt to learn from the past and grow for future in how classical music is presented and engaging its audience. Would like to learn more about any partnerships they have in this area as well that may advance this work.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Clear focus on specific styles within larger traditional ouvre, again good evidence of program evolution and clear steps to improve vibrancy.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ESO shows strong artistic and cultural vibrancy with their paid staff. I would love to hear more about the background and professional capacity of the volunteer musicians who make this program possible.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Plenty of overall experience, newer program but already working well with feedback and capacity.

The history of the Spiritual Echoes program and continued refinement demonstrated in this application show a commitment to setting goals, measuring progress, and evolving as an organization. I am excited to see how this program continues to grow!

I really appreciated seeing the implementation steps in this narrative along with examples of what worked from previous years because it provided helpful context to understanding the project and its goals.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Far West Center

Project Title: Supporting Recovery from Mental lllness Through Creative Arts

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Clear audience and outcomes built into programming with accessible focus.

This application outlines a clear need in its community, and the program itself is accessible and inviting for those who will benefit the most.

This project utilizes assets in its community to make its offerings inviting and accessible within the framework of an organization that is already tailored toward engaging underserved populations. Moreover, many of these institutions are also public-facing and convenient for the public, e.g. the public library and government buildings. No cost barrier to both participants and the general public helps ensure that you can meaningfully connect with your community in numerous ways through this project. The impetus of the project was informed by and designed by client feedback on the type of artistic experience that would be most meaningful. You've identified clear goals, outcomes, and measures of success. For your consideration:
- Beyond participant networks, how are you building relationships with/marketing to the general public to drive attendance at exhibitions?

I appreciated the application clearly defined the goals of the project. It was really helpful to understand the additional context of how arts is integrated throughout organization to advance these goals. It is nice to see that this is two-tiered approach, first with the clients and then with a public exhibition. Would like to know what partnerships are in place to reach the audiences for the exhibition part of the project

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Definite value demonstrated via determining audience, multiple programming locations, and social value as a consistent undercurrent.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

This application shows a commitment through artistic and cultural vibrancy, using art as a tool for recovery and to build self-esteem and communication skills. The inclusion of the professional water-color artist who donates their time also increases this vibrancy.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Overall capacity appears present, planning around outcomes and programming needs is clear.

The years of experience shown by the staff team demonstrate organizational capacity.

The team listed sounds highly qualified to be part of this program; it's great to see someone on the team that is able to share lived experience! I did wonder if the team listed are the only ones delivering the Art Heals programming or if local artists or arts organizations are partnered with as well.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Fashion Talks Foundation

Project Title: Fashion Talks Foundation: The Runway - A Premier Fashion & Cultural Experience

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8.25

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I especially appreciate how The Runway "remains a professional, paid opportunity for diverse creatives rather than an unpaid exposure-only experience that perpetuates inequity in the creative economy." Additionally, I value Fashion Talks Foundation's focus on "active outreach" during its application process and its decision to collaborate with both emerging and established professionals.

Centers women of color, immigrants, and emerging creatives. Are free or discounted tickets offered?

Audience engagement numbers are a strong indicator of need. However, I would like to understand who the audience is better and how they are recruited, engaged through marketing or other methods.

Love that you are including student designers in a professional setting. Fair artist compensation helps create a thriving local creative economy.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The partnership with Kent State University is an excellent example of building the capacity of future arts professionals.

Excellent use of paid creatives as a core budget priority, building professional capacity.

Lots of discussion about who the community is, but very little about how they find out about the program or initiate engagement.

I'd like more details about affordability and how you take the community feedback and apply it to shaping the event.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Economic Impact Report is very helpful in showcasing Fashion Talks Foundation's impact and growth over time. In addition to describing the backgrounds of the founder and board chair, future applications could benefit from more context on how the event is supported administratively. For instance, it would be great to know who evaluates designer applications and who handles marketing, venue relations, etc.

Economic Impact brochure - excellent piece to highlight this work

Staff and board profiles are much appreciated. $8,000 in the budget for marketing but no discussion in the narratives about what that is. Great to see $15k paid to artists - but some more detail there would be helpful - who are they, how are they recruited, how are rates of pay determined, etc.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Federation of India Community Association

Project Title: Deepavali - Festival of Lights 2027

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 6.25

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Appears to be public event, but audience and main event details are not articulated clearly.

This application shows a strong benefit to its community and the greater region. This is demonstrated through partnerships in planning the event, and support for other non-profits that align with their mission.

You've provided great detail on administration of the event itself, but jumped in without explaining anywhere in the narrative what the festival is and what its intended outcomes are. Always assume that your reviewer has no previous knowledge of who you are, what you do, or why you do it! This application would be immensely strengthened by additional information about desired goals and outcomes and how you intend to evaluate success.
I would also encourage you to consider means of building relationships and growing audience beyond your social media presence. Social media can be a great tool, but additionally, intentionally strengthening ties with other institutions, community leaders, families, etc. may prove more effective means of connecting with your community through this project.
You've provided great historical context regarding your community, but what does it look like now, in 2026/2027?

The application provided great detail to understand the history of Indian American community in greater Cleveland which helps to explain how deeply connected and integral the organization is to the community as a result. Though it's clear the organization is also part of this Indian American community, I wondered if there is any wider input in the planning of the festival from broader Indian community, outside of the organization, particularly for selecting the awardee

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Cultural value very present in overall org mission, but also lacking details regarding intent and goals of the event and programming. Application needs to demonstrate value more clearly.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

This application shows strong artistic and cultural vibrancy, and a dedication to carrying on the event for future generations.

It would be nice to have more detail on how the organization is engaging artists, especially local artists, in the planning and programming for the festival. There is not much detail on specifics here besides the local dance school being engaged and celebrities/DJ.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Capacity appears evident, plenty of experience and clear history with this event. Overall, the application seems to assume that the reader has a lot of the baseline event info already, and needs goals/outcomes/measurables.

The long history of the event and dedication of the board and committee confirm the organizational capacity for this event.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Food Strong

Project Title: Green Gateway Mural Project

Panelists: Nur Abdalla, Lisa Chang, Ben Cook, Claudia Gage, Joe Prickett

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Strong evidence of prior community-oriented programming and overall org focus. Main project as artistic visibility boost to existing org work does have public benefit.

This application shows a strong public benefit and an ongoing dialogue with the community it serves.

You've identified an opportunity to transform an already existing element of your community into an asset with specific outcomes outlined that will serve your mission. You've provided several opportunities for community input and expertise throughout the process of project planning and administration. I'd be curious to learn more about the logistics of how you'll gather community input and enlist volunteers.

I really appreciated this application's focus on community involvement in the planning phase of the project. Similarly, I wondered if there had been any community input beforehand that informed the decision of creating a mural in the first place. This information would be helpful in the future for a little additional context.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Vibracy improvement to site is clear, overall community vibrancy is more indirect via placemaking but strong nonetheless.

This project shows strong artistic and cultural vibrancy, engaging with professional artists and bring public art to their community.

Great to see the organization is including community input in the planning process! The connection with community section provided good insight on how deeply invested the organization is in gathering community input *before* the start of the project, which I think speaks volumes of their partnership and respect for their community. What was unclear is if community volunteers will help with the actual mural painting or if the 75 participants listed are from the planning phase

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Org capacity appears very present, definite reliance on artist selection process for successful outcome.

Yes, this application shows a team that has the capacity to create this project and sustain their work.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Fostering Hope

Project Title: Creative Collaborative Art Curriculum

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 9.25

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Grounding in the CASEL Social-Emotional Learning model and trauma-informed care illustrate how Fostering Hope understands and respects its community on a deep level. It was helpful to learn how the program itself focuses on "choice and self-paced engagement" to make its content more accessible.

Connecting youth to their potential is THE public benefit

Nature of the program is responding to public need by definition, which is a good thing. Audience numbers seem very high for this type of program - 25,000 - how was this calculated or measured? How are the participants in the program recruited? The situation of the participants is discussed but not how they are initially engaged.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The public display of artwork allows the young artists to feel celebrated for their work, and I appreciate that Fostering Hope also understands that some people may not want to part ways with their creations. In future applications, it could be helpful to include additional information on the feedback collected from youth participants and explain how it is incorporated in future programming.

The applicant mentioned feedback is gathered from youth. How are the evaluations used? Some of the evaluations could have been provided as attachments to this grant. Overall the idea and implementation of the program is very strong.

Bringing programming into residential facilities directly addresses those issues that come from restricted mobility. Bravo! I appreciated the details of the youth helping shape project and activities to their needs. Love the feedback and evaluation details.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The budget detail is outstanding. Staff bios are very helpful to see. The organization clearly has adequate capacity to see the program through and has a good track record of success.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: From Me 2 U, Inc

Project Title: Through Their Eyes: NeuroStrong Stories of Strength, Identity, and Belonging

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 6.2

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate seeing the organization increasingly engage and collaborate with the neurodivergent community, particularly because this work has the potential to meaningfully facilitate wellbeing through the arts. At the same time, I would have appreciated more context around why this programming was developed for this particular community. For example, did these opportunities emerge from requests or identified needs within the neurodivergent community, or did the organization identify a gap through its initial collaborations? I also wanted to better understand why these particular artistic activities were selected. Beyond the inherent value of engaging in the arts, is there research or community-informed evidence demonstrating how these activities can support participants' wellbeing, livelihoods, or forms of expression in particularly meaningful ways? Without that context, there is a risk that the community can feel tokenized, particularly if the programming is presented as being for a community without making clear how it was shaped with them.
That said, I appreciate the inclusion of a public exhibition as part of the project. Creating an opportunity to celebrate participants' work publicly can extend the impact beyond the participants themselves, while inviting the broader Cleveland community to encounter and engage with people who may share similar experiences. I think there is meaningful potential here to not only provide an arts-based space for participants to express themselves, but also to challenge assumptions about neurodiversity by allowing participants to be seen first and foremost as creators and contributors.

Organization cited that they serve neurodiverse youth and outlines general partnerships to recruit participants for the program but didn't detail any specific outreach efforts to this community and if their input or feed is gathered in any way to understand barriers to participation that may exist in order to help address and create accessibility and meaningfully connect with those they intend to serve.

I think that I enjoy the project targeting a marginalized group of people specifically the neurodivergent population. That being said, I have a concern about the expertise in working with the populations, as there is such a thing as expressive arts therapy and this seems akin to that. I always worry about the framing of the population and how one can specifically target the population intentionally and also how one can define the gap in the access to the arts for these populations. I say this because I am a Student therapist and work with these populations and I'm unclear about the route one would take to include

and expand on barriers intentionally, or even the way they would define these for neurodivergent populations.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the organization's commitment to partnering with and creating opportunities for a community that is often overlooked. Disability can shape both a person's internal experience and how they are perceived and accommodated by the world around them. In particular, people with non-apparent disabilities may encounter additional barriers because others may perceive them as "normal" and therefore fail to recognize or accommodate their needs. I see the arts as a particularly powerful tool in this context because they can provide ways to externalize experiences, perspectives, and emotions that may otherwise remain unseen or difficult to communicate. Creating opportunities for people to express what is happening internally and have those experiences witnessed by others can be a meaningful form of both individual expression and broader community understanding.

The application would be strengthened by providing more specificity on how the proposed artistic mediums (i.e. digital storytelling, photography, etc.) will be delivered to the target populations. In other words, what does the programming actually look like? For example, what does digital storytelling (a broad category) in your organization entail?

Organization seems to be engaging with professional and qualified individuals to carry out the project. The application would have been strengthened by including why programming selections were made - was it based on attendee feedback, prior programming, community outreach etc. to make the case for how they are presenting a relevant and engaging project for their audience.

This project is an exceptional example of advancing the organization's mission through artistic engagement. The experiential learning component, supported by creatives from B&B Class and the Cleveland Institute of Art, provides a mutually beneficial opportunity to gain practical experience in community arts education while engaging participants in meaningful creative experiences.
The intentional effort to make the program accessible to youth and families recruited through schools, libraries, behavioral health providers, youth-serving organizations, and community partners throughout Cuyahoga County demonstrates a strong commitment to EIDA. This broad community outreach promotes access and inclusion while creating an environment where participants can experience a genuine sense of belonging.

Thinking on this, I like the diversity of the organization and the mission statement I just believe the written narrative didn't give enough information to build confidence for me. I also have very little information on the actual exhibition or even the e

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The project appears to be supported by a quality team with relevant experience, which gives me confidence in their ability to thoughtfully execute the work. I also appreciate the commitment to compensating all Creatives, including interns, for their time. That choice recognizes that people's labor and expertise have value regardless of their position or level of experience, while also supporting

participants' capacity to meaningfully engage in the project. To me, this reflects an abundance mindset around creative work, creating opportunities for people to contribute without asking them to subsidize the project through unpaid labor.
I would have appreciated more dialogue and transparency around the budget, particularly to better understand how resources are being distributed across the project. More context would help demonstrate how the organization is aligning its financial resources with its stated values and priorities.

The application's listed team members -- Dr. Lydia Hill-Grant and Brian Bruce -- have particularly strong expertise and qualifications.

The applicant did not address goals, how/if programming is measured or evaluated for success, and if this is a one time or ongoing program.
In-kind amounts presented in the income & expense sections of the budget do not align, and applicant did not detail what the in-kind expenses actually are within the budget.

Just an observation: The project budget shows $8,000 in cash income and $9,000 in cash expenses because the in-kind income and expenses do not match. I hope the organization recognizes that, as presented, the project is operating at a $1,000 cash deficit and hopefully has a plan to address the shortfall.

I could see measurable goals, and the intention and logistics behind attaching to community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Fryderyk Chopin Institute Of Ohio

Project Title: Chamber Concert with Callilsto Quartet

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 8.2

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate the Institute's intentionality around accessibility, particularly given that educational programming is a core part of its mission. The combination of low-cost student tickets, a venue that is accessible by public transit, and anticipated collaborations with neighboring music schools demonstrates a meaningful effort to remove both economic and geographic barriers to participation. I also appreciate that the Institute's reach extends beyond the Polish community, while still recognizing the Polish diaspora as an important community within its work. That broader reach, however, left me with some questions about the project's intended audience and how the Polish community will specifically be engaged. For example, how will members of the Polish diaspora be involved in promoting, attending, or otherwise shaping their appreciation of the project?
I would also appreciate more information about the Institute's existing relationships with the communities and broader ecosystem it hopes to reach. The proposal could be strengthened by providing more specificity around how the organization currently works within neighborhoods such as Slavic Village and Tremont, as well as identifying the particular schools, community organizations, or other partners serving students and communities that have historically been strategically undervalued. This would help demonstrate that removing barriers is not only a stated priority, but one grounded in established relationships and knowledge of the communities the project intends to serve.

This is a very comprehensive application. In particular, this organization has done a lot of work to make their programming accessible across multiple levers, i.e. economic, transportation, marketing efforts, etc.

Applicant clearly articulated how they plan to engage with and market to their target community, why the programming was developed (to fill an identified gap) and ways they're working to address barriers. Applicant cited low cost ticket & student discount, this could have been strengthened but including those actual costs/discounts.

I appreciate that an organization recognized a gap in local arts offerings and created an organization with projects that celebrate the works of Fryderyk Chopin while connecting to Greater Cleveland's deep

Polish heritage. Given the significant role Polish communities have played in Cleveland's history, this project provides a meaningful cultural connection for the region.
The premiere of Three Polish Dances by a Cleveland-based composer is particularly compelling. It offers audiences a rare opportunity to experience new classical music composed and performed by living artists working within their own community, while building on the legacy of Chopin.
The organization is also thoughtfully addressing barriers to participation by offering affordable tickets, student discounts, and performances at transit-accessible venues. Serving Cleveland Heights, Chagrin Falls, Gates Mills, and surrounding communities, while intentionally engaging Cleveland's Polish-American community, further strengthens the public and community benefit of this project.

I think that the connection to the region having the largest polish-american community and then presenting this kind of work to preserve and share their arts and cultural practice can be beneficial. I however don't like how broad the audience was, and the connection to the "general" public and couldn't define a more specific audience. I felt like there were a few buzz words thrown around and when you say "underrepresented" I need to know if we're talking socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, or etc. Be specific with identities as some of the impact gets lost and then you're unable to connect barriers and how you're increasing accessibility.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the opportunity this project creates for Cuyahoga County audiences to encounter perspectives from the Polish community through composed music by Konrad Binienda, particularly with the inclusion of a Q&A that can facilitate deeper engagement, conversation, and understanding beyond the performance itself. I also find it compelling that, while the project centers Polish heritage and identity, the programming will reflect Canadian and Chinese backgrounds as well. This creates an opportunity to present cultural identity as something layered and interconnected rather than singular.

Applicant clearly demonstrates how they connect with their community to present relevant and engaging programming. They are engaging with qualified professionals to carry out the programs and cite how they target underserved audiences to encourage equity and actively work to present a range of diverse perspectives.

I think the project itself is unique and seems well thought out and can express arts with a cultural history attached to it.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Given the grant narrative, there is a robust and well-established team supporting the implementation of this project, including internal leadership as well as sought-out and confirmed traveling artists. I am also pleased to see that these creatives will receive the bulk of the proposed budget, which reflects a meaningful investment in the people whose artistic labor is central to the project. I do, however, have some concerns about the level of projected ticket revenue in relation to the stated goals of accessibility and community engagement. With a commitment that "nobody should be turned away," an anticipated student audience, and classical music audience engagement record, I would be interested in understanding how realistic an audience of 250 attendees is and what ticket pricing assumptions

underpin that projection. The partnerships with local music institutions may help support attendance, and the supplemental materials demonstrate encouraging historical attendance, but I would appreciate more context around how those factors informed the revenue projection.
I also would have liked to see a greater investment in the marketing budget given the narrative's emphasis on community inclusion and reaching audiences beyond the organization's existing base. In particular, I wonder how the marketing strategy will support reaching the specific communities identified throughout the proposal, and whether that investment would be further reduced if ticket revenue falls short of projections. Clarifying how the organization would navigate that scenario would help me better understand the sustainability of the project while maintaining its stated commitment to accessibility. Overall, I am encouraged by the prioritization of Creative compensation and would hope that the remaining resources similarly reflect the project's ambitions around meaningful community engagement.

Organization seems to bee in a strong financial position with diverse revenue streams to carry out project. Applicant includes detail about input prior to event and post event feedback for evaluation and future planning.

I appreciate the clear explanation of the project budget, including the organization's commitment to paying fair and appropriate professional fees to performers. This shows an intentional investment in the artists whose work is essential to the project's success.

This is probably one of the strongest applications in terms of naming specifics, I think that in terms of numbers and process I didn't have many questions. That said, in terms of narrative I think too much time was spent in describing accolades instead of describing the project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: FutureHeights

Project Title: Heights Music Hop

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Future Heights' Music Festival will include local artists and promote local businesses. Future Heights also has a local newspaper for local journalists and provides other beneficial programs to the community.

The organization does a strong job of defining the Public Benefit of its project by detailing how local business owners are involved in the planning and expansion process. This shows that the org listens to and involves its community.

Great reach for community engagement. Free programming creates accessibility. Recurring event with evidence of community engagement and benefit.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The Heights Music Hop will promote local artists as well local businesses.

The strength of this proposal is the intersection of artists' creativity and the on-the-ground business needs of multiple neighborhood/districts. This reviewer appreciated the detailed project plan with time for consultation and real relationship-building with project partners. Mention is made of tailoring each event to its particular locale. Further description of that process, as well as the call for artists and associated selection methodology, would strengthen future applications.

The organization does a fair job of illustrating the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of its project. Not including a recent event schedule or a list of recent performing groups, with explanations of the diversity of the types of music and musicians as sample attachments, was a missed opportunity.

Connecting multiple cultures and artistic backgrounds through different mediums and community partnerships is strong.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The organization does a fair-to-strong job of detailing its Organizational Capacity by sharing a detailed timeline of preparations for the project. Section 8 (the question about describing your team) could have been strengthened by sharing more details about how various staff members participate in the planning and implementation stages of the project, in addition to listing their general experiences and skills.

Long-standing history and evidence of execution due to the recurrence of the event and programming.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Gardening in the District

Project Title: Quincy Community Mural Creation

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,900

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Gardening in the District has a deep understanding of its community and ensures locals are heard through direct outreach. I would be interested in learning more about the structure of the community celebration event. I appreciate that it is a chance to honor the artists' work and wonder exactly how this happens from a logistical perspective. Additionally, it could be helpful to include pictures of the mural and/or community celebration event. While the current attachments show other excellent programs, it is harder to see the direct connection to the mural project.

Strong public benefit - Outreach, community conversations, and resident. Free community unveiling event builds relationships.
Youth, seniors, and newcomers are invited to take part. The founder lives in the community and has 12+ years of trust.

Door-to-door outreach to learn about community needs is a great idea! If this has been done before, it would be great to see the results and learn if/how it influenced the program.

Loved reading about residents contributing ideas and joining the painting process! This directly connects them with the mural that will live in their neighborhoods.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Experienced professional muralists (17+ years) who painted the first fence section. The project builds on visible earlier work, and open mic and podcast activities show wider arts programming.

Descriptions of how the program will actively be promoted and the public engaged is outstanding. Both in-person and media marketing is great. Engaging with third parties who have expert knowledge is also super. Great sense of attention to quality and oversight.

Loved the door-to-door plan. The hands on involvement truly supports a clear plan to support belonging and community ownership.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Future applications could benefit from more information on how Gardening in the District sets goals and measures progress. Additionally, I appreciate that youth stipends are listed in the budget and would be curious to learn more about the young peoples' direct involvement in the project. I see that they are part of the gardening initiatives and wonder how this extends to the mural project.

12+ years of operation, with named partners for design and paperwork. Budget request of $4,900 is within the cap and under the 50% limit. The attachments would not open - I would have liked to see the mural.

Staff seems capable and experienced. Some additional detail in the budget would be helpful - what is the in-kind? How do the admin costs break down?

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: German Central Foundation

Project Title: German Oktoberfest

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.25

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The German Central Oktoberfest will engage the public with German Culture through food, performers, and vendors.

This long-running event draws a significant crowd and promotes demonstrations and understanding of German-American culture. The application would have been strengthened by further description of the feedback given by attendees/community members and the ways in which that feedback has helped shape cultural activities/offerings for the next Oktoberfest celebration.

The organization does a strong job of showing Public Benefit by sharing how it identifies its community and writing honestly about the fact that Oktoberfest does attract some participation outside the community of those with German heritage, but it's an "opt-in" situation.

Activation of large space and clear engagement with local and extended communities.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Oktoberfest is 2 days, which will give the public more time to enjoy the artistic German Culture.

Long-standing relationships with multiple community/event partners demonstrate a high level of community support and buy-in. This broad range of partners, along with the work of the Trustees and committee members, will bring together decades of experience with this particular festival and these particular partners.

The org does a strong job of showing the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy by detailing how it partners with other organizations related to German and Austrian heritage to ensure the authenticity of the performers booked for the project.

Integrating German culture for the German community and others creates a bridge between cultures.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org does a strong job of showing Organization Capacity by sharing its 100 year history and the history of planning this annual event.

Well-established track record of organizational capacity as well as volunteer opportunities and support.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Getting To We

Project Title: Amazing Amazing Inclusion & Belonging Edutainment™ Experience : A Community Social Trust Project

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate that Getting to We is intentionally growing its audience and adapting its conference in a way that "reduces cost, supports local artists and keeps local arts dollars within Cuyahoga County." I would be interested in learning more about how Getting to We plans to reach the general public outside of partner organizations as referenced in response to question 7.

Strong public benefit - Extends the 2024 event to West Side audiences, with a youth component and a sliding-scale, pay-what-you-can price. Names ten partners.

The mission of the organization is clearly meeting a need in the community. It is not readily apparent in the application how the organization plans to engage the community, recruit presenters, or market the program to its intended audience.

I'd like more detail about '27 artistic programming and audience participation for the proposed experience.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

It was helpful to see the impact evaluation questions, but future applications could be strengthened by seeing the results of this survey in addition to the evaluation itself.

Theater, comedy, dance, and music are used for stated learning objectives. Fourteen paid Cleveland actors, local talent

None of the team members are named, or partner organizations identified except the marketing team and financial services. Some idea of how presenters are selected would be helpful to understand how quality is measured or ensured.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

There's a big shift from the corporate audience to a broader more intergenerational community through a pay what you can pricing model. I'd like clearer details about recruiting all types of audience members and pricing tiers that will help reach all.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The budget is incredibly detailed, and the teams brings great expertise.

15-member board, advisors, pro bono marketing, three paid staff

Attached budget is detailed and balanced - a technical note for the applicant - be careful when submitting budgets in excel format with tabs - they are easy to miss! At first I thought the expense portion of this budget was missing. As a best practice, always try to include your expenses and revenue on a single page or spreadsheet when submitting funding applications.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Golden Ciphers Youth Development & Cultural Arts Center

Project Title: DjJembe and Beyond

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7.2

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate the project's clear focus on African American communities and the opportunity to bring the programming into a variety of indoor and outdoor venues. This geographic flexibility creates an opportunity to reach different communities throughout Cuyahoga County rather than concentrating participation in a single location. I also appreciate that the narrative indicates the continuation and expansion of the project were informed and supported by community members and partners. That demonstrated community consent gives the project a stronger foundation, particularly when paired with the inclusion of food within the programming. Providing food alongside artistic experiences recognizes that participation in an artful life is also connected to foundational needs and can help create the conditions for people to meaningfully gather, participate, and sustain themselves.
While I understand the target audience is African American communities, I would have appreciated more context around why this particular project and artistic approach is meaningful for that community beyond the inherent association between African American culture and African drumming. What did the organization hear from community members or learn through its existing relationships that led to this specific programming? More explanation of the cultural, artistic, or community-specific rationale would help demonstrate how the project moves beyond an assumed connection between identity and art form and instead reflects a genuinely community-informed artistic opportunity.

The organization's origin story and the impressive breadth and depth of founder Pamela Hubbard's expertise are inspiring. In particular, the food program was especially note worthy.

In order to provide beeter context of how the organization is providing public benefit, the organization overview would be strengthened by including information about why the organization was created and how it has grown/changed/evolved or remained the same after all these years.
Applicant cites expanding offerings after meetings with community partners and provides detail as to why a shift is being made in programming, how it is creating greater access and further connecting within the community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

I really enjoyed that you named a very specific subset of the population specifically a racial/ethnic minority that has historically been oppressed. Not only this but you focused on the different generations, and are trying to make it accessible from basic needs and community building to healing.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the breadth of the organization's six partnerships, particularly that they extend beyond traditional arts and culture organizations. The inclusion of food-based partners, from Food 2 Depot to Health Garden, alongside Northern Winds Martial Arts School demonstrates an understanding that cultural life does not exist in isolation from other aspects of community life. I especially appreciate the martial arts partnership as another cultural endeavor that can connect the project to broader experiences and communities within the Asian diaspora. These relationships suggest an approach to community engagement that is not limited to the traditional arts ecosystem.
I also appreciate the organization's demonstrated willingness to sustain this work through its own resources and capacity. The organization's beginnings in a living room and its growth into a 25-year recurring grant recipient tell a compelling story of longevity, persistence, and community investment. That history suggests the organization has become more than a program provider; it has established itself as part of the cultural fabric of the communities it serves. I find that particularly meaningful when considering the project's current partnerships and its continued commitment to doing this work.

While not explicitly detailed, applicant notes partnerships and meetings that suggest a process of reflection to ensure relevant programming.

D'Jembe and Beyond appears to bring together several smaller, complementary projects to create a broader offering of artistic and cultural programming. The programming was developed following conversations with community partners, demonstrating that the organization is attuned to the needs and interests of the community and actively seeks community input in shaping its offerings.
The programming intentionally engages youth, adults, elders, families, and the broader community. The inclusion of elders is particularly noteworthy, creating opportunities for intergenerational participation and ensuring cultural programming reaches community members across different ages and life stages. Each component is clearly described, providing a strong understanding of what will be offered, who it is intended to reach, and the anticipated outcomes.
The project also demonstrates a strong commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging by providing culturally relevant, quality arts experiences to communities that may not have the same level of access or representation within more mainstream arts programming in the Greater Cleveland area.

That said, from an artistic aspect I felt like the project fell flat. It almost felt like the artistic aspect was secondary to the healing or cultural practices at hand. I also felt, like had you expanded more on the drumming, your definition of the culinary arts, or the holistic healing aspect as artistic it could have been a stronger application. I think there was cultural vibrance but there wasn't an easy melding of these ideas- I also believe that the project itself does seem very broad considering what is being asked.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I am impressed by how the project's partnerships meaningfully contribute to its artistic merit rather than functioning simply as supplemental community relationships. The incorporation of food provides a form of sustenance that can support people in fully participating, while the movement practice offers an opportunity to understand and engage the body differently, both creating conditions that allow participants to lean more fully into the artistic experience. I also appreciate the emphasis on collaborative recruitment across both internal and external partners, which can broaden the project's reach while creating shared ownership of participation. Combined with a solid and experienced team, these elements give the project a strong foundation for implementation.
I also appreciate the anticipation of multiple funding sources and the organization's proactive approach to resource development. However, I had some questions about the request in relation to the overall budget: with projected expenses appearing to be approximately half of the anticipated income, I would have appreciated more explanation of why this grant funding is necessary. Is the additional revenue intended to provide a financial safeguard, support future programming, or allow the organization to expand its work beyond this particular project? Given that grant resources are limited and other organizations may have more significant funding needs, I would have preferred to see a more balanced budget or clearer rationale for the level of requested support. Finally, the organization's website was unavailable when I reviewed the application, so I was unable to use it as an additional source of context about the organization's history, current work, or community relationships.

Application would be strengthened by including information about organization or program goals, how they're being measured/evaluated or how current/past programming informs future programming. Budget presented is not balanced and in-kind figures presented do not align.

Just an observation: An arts and culture project budget should reflect income and expenses that align (a balanced budget), providing a clear picture of the project's financial viability and resource use. In this project budget, in-kind income and in-kind expenses do not match, but they should be the same because these are noncash components of your budget.

The project lacked SMART goals and could have benefited from understanding how they're responding to goals, how they'd measure success or impact by participants, and could have benefited from more description on implementation.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Greater Cleveland Film Commission

Project Title: Film Forward Documentary Spotlight

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7.4

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate the project's clear focus on Northeast Ohio's current and aspiring documentary filmmakers, with a concentrated focus on Cuyahoga County. Given this target audience, the inclusion of educational opportunities such as Q&A sessions and workshops feels particularly valuable, as they create opportunities for participants to not only experience the work but also deepen their knowledge, ask questions, and potentially develop their own documentary practices. I also appreciate that the program will be offered free of charge, which meaningfully reduces an economic barrier to participation. While the project has identified a specific target audience, I appreciate the intention to market the program broadly and encourage participation from the wider community. This creates a useful balance between intentionally reaching those who may benefit most from the programming while still allowing the project to serve as an accessible cultural opportunity for anyone interested in participating.

The public benefit of the proposed workshop seems limited. While it's open to the public and free, their marketing and target audience seems small/restricted. Including how they go about identifying and selecting filmmakers from the community and what work is done alongside the community to solicit feedback on what type of topics are relevant/engaging to them for the proposed project would have strengthened this area.

I think the defined community was too broad, when you use the term "underrepresented" or say multiple identities but only name the general public the impact and intent become blunted. I think the narrative could've benefited from specificity.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the project's intentionality around engaging people from strategically undervalued communities, including through its hiring of caterers from these communities. Given the demographic data presented about the project's historical audience, which indicates that participants often come from similarly underserved communities, the project has an opportunity to support equity not only through who experiences the programming but also through who is economically supported by its

implementation. This appears consistent with the organization's broader efforts to connect workforce and educational opportunities with audiences that have historically been underrepresented in the industry. I also appreciate the identification of young people as a secondary audience, particularly because the project can help make pathways into the documentary field more visible and tangible for emerging creatives.
The emphasis on collaborating with community partners who themselves come from strategically undervalued communities is another strength. Beyond the value of those partnerships to the project itself, these relationships may create opportunities for more authentic outreach, as partners can share the program within their existing networks and communities. This could help the project reach audiences through trusted relationships rather than relying solely on traditional marketing channels, while also strengthening the connection between the organization and the communities it hopes to engage.

Proposed project clearly demonstrates how it will provide professional development and learning opportunities to the community through filmmaking workshop.
It's not clear how the applicant reviews/solicits feedback about the project to inform future programming and ensure programming remains relevant to community.

The Film Forward Documentary Spotlight demonstrates artistic and cultural vibrancy by creating multiple opportunities for audiences and filmmakers to engage with documentary film as both an art form and a vehicle for storytelling. Featuring a Greater Cleveland Film Commission-selected documentary with Northeast Ohio ties provides a meaningful connection between professional filmmaking and the region's creative community.
The screening, reception, and moderated Q&A extend the experience beyond simply viewing a film. Audiences have an opportunity to hear directly from filmmakers about the creative process, the stories and experiences that shaped the work, and how the project came together. This exchange encourages reflection, dialogue, and a deeper appreciation for documentary filmmaking and the stories being shared.
The documentary filmmaking workshop adds another strong artistic component by taking participants behind the scenes to explore how documentary films are developed and produced. By engaging current and aspiring documentarians, the project supports artistic learning and skill development while strengthening connections among filmmakers, audiences, and the broader Northeast Ohio creative community. Together, these elements contribute to a vibrant local film culture that supports artistic expression, community storytelling, and opportunities for both experiencing and creating documentary film.

I think that artistically keeping the documentary process and methods alive is engaging and I can see the appeal to filmmakers or documentary enthusiasts. That being said, what is being filmed and themes seemed unclear to me other than it would highlight the filmmakers and the geographic location. Specificity on topic could have benefited here as well.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I appreciate the project's increased emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly within today's political and social environment. It demonstrates an organization that appears attentive not only to its identified target audience but also to creating a welcoming experience for eventgoers more broadly. I also appreciate the emphasis on collaboration over individuality, particularly in the organization's work with community partners to determine elements such as the project's venue. That approach suggests a willingness to share decision-making and allow community relationships to shape the work. Given the team's knowledge and demonstrated commitment to these values, I also appreciate the organization's broader public policy efforts to influence not only the documentary industry but the region itself, including efforts that can contribute to economic activity and strengthen the area's artistic ecosystem.
I would have appreciated a more balanced budget between projected income and expenses. While I understand that funding environments are fluid, the level of anticipated income relative to expenses raises questions about how the requested grant funds would ultimately be used, particularly when other organizations may have significant needs but less access to resources. I also noticed that, despite the narrative's emphasis on promotional efforts and audience diversification, I did not see a dedicated marketing allocation in the budget. I recognize that the organization's community partnerships may serve as important avenues for outreach and engagement, but for an organization seeking to diversify its audience, some dedicated investment in advertising and promotion could help extend beyond existing networks. Finally, I was unable to access the submitted video, which limited my ability to fully engage with that component of the application.

The board's financial commitment and the success of the 2024–2025 season are clear organizational strengths, demonstrating high institutional health.

Budget presented is not balanced. Organization seems to be engaging with partners to help with promotion/outreach of the series but the qualifications/capacity of the staff is unclear.

I had a few questions about organizational capacity, indicators of success, and also logistics and implementation of the project due to lack of details.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association

Project Title: NCA's Multigenerational STEAM Makers

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 8.2

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Clear public benefit - Applicant states they develop programing with community by directly asking what they are interested in and plan activities accordingly. They engage with a wide variety of diverse populations by the the types of programming, physical and digital access points and targeted age ranges.

This is a well-established program presented by an experienced organization. A particular strength of the project is its multigenerational, project-based STEAM learning model, which brings older adults (ages 55+) together with youth, an approach that is not often seen in STEAM programming. This intergenerational engagement creates opportunities for shared learning, relationship-building, and a richer experience for participants across age groups. The anticipated attendance of 1,250 participants also speaks to the program's reach and strong community interest.

I think there is a strong public benefit for people across all ages and specifically age groups that need enrichment and could benefit from such offerings. I can also see that they do survey and take feedback from stakeholders.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The organization has demonstrated a true commitment to its community. However, the proposal would be strengthened by a clearer framework for evaluation, namely how KPIs are tracked, assessed, and possibly integrated into current and future planning.

Organization has clearly defined audience and listed the ways in which they engage with and serve relevant programming to those groups.

That being said, I think the offerings were too wide and had very general ways of being written. I can see buzz words throughout the narrative and felt like the actual offerings could have been better described.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

I think where this application could have benefited was putting the brakes on metrics, numbers, and achievements and focused on helping the panelist visualize what participants will actually be doing.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Given the organization's capacity and robust partnerships cultivated, like Cleveland Metropolitan School District System or AmiCorps, for the past 78 years, this project seems adequately staffed for success. For example, the organization hires full-time Site Directors per each partnered school.

Organization has a strong and qualified staff to successfully carry out the proposed project.

The well-organized budget, combined with the experience and expertise of the staff and volunteers, demonstrates strong organizational capacity to successfully implement the project as proposed.

Organizational capacity seems to be in alignment with the intended community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Harvard Community Services Center

Project Title: Harvard Cultural Fest

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 9.5

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate how the Harvard Community Services Center team prioritizes attending local block club and community meetings in order to hear directly from their constituents. The story about the community enthusiastically showing up for the 2016 event, despite the storm, shows how much they value the programming.

Expected audience is 5,000 to a Free, family-friendly festival on a walkable, accessible neighborhood site.
Strong listening loop: staff attend all block club meetings, monthly community meetings draw about 300, and feedback shapes planning each year.

This is a highly visible program that engages the community through public-facing events. The methods of engaging the community through meetings with clubs is really great.

Love the free art classes and on-site portraits! The range of creative activities helps make the festival relevant to all types of residents with varied interests

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Varied lineup: up to 7 bands, 2 DJs, spoken word, a professional dance troupe, and free art classes. CAC funds pay market-rate fees to local artists.

Leverage of media, online, local news, etc. is strong. The process of meeting with block clubs is novel and creative and an effective way to evaluate the program and ensure it is meeting public needs and wants. Descriptions of team members and bios of key staff is especially helpful in evaluating this application.

The application showed strong evidence of a continuing relationship with residents leading to a high possibility of the celebration truly reflecting the communities identities. Bravo!

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I would be interested in learning more about how the Harvard Community Services Center sets goals and measures progress. The statistic about attendance increasing by 40% is valuable, and it would be great to see more of this kind of data.

Founded in 1968, with a festival coordinator since 2016, clear staff roles, and an 11th-year budget on a $24,069 plan with a past CAC grant.
Funding determines hiring scale, which shows realistic planning.

Detail provided in the budget to understand each line item is outstanding!

I appreciated the details about how CAC funds would directly support part of the project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Haus of Transcendent

Project Title: Promoting Health Literacy Through Digital Art for a New Video Game

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 6.25

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I understand the importance of health education, but I do not understand the full potential of this event.

The organization shows a strong Public Benefit with this project and details its community thoroughly; however, the entire application is more aspirational than concrete. Specific, detailed timelines are not shared. The digital artist for the project is not identified. Beyond the launch party, a community-wide distribution and promotion plan is not shared.

More information on if the video game has already been designed would be helpful in understanding how this will reach the community. It seems that it will be beneficial based on the demographics that they serve. I am confused about how 4,000 people will be able to fit in one space, or if there will be multiple other events and meetings.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The org does a fair job of expressing the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of the project. As stated earlier, the focus on aspirational goals and plans, with few concrete details on how the project will be completed and shared (beyond the launch party) and which artists will be involved in its completion, keeps this from being a strong application.

Incorporating entertainers and local artists is strong, and using a digital art medium to reach the community is a very creative approach. Health and wellness education is great across all cultural backgrounds. Including a timeline for completing the video game would give more context.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I appreciate the project's work at the intersection of arts and health. The focused attention on BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and disabled communities is wonderful, and the personnel involved describe building relationships of trust to further this work. This reviewer was left with a number of questions regarding

the functionality of the game in its current state and the proposed enhancements this funding would provide. Yet, the project is still strong in its direction and targeted nature.

The project sounds like a meaningful and important service for the stated community. My desire for more specificity keeps me from strongly recommending the use of public funding for its support.

It seems that the organizational capacity is strong, but I don't think all of their answer was included in the submission.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Heights Chamber Orchestra

Project Title: Stars, Stripes, and Symphonies - Celebrating American Music

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 7.5

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Concerts are free, and accessible. Printed program notes, a composer talk, soloist meet-and-greets, and outreach to Heights and Euclid High School directors.
Programming highlights Black, female, and Cleveland-linked composers.

Promotion through public schools is encouraging. I would like to see greater effort put into marketing, especially for a program in a discipline that traditionally somewhat inaccessible (classical music). Use of some traditional and social media is good to see, and shows the organization is making an effort towards outreach.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Heights Chamber Orchestra will be showcasing work by artists from underrepresented communities, and I appreciate that the outreach strategy includes getting in touch with local high schools to promote orchestral music to a younger audience. Future applications could benefit from information on how the organization engages its community throughout the planning process and how it incorporates constituent feedback from past programming.

Top-tier soloists, including Cleveland Orchestra principals, and a Cleveland Classical review.
A board-reviewed process for selecting programs, and an amateur-professional mix that builds musician growth.

Providing free concerts does not in and of itself make a program accessible. What is the applicant doing to engage community members who may not otherwise feel welcome to this type of program to begin with? Is there a process for feedback from the community or audience?

The free admission model, having accessible venues and intentional school outreach addresses financial and physical access issues. I'd like more details of how the audience input is then applied to the program.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Since the in-kind revenue budget line is especially high, I appreciate the breakdown of costs at the bottom of the document. I would be interested in learning more about the backgrounds of Heights Chamber Orchestra's administrative team in Question 8 (describe your team). It was valuable to read about the music director's and composer's qualifications, and similar information about other team members could strengthen the application.

43-year history, a credentialed music director, clear program-planning steps, a board approving budgets, and varied revenue (donations, dues, appeals).

The budget contains adequate detail and has been thoughtfully prepared. Providing names and profiles of key staff and artists is appreciated and helpful for evaluation.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Henry Johnson Center

Project Title: Art Meets Tech

Panelists: Yadira Gonzalez, Jo-ann Lawrence, Elise Pakiela, Philip Rice

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The program addresses a clear need in helping students identify how they can use art and tech skills to develop careers. I especially appreciate how the Henry Johnson Center makes more expensive software available to its participants for free since exposure to such tools can be a prerequisite for future work. Moving forward, it would be helpful to include more information about the "marketing at the local libraries and schools" part of the planning process to get a more thorough understanding of the outreach strategy.

Community "Friends" are invited to help plan, recruit, host, and evaluate, and feedback is gathered year-round. A pilot informed the revised design, and the program ends with a community art show.

Thank you for providing demographic data! Also providing studies and evidence to define your community is especially strong. When defining how you will connect with your community, some explanation of specifically what steps will be taken to recruit or invite participants would be helpful.

I appreciated reading about the changes you are making based on the pilot shows outcomes. It demonstrated that you are paying attention to keeping artistic activity meaningful for participants with different interests.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Clear 8-week curriculum (3D printing, Adobe, photography, VR/AI) with weekly guest speakers and career options. Artists and educators on the team have decades of experience, and the pilot led to a stronger arts balance.

Providing names and profiles of key staff makes this application especially strong. It is mentioned that feedback is gathered from participants and community members - it would be helpful to know how that feedback is used, or an example of feedback could be provided as an attachment.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Community feedback and mentors provide concrete opportunities for connection and evolving the program. I'd like more details about fees, accessibility, and participation arrangements.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Henry Johnson Center has very clear goals for the Art Meets Tech Program and a strong 20+ year legacy.

A detailed 11-step timeline and measurable goals (85% completion, 80% choose a mentor, 75 youth), plus an end evaluation

The budget looks great and adequate detail is provided. Again, it would be good to see a more formal process for evaluation, especially for this type of program that is learning-based.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Historic Gateway Neighborhood Corporation

Project Title: 2027 Take a Hike Summer Series

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The fact that this applicant's programming offers free admission for these tours shows that they are interested in making sure all who want to participate can. And what a breadth of area do they cover! I was curious about how this applicant builds relationships with their community, including how outreach to community members in specific neighborhoods occurs.

CLEARLY IDENTIFIES COMMUNITY SERVED: The applicant provides strong evidence of a clearly identified community consisting both of residents and businesses in the neighborhoods represented by the tours and participants interested in Cleveland's history, architecture, cultural heritage, neighborhoods, and local businesses.
The application goes beyond a generic statement such as “the general public.” HGNC reports that approximately 90% of participants are Cuyahoga County residents, 5% come from elsewhere in Northeast Ohio, and 5% are visitors.
MEANINGFULLY CONNECTS THE PROJECT TO THE COMMUNITY:The application provides strong evidence that Take a Hike connects participants with Cleveland's neighborhoods, history, architecture, cultural heritage, businesses, and community institutions through direct, place-based experiences.
The program is not simply delivering historical information. Signature Tours use story-driven interpretation and historical character portrayals, while Stroll Tours incorporate neighborhood history and cultural traditions as well as visits to archives, museums, churches, landmarks, cultural demonstrations, and locally owned businesses.
ACCESS & REMOVAL OF BARRIERS:The applicant provides strong evidence of financial accessibility by offering all Take a Hike tours free of charge, removing a significant barrier to participation.
The applicant explicitly connects free admission to its inclusion strategy and describes the tours as welcoming
experiences where participants can ask questions, meet neighbors, and experience unfamiliar neighborhoods.
INCLUSION & BELONGING: One limitation is that the inclusion discussion is somewhat general. The application does not provide much detail about specific accessibility accommodations, targeted outreach methods, language access, physical accessibility, or strategies designed around identified barriers experienced by particular communities.

That does not negate the strong access case created by free admission and broad geographic reach, but additional specificity would have strengthened this point.
GEOGRAPHIC REACH:The application demonstrates strong geographic reach through programming distributed across numerous Cleveland neighborhoods rather than concentrating the project in a single location.
The application demonstrates a convincing connection among community, place, programming, accessibility, and participation.

This application states that the tour experiences are welcoming, trusted, and comfortable, without fully illustrating how they achieve this or whether participants consistently validate that claim. It is unclear how the tour guides facilitate building stronger connections among Cleveland's diverse communities, though the tours seem to take place in many places across the city. Aside from some number of private tours implied in the budget document, this free offering does provide a public benefit through a cost-free experience that includes theater professionals and promotes historic/architectural understanding.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I was curious about the specific "rich cultural heritage and historic districts" that have been spotlighted through the Take a Hike Series. How are these tour topics selected during the planning process? Is the community involved in this process? I imagine that they may be based on the mention of "[e]xisting tours are refined, new topics and neighborhoods identified" but it is not explicit in the narrative, therefore I cannot assume it is so. This section could have been strengthened by offering an example of a recent tour and its evolution in the past few years based on feedback or new findings that applicant has valued.

RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT: The application provides strong evidence that Take a Hike is relevant to the organization's preservation and cultural mission and to communities interested in Cleveland's history, architecture, neighborhoods, and cultural heritage.
HGNC's mission focuses on historic, cultural, and heritage preservation through advocacy, education, and programs supporting historic districts. Take a Hike directly advances this mission through public interpretation of those histories and places.
ENGAGING PROGRAM DESIGN: The project provides strong evidence of engaging cultural programming through a combination of guided storytelling, historical character portrayals, neighborhood exploration, cultural demonstrations, institutional visits, and interactions with locally owned businesses.
The Signature and Stroll Tour formats provide multiple methods for participants to encounter cultural and historical content rather than relying solely on conventional lecture-style interpretation.
The experiential format strengthens the case for cultural vibrancy.
CULTURAL INTERPRETATION: The application provides strong evidence that historical and cultural content is intentionally interpreted for public audiences rather than simply presented as information.
Historical actors bring historical figures and stories to life, while guides use researched scripts and storytelling to connect participants with places and communities.
The applicant also reports that scripts are carefully researched and professionally prepared to support historical accuracy and consistency.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

COMMUNITY RELEVANCE & RESPONSIVENESS: The application provides fair-to-strong evidence that programming evolves in response to participation and community experience.
The annual planning process begins with a review of attendance, participant feedback, and program outcomes. Existing tours are refined, new neighborhoods and topics are identified, partnerships are renewed or expanded, and routes are developed before implementation.
This is good evidence of responsiveness. However, the application could be stronger by explaining what participant feedback has actually revealed and providing an example of how that feedback changed a tour, topic, route, or program strategy.
DEPTH & BREADTH OF PROGRAMING: The applicant demonstrates strong evidence of sustained and varied cultural programming through a mature program that has expanded substantially since its launch in 2009.
Take a Hike began with three tours and now includes more than 45 unique tours across approximately 240 tour dates. The 2027 Summer Series proposes 12 different tours each week during the June-through-September project period.
The program's longevity and breadth support the applicant's claim that this is an established and engaging cultural offering.

Take a Hike seems like a great concept. It gets the community out to learn about culturally and historically relevant places, encourages exercise and unity. I love the fact that tours are free in keeping an eye on financial accessibility!

Appreciate that some of the $35,000 budgeted covers actors' fees. The application suggests a process for incorporating participant feedback into refining the tours, but it is unclear to what extent community members and partner agencies are engaged in developing tours.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The applicant describes a large network of contractors and partners that brings programming to life. It does concern me that the ED is the person overseeing everything. Some insight into chain of command and who are the people supporting ED Cassidy would better support the organization's ability to execute planning.

LEADERSHIP & PROJECT MANAGEMENT: The application provides strong evidence of centralized project leadership through Executive Director Eileen Cassidy, who oversees planning, partnerships, marketing, logistics, and operations.
The project is additionally supported by contracted tour guides, historical actors, and marketing professionals.
QUALIFICATION OF PERSONNEL: The narrative describes qualifications effectively but provides relatively little detail about individual personnel beyond the Executive Director.
PLANNING PROCESS: The applicant provides strong evidence of an established annual planning and implementation process.
Planning begins in January and includes reviewing attendance, participant feedback, outcomes, tour content, potential new neighborhoods, partnerships, routes, recruitment, and training before the annual schedule is finalized.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

DEMONSTRATED EXPERIENCE: The application's description of Take a Hike as an established program operating since 2009 provides strong evidence of institutional experience in delivering this type of programming.
Its growth from three tours to more than 45 unique tours and approximately 240 tour dates further supports the organization's ability to execute a project of the proposed scale.
BUDGET & FINANCIAL PLANNING:The applicant provides strong evidence of financial planning and the ability to support the proposed project. The detailed project budget is balanced at $80,000 in income and $80,000 in expenses and identifies multiple sources of project revenue, including foundation support, corporate sponsorships, individual contributions, private-tour revenue, and the requested CAC grant. The $7,500 CAC request represents approximately 9.4% of the total project budget, demonstrating that the project is supported by substantial resources beyond the CAC request. Expenses are concentrated in personnel directly responsible for program delivery, administration, marketing, and program supplies.
EVALUATION & LEARNING: The application would be stronger if it identified specific outcomes, evaluation measures, previous findings, or examples of changes made because of evaluation results. The long-running nature of the program, defined management structure, annual planning cycle, professional personnel, and extensive implementation history provide convincing evidence of capacity. The principal weakness is not apparent inability to deliver the program, but rather limited specificity around evaluation results.

This application lacks specific goals or KPI, beyond attendance figures and qualitative feedback. Given the multi-decade growth implied in the application, this organization seems historical capable of successful producing its programs and events.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Ifilm Inc

Project Title: IFilm Cinema Program

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate how this project appears to strengthen the organization's sustainability by creating a tangible training-to-work pathway. The partnership with Studio Zero Media, which provides opportunities for project participants to work on active productions, moves the program beyond skills development and toward meaningful professional experience. Given the project's focus on populations historically excluded from traditional education and career systems, I can feel the care being taken to ensure participants are not simply trained and then left to navigate the industry on their own. Providing opportunities to gain experience while the organization continues to pursue additional professional income pathways creates a more intentional bridge between education, employment, and long-term career development.
I also appreciate the commitment to building a creative team composed of working Cleveland film professionals. Beyond bringing relevant industry knowledge into the program, this can provide participants with mentors who understand the local filmmaking ecosystem and can potentially serve as relatable examples of what a career in the field can look like. That representation feels particularly important when the project is intentionally working to expand access to people who have historically been excluded from traditional pathways into the industry.

Of particular note is this program's workforce development program which creates a pipeline for participants to find employment in the industry.

Organization has a clear public benefit - engaging with local partners in the area they intend to serve. The organization is clear on the audience they serve, their needs and barriers, and actively work to address them through the programming provided.

I really enjoyed how you were able to name communities based on socioeconomic status as well as racial/ethnic status. I think that something else I admire is that you're bringing arts and culture as a viable way of pursuing passion and getting rid of the "dying artist" artist narrative.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

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Organization is creating a relevant and engaging project for their intended target audience, building capacity of individuals to help them thrive and identifying was to be inclusive and promote equity.

iFILM presents a thoughtfully developed project with several notable strengths, including free access to hands-on education, mentorship, and workforce development. Particularly compelling is the program's vertically integrated approach, which creates a continuum of opportunities for participants to develop technical and creative skills, gain practical industry experience, and build pathways toward careers in media.
The project also intentionally addresses gaps in access and representation within the media industry by engaging populations that have historically had fewer opportunities to enter the field. By supporting participants not only in skill development but also in seeing their experiences, perspectives, and creative voices reflected within the industry, the project demonstrates strong artistic and cultural relevance. Overall, the program design clearly connects access, artistic development, mentorship, and meaningful workforce pathways.

I think that bolstering the film industry in the region is a strong, and also ambitions pursuit and I like how you named the variety of film and cinematic exposure that participants would have.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I appreciate the cultivated partnerships supporting this project, particularly the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority. Given the project's focus on communities that may experience economic barriers to education and employment, transportation access can be a significant factor in whether someone is realistically able to participate. This partnership therefore feels especially meaningful as a way to reduce a practical barrier to participation, while also creating opportunities to reach and promote the program directly to potential participants who may otherwise be difficult to engage.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The leadership team is also strong, with a depth of accredited professional experience that lends credibility to the project's implementation. What impresses me most, however, is that the team includes the organization's first graduate of the program. That feels like another meaningful expression of care: the people leading the work have not only professional expertise in community engagement and arts education, but also firsthand experience with the organization's pathway. That combination of professional knowledge and institutional memory can create a mentorship environment where participants are supported by people who understand both the systems they are navigating and the experience of moving through this particular program themselves.

Budget is balanced, organization is engaging a professional and qualified team to execute the project. This area could have been strengthened by including program goals and how the programs success/impact is measured and evaluated.

Kudos to the organization for presenting a balanced budget that accurately and appropriately accounts for both in-kind income and expenses. However, based on the scope and description of the proposed project, the overall budget appears quite modest relative to the level of programming and activities planned. This raises some questions about whether the available financial resources are sufficient to fully support the project as proposed especially for fees for teaching staff. At the same time, the inclusion of in-kind support demonstrates the organization's ability to leverage non-cash resources to help extend the project's capacity.

I can see that strength of the organizational participants and they have defined a rather small population to target for this opportunity. Additionally, they noted project is not conceptual but there are existing agreements and routes to move project forward.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: India Fest USA

Project Title: 2027 - 18th Annual IFUSA

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 6.6

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Applicant is providing programing with clear public benefit, understands who their audience is and has implemented multiple initiatives to be inclusive and engage diverse populations.
This section would have been further strengthened by detailing how they market to and directly engage with their audience, any valued partnerships and how they solicit feedback from their audience.

The project demonstrates strong public benefit through its emphasis on inclusion, belonging, and year-round opportunities for people of varying ages, cultures, and backgrounds, with a particular emphasis on the South Asian diaspora. Programming reaches a broad cross-section of the community, including emerging artists and performers, high school and arts students, as well as healthcare educators and professionals. This range of participants creates opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural engagement while bringing together individuals who may not otherwise interact. By creating shared artistic and cultural experiences, the project strengthens community connections, provides opportunities for learning and creative expression, and increases access to culturally relevant programming.

I think that there is always benefit in the intermingling of culture and arts, especially through a festival format in which we know there is a multitude of programming, foods, and offerings. That being said, what is being offered during this festival isn't quite clear for me and the benefit though clear from a youth and community health aspect; I'm unclear on how the community is benefitting from the arts or cultural aspects. Exposure to culture and arts is always beneficial but this isn't named and neither is how the intermingling of different cultures is occurring.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the intention to recognize that South Asian culture can resonate with and be meaningfully experienced by people beyond the South Asian community, as demonstrated through partnerships with Latin American and African American communities and the broader desire to collaborate with communities experiencing disadvantage. At the same time, given the supporting materials provided, I

would have appreciated seeing that representation more visibly reflected in the project. Representation can take many forms, and I think it is important to consider identities and experiences that may be less immediately visible, including people experiencing economic disadvantage, rather than assuming what representation looks like based solely on race or ethnicity. Making those intersections more apparent could further demonstrate how the organization understands the communities it hopes to engage.
I appreciate that both the organization's mission and this project are rooted in creating and solidifying a sense of belonging, for example, first-generation South Asians who may be geographically removed from their families, cultures, or places of origin.
The project also appears to create multiple pathways into that sense of community beyond artistic participation alone. Opportunities such as "You've Got Talent" provide a platform for creative expression, while scholarships invest in the next generation of creatives, STEAM curriculum creates opportunities for more robust educational engagement, and the health clinic addresses access to health services and wellness. Taken together, these offerings suggest an understanding that sustaining cultural roots and vibrant communities requires attention to artistic, educational, economic, and physical wellbeing alike.

This application would be strengthened by providing the narrative with more detail regarding the structure, scope, and nature of the artistic programs, i.e. clarifying the exact components of the arts programming and the specific evaluation methods used to assess their outcomes.

It seems they have a team experienced in the areas of programming they intend to provide however providing specific details about the key individuals/staff and their relevant experience would have further strengthened this section.
The organization seems to be delivering relevant programming based on initiatives implemented however giving concrete examples of how the organization collects and reviews audience feed back and listing any goals/program evaluation methods would further strengthen this section.

In terms of artistic and cultural vibrancy I think that a festival does that in and of itself - especially such a longstanding one. Where I think there could have been more explanations is what are the actual things happening in the festival, what are the different cultures and bridges that are being created, and also more specifics about initiatives.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Given the narrative, it is exciting to see the organization's growth in capacity, particularly the expansion from 3 to 8 Board members and from 15 to 58 volunteers. That growth suggests an increasing ability to support the scope of the work, and I appreciate that the organization is using that expanded capacity to pursue multicultural collaborations rather than limiting its growth to the South Asian community alone. I would have liked to learn more specifically about who comprises the team and the roles they play, but the narrative demonstrates that the leadership has the skills and experience necessary to mount a project of this nature. That confidence is further supported by the fact that this is not the organization's first time undertaking this type of work.
I do have some questions about the proposed budget, particularly the projected $9,000 in revenue from ticket sales, tuition, and related sources. I celebrate the organization's enthusiasm and belief in ability to generate earned revenue and understand that this is intended to be an ongoing project, but I would

have appreciated more information about how this projection was determined and what assumptions are informing it. Given the scale of the anticipated revenue, additional context around historical performance, pricing, enrollment or attendance expectations, and contingency planning would help me better understand how realistic the projection is and how the organization would respond if those revenues fall short.

The organizations appears to have a well rounded team with knowledge and representation needed to successfully carry out the proposed project.
Proposed budget totals are balanced however in-kind support figures do not align.

Organizational capacity for such a longstanding festival is not something that I'm worried about. They seem to know what they're doing, and for the amount of expected participants and the length of this annual festival I'm sure of their ability to complete the task.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: InMotion

Project Title: Community-based Music and Art Therapy Classes

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I was curious about the specifics of how the applicant conducts outreach to the community it serves and others who may want to join. The applicant notes that its community resides in Cuyahoga County and beyond, with "thoughtful and thorough outreach across the entirety" of the area. However, the community members who are Black only make up 12%, which is comparable to the neighborhood that the organization is located in (11.4% for Beachview). Knowing more about the actual process of outreach as well as how it conducts partnerships would give panelists a stronger insight into how the organization is being inclusive and inviting the broader public to become part of its community.

CLEARLY IDENTIFIES ITS COMMUNITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of a clearly defined community consisting of people living with Parkinson's disease and their care partners.
The application provides useful demographic context: 92% of participants are age 65 or older, 66% reside in Cuyahoga County, and approximately 12% of the client base is Black.
MEANINGFULLY CONNECTS THE PROJECT TO THE IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY:The applicant provides strong evidence that the proposed project is intentionally designed around the needs and experiences of people living with Parkinson's disease and their care partners.
The project includes singing, drumming, melodica, and visual-art activities. The applicant connects these activities with cognitive function, social interaction, breath support, articulation, posture, fine and gross motor skills, divided attention, creative expression, and meditative practice.
ACCESS & REMOVAL OF BARRIERS: The application provides strong evidence of financial accessibility because all proposed programming is offered free of charge.
Free participation is not incidental to the project. InMotion describes no-cost programming as a founding organizational commitment, supported through individuals, foundations, and businesses.
INCLUSION & BELONGING: The applicant provides strong evidence that belonging is integral to its service model, particularly for individuals who may experience isolation following a Parkinson's diagnosis.
InMotion describes its facility as providing fellowship, belonging, and empowerment and states that its commitment to inclusion extends to clients, care partners, staff, volunteers, and community partners. Participants also have opportunities to provide feedback about class format, content, and impact. There is more substance here than a generic assertion that “everyone is welcome.” The applicant connects belonging to the lived experience of its particular community.

However, the application provides less detail about specific physical, sensory, transportation, or language-access accommodations. Given that 92% of participants are 65 or older and all participants or their care partners are affected by Parkinson's disease, additional specificity about those access strategies could have strengthened an already persuasive case.
SCALE OF PARTICIPATION: The applicant provides strong evidence of sustained community engagement, projecting 90 participants per week and approximately 4,500 class visits during the grant period.
The organization's broader participation history also supports this projection: InMotion reports 36,909 total class visits in 2025, with participation on pace to exceed that figure in 2026.

Art and music therapy does wonders for everyone and having a safe space for people with Parkinson's Disease to experience art therapy is amazing. I feel that this is a great benefit for the public and especially for the members of the Parkinson's community. Keep up the amazing work

Programming provided to clients free-of-charge, provided by board-certified music therapists and designed with their community in mind.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

RELEVANCE OF ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES: The applicant provides strong evidence that music and visual art activities are relevant to the identified participants and are intentionally integrated into the organization's wellness programming.
Music activities include singing, drumming, and melodica, while the visual-art component allows participants to work with paint, pastels, acrylics, and other media.
The arts are not presented merely as entertainment added to another program. They constitute the activity through which participants engage creatively, socially, cognitively, and physically.
PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT: The application provides strong evidence of active rather than passive artistic participation.
Participants sing, discuss songs, play percussion instruments, improvise, learn to read music, play melodica, and create original visual artwork. The Art Workshop specifically encourages participants to create work from their own inspiration with guidance and support available when needed.
This is one of the application's strongest Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy elements. Participants are makers and creators, not simply audiences.
PROFESSIONAL ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP: The applicant provides strong evidence that qualified practitioners lead the artistic experiences.
Kevin Teplitzsky is identified as a board-certified music therapist with eight years of experience working with specialized populations. Stephen Greenberg has led InMotion's art-therapy program since 2018 and has educational experience in painting, art therapy, and nonprofit administration.
RESPONSIVENESS OF PROGRAM DESIGN: The applicant provides strong evidence of responsive program design because classes are adapted based upon current research, participant attendance, and participant progress.
Participants are also given opportunities to provide feedback and input concerning class format, content, and impact.
CULTURAL ARTISTIC DIMENSION VERSUS THERAPEUTIC DIMENSION:The application strongly demonstrates the relevance of arts participation but frames much of its case through the therapeutic

and health-related benefits of music and art, rather than extensively discussing artistic exploration, creative development, cultural expression, or artistic outcomes.
For example, singing, drumming, melodica, and visual art are frequently described in relation to motor skills, cognition, breath support, dopamine production, disease management, and quality of life.
The applicant could have strengthened Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy by telling us more about creative expression itself—what participants create, how their artistic interests influence programming, whether they develop artistic skills over time, or how creative accomplishments are recognized or shared.

Each stated area of healing is led by a professional with relevant qualifications and expertise. The application states the percentage of clients that identify as Black is 12%, which is far below the demographic percentage for Cleveland. Without more information on racial demographic distribution among residents experiencing Parkinson's disease, it is unclear if they are successfully reaching all of their target community, or what efforts they are making to do so.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The organization describes its teams of arts therapy professionals, who are incredibly well-qualified, showing their capacity to execute their mission through programming.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE: The applicant provides strong evidence of organizational capacity through more than a decade of specialized programming and substantial existing participation.
Founded in 2015, InMotion now provides more than 60 classes per week through four program modalities and recorded 36,909 class visits in 2025
PROJECT LEADERSHIP: The applicant provides strong evidence of qualified program leadership and clearly identified responsibilities.
In addition to the music and art professionals, Chief Program Officer Ben Rossi is responsible for planning, budgeting, and collaborating with instructors. The application also identifies specialized Parkinson's-related training and professional affiliations relevant to his role.
EVALUATION & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: The applicant provides strong evidence of an organizational culture of evaluation and learning.
InMotion reports ongoing data collection, analysis, and research regarding the effectiveness of its programming and partnerships with academic and medical institutions.
The applicant further reports that its outcomes-based research was highlighted at the 2026 World Parkinson Congress and published in Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation.
PLANNING & ADAPTATION: The applicant provides strong evidence of ongoing program planning and adaptation, with classes informed by current research, attendance, participant progress, and participant feedback.
The model appears established and repeatable.
FINANCIAL CAPACITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of sound financial planning and a project budget that is directly aligned with the proposed activities. The $27,000 budget is balanced, identifies both cash and in-kind resources, and clearly connects expenditures to project delivery. The majority of expenses directly support the qualified professionals delivering the music and art programming, while the remaining cash expenses provide supplies and instruments necessary for participant engagement. The detailed calculations for weekly classes further demonstrate that the budget is based on an identifiable program-delivery model rather than generalized estimates.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

This application could be more specific about how data collection, analysis and research efforts support long-term goals, but this applicant otherwise does a fantastic job describing the need for this program and its impact on their community. The budget is realistic, albeit modest, and they report growth in their numbers served. With 12 years in successful operation, this organization seems very capable of administering high-quality art therapy programming.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: International Community Council-Worldwide Intercultural Network (ICC-WIN)

Project Title: MOSAIC VOICES: International Children's Chorus

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate the organization's multicultural focus and approach, particularly its ability to balance honoring the specificities of individual cultures while also celebrating the breadth of cultures represented throughout the region. The combination of targeted cultural efforts and broader public offerings creates opportunities to engage across cultures, generations, and communities without suggesting that one approach to cultural engagement can serve everyone. I also appreciate that youth singers are identified as cultural ambassadors within the project. That framing demonstrates a meaningful investment in young people not simply as participants, but as active carriers and contributors to the region's evolving cultural landscape.
It is also encouraging to see that the organization is continuing to identify and cultivate leadership throughout the region as a way of expanding its multicultural network. Rather than allowing established partnerships to become static, this demonstrates an ongoing commitment to building new relationships and responding to the changing cultural landscape of the community. That intentionality can help the organization continue growing its reach while creating more opportunities for communities to see themselves reflected in and connected to the work.

This is application has provided strong evidence for how important this organization is to their stated community. However, the proposal would be strengthened by more specifics regarding the choral program, i.e. types of music or support materials that showcases their work.

The organization is providing a public benefit by building and strengthening relationships within it's target audience. Organization clearly outlined how talent will be recruited, this section would have been further strengthened by including how the recruitment and event itself is publicized and how their audience is engaged in the development of programming.

This project is a meaningful way to celebrate Greater Cleveland's diversity, heritage, and shared identity. Youth choir members add a particularly powerful dimension, using young voices to bring together cultures, generations, and communities through a shared artistic experience.
In a Northeast Ohio region where more than 120 countries are represented, this project recognizes and celebrates the tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity that exists within the broader community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Through music and the arts, the project creates opportunities to share culture, language, and heritage while fostering common understanding and mutual respect. The project's intergenerational and multicultural nature demonstrates the power of the arts to build connections across communities and contribute to the cultural vibrancy of Greater Cleveland.

I think there is a very real public benefit and in targeting the youth we can target the future; I also enjoy the very real call out of the sociopolitical state of the world and the ways in which community organizing can combat some of the worst parts of it.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate that singer recruitment will be conducted through a public process, as this creates a more accessible pathway for a wide array of community members to participate rather than relying primarily on personal recommendations or existing networks. I also appreciate the intentional use of music as something that extends beyond performance, to represent Cleveland's multicultural landscape while creating a space for people of different backgrounds to convene, connect, and experience something collectively. This presents a strong opportunity for the project to engage the broader public in cultural learning, particularly because encountering cultures beyond our own can help us recognize both the similarities that connect us and the distinct traditions, perspectives, and experiences that make our communities beautiful.
I would have appreciated seeing more of that multiculturalism reflected within the supporting materials. The materials demonstrate diversity, which is valuable, but if multiculturalism is a central purpose of the project, it would be helpful to see more of the intersections between the cultures and communities being represented. For example, showing how different cultural traditions, generations, or communities are already interacting through the organization's work would provide stronger evidence of the project's ability to move beyond simply presenting diverse individuals and toward creating genuine multicultural exchange.

It is clear the organization intends to engage with diverse audiences and their goals for the programs platform, however it is unclear how they are ensuring the programming is desired/relevant to those communities they wish to serve, how feedback is solicited and considered to measure impact/success and inform programming.

This being said, I think the project itself for Mosaic voices lacked details about what is actually happening. I'm unclear of the actual approach, the theme of the project, logistics, or even the intent behind it. I know it's supposed to bridge different voices but I felt like I had more details about the summit than I did the project that was being proposed.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Given the project's multicultural focus, it is refreshing to see a leadership structure that is itself predominantly multicultural rather than operating from a more monolithic perspective. That diversity of experience can bring valuable cross-cultural frameworks to the organization's decision-making and help inform how the organization approaches programming, partnerships, and community engagement. The current leadership team appears well equipped to mount this work, though I do have some questions

about capacity. With a staff of two responsible for producing multicultural programming and events, I would encourage the organization to consider how it can continue bringing additional people into the work as its reach grows. Expanding the team or developing additional operational support could help ensure that the organization's ambitions remain sustainable without placing too much responsibility on a small number of staff.
I was also impressed by the budget document and the level of detail provided. The clarity around projected income and expenses, along with the supporting information, gave me confidence that the organization has a thoughtful understanding of its financial position and the resources required to execute the project. That level of transparency was particularly helpful in assessing the project's overall feasibility and financial security.

Key staff is experienced and capable of carrying out proposed project. Budget is balanced however in-kind support is listed in income but not detailed under the expense section.

I think organizational capacity is strong with pre-existing community partners and other buy in from community partners.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Jennings Center for Older Adults

Project Title: Gateway to Culture

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 7.25

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I applaud this applicant's solicitation of community input in the programmatic design process, and even more so, their ability to articulate exactly how that feedback helped shape their program direction.

The organization did a strong job showing the Public Benefit of its project by detailing its history of previous programming and how it engages its defined community in planning future presentations and activities.

The specificity of the audience reached is interesting. It is unclear to me what programming is being done and how it will serve the communities mentioned.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The Gateway to Culture program will include the artistic community and help keep them engaged with the elderly community as well, which is important because sometimes the elderly community is forgotten.

This applicant did a fantastic job identifying the goal of 'belonging' in its proposal. From the target audience of seniors to the intentional listening as part of the program design, to the mindful approach of removing barriers to participation (cost, transportation, physical accessibility), this applicant ably demonstrated an ability to create and deliver a relevant, necessary, and engaging series of cultural events to its community.

The org did a fair job illustrating the artistic and cultural vibrancy of its project. The anticipated artists & performers listed was helpful. Including a list of previous years' artists, performers, and activities that illustrate the breadth and depth of the programming, along with the cultural, racial, and content diversity, would be additionally helpful in future applications.

Again, there is a lack of clarity on what the project and programming really is in order to understand how arts and culture are being integrated.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org did a strong job showing its organizational capacity to produce the project. There is an experienced team in place, and the org has a history of successfully producing the project in years past.

It is hard to know if the organization can support what is being done without clearly stating what will be done.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland Ohio

Project Title: Blossoming!

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

This reviewer appreciated the collaborative methodology of determining the project theme. This project listened to its client artists, valued their desires and needs, and is shaping a significant art undertaking in alignment with this input.

The organization did a strong job showing the Public benefit of its project by clearly identifying its targeted community and by showing how the project is adjusted and improved over time based on client artist feedback.

Seems to be a really timely and focused project.

The Blossoming event will benefit adults with mental health issues.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The adults with mental health issues will be able to express themselves artistically and individually.

The applicant did a tremendous job of demonstrating its commitment to belonging through its targeted outreach to and service for client artists with mental illness, to the use of art therapy sessions, and finally by sharing the works of these artists in a variety of community spaces. The exhibition of work, as stated in the application, is a celebration of creativity, but also a chance to foster spaces of belonging and understanding. Really great application.

The org does a strong job of illustrating the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of the project by showing how the client artist's interest in Freda Kahlo inspired this theme for 2027.

Lots of artist opportunities, as well as tying into their interpersonal needs, create strong support for those involved.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org did a strong job defining its organizational capacity. The parent org has a long history, and the professional team that oversees the project is skilled and experienced.

Incorporating the use of interns is a cool approach, creating additional support and resume experience for the interns.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Jewish Federation of Cleveland

Project Title: Cleveland Israel Arts Connection: Roe Green Gallery Exhibitions

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 6.2

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Jewish Federation of Cleveland has a powerful commitment to serving the members of its community. I found their mission quite moving, but I did not read much about their connections outside of the population that they serve. Their relationship building seems to be mostly internal. They did mention hosting meetings and events with government representatives and that the Roe Green Gallery is open to the public, but I wanted to see more focus on how exactly they intend to introduce the greater Cleveland population to their spaces. They mostly allude to cultural connections within their own community, with a reference to Latin-Jewish Roundtable and Black and Jewish community members.

The benefit to the Jewish people of Cleveland is evident. I would like to know how they plan outreach to other communities.

Applicant is thorough in the explanation of demographics. Helped to understand the landscape of impact. I'm curious about how well the organization brings in non-Jewish community members for these exhibitions.

This application demonstrated partnerships to help spread the word and welcome "diverse communities," but most of the community engagement strategies appear focused on existing networks and Federation audiences. Would have liked to hear more about how new residents, who potentially have not engaged with the Federation previously, could be reached to experience these incredible installations.

I can see evidence of intentionality in inviting those in its geographical area, including those across income, health, etc. However, as it has stated, Israel is the home of three major world religions, as well as many religious minorities; The application is missing evidence on how the organization is inviting or accessible to people of other faiths, especially as it has stated: "immigrants and LGBtQ+" (faiths unspecified) are experiencing increased harassment.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

CIAC's Roe Green Gallery has the appropriate platform to help artists thrive through the Federation's position in their community space. They have emphatically shown they are willing and able to invite members of their audience to enjoy their art exhibits. I wish I saw more concrete details about how their work connects to diversity and equity among the greater public.

The Israeli artists bring a unique perspective to the community. I'd like to see more about the type of programming planned to accompany the exhibitions and learn how the Federation intends to create conversations about this work with the non-Jewish population of Cleveland.

3 strong artists. A very strong team of art and cultural professionals.

The variety of works presented, as well as the inclusion of both national and international artists, is appealing and intentional. The curation focuses on both the beauty of the art as well as the relatability with those who experience it (ex., coping with cancer). I love the inclusion of multidisciplinary approaches (and congrats on the inclusion of video for the first time).

I can see some evidence that the applicant engages a qualified team to operate the program. Some of the members have listed credentials; some do not. While I can see that CIAC's advisory group engages 90 people, I don't see the criteria and rubric they ar

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

They seem to have a strong capacity to maintain their financial position due to their self-funding, corporate sponsorships, and a multitude of other sources. They do seem to have a plan to evolve beyond the proposed exhibitions, but I am still not confident about their organizational commitment to fostering a culture of belonging among members of the broader Cleveland community.

The project has significant support from individual contributors. They have the organizational capacity to fulfill their plan.

Based on the application, the Jewish Federation of Cleveland has a clear history of leadership and an impressive track record of partnerships with a variety of organizations/artists. I have no doubt this organization has the capacity to pull off this large event. However, I was hopeful to see evaluative methods within. Beyond attendance, how will success be measured? Are there ways for deeper impact beyond exposure to (very thoughtful, intentional) exhibitions?

I can see evidence of financial prudence to maintain the program, with the program breaking even.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Jones Road Family Development Corporation

Project Title: Literacy Through the Arts Summer Academy

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application states the specific neighborhood and identifies it's youth as greatly in need of arts programming. It makes the claim that such programming supports educational outcomes, and it gives an example of a program designed to support math and literacy; however, there is not much supporting evidence for why they believe this programming leads to such outcomes (for example, citing peer reviewed research) or how they track such outcomes. Glad to see breakfast and lunch provided through a partner organization.

CLEARLY IDENTIFIES THE COMMUNITY: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of a clearly identified community, primarily children and families in Cleveland's Slavic Village neighborhood and surrounding communities, as well as participating teenagers and teachers.
JRFD describes itself as a Slavic Village-based organization focused on youth literacy. It reports that approximately 68% of neighborhood residents live below 185% of the federal poverty level and explains that arts instruction is often unavailable through schools or unaffordable to families. All JRFD programs are therefore offered free of charge.
The community is identifiable, but the applicant's direct response to “Define your community” is relatively brief. More demographic information about participating children and families would have strengthened this section.
MEANINGFULLY CONNECTS ITS PROJECT TO THE COMMUNITY: The applicant provides strong evidence that the proposed project responds to an identified community need by providing free arts and literacy programming to elementary and middle-school students.
ACCESS & REMOVAL OF BARRIERS: The applicant provides strong evidence of financial accessibility by offering the Summer Academy at no cost, specifically identifying affordability as a barrier to arts participation for neighborhood families.
This is one of the application's clearest Public Benefit strengths.
The project also includes breakfast and lunch through the Cleveland Catholic Diocese Summer Meals Program, which provides an additional practical support for participating children.
The six-week academy serves students in grades 1–8 through music, instruments, vocal ensemble, theater, dance, visual arts, and creative writing. Teen peer mentors ages 14–17 also participate by assisting instructors and mentoring younger students.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of community outreach through newspaper advertising, flyers distributed to local schools, communication with parents and school administrators, and a culminating community showcase.
The applicant reports that children come from public, charter, and parochial schools and states that 122 children represented eight Slavic Village schools in its described program experience. The culminating event invites the broader community to participate in the showcase, fellowship, dinner, line dancing, and other activities.
There is good evidence of outreach and community participation.
However, the application tells us relatively little about how families or young people participate in program planning or provide feedback, for example, there is no clearly articulated participant-feedback mechanism.
INCLUSION & BELONGING: The applicant provides fair evidence of inclusion and belonging, primarily through free access, neighborhood-based recruitment, participation across different school systems, peer mentorship, and the community celebration.
The application demonstrates access, particularly economic access, better than it demonstrates an intentional inclusion and belonging strategy.
The response to the question specifically asking how the organization will "be inclusive and foster belonging for all people" largely describes recruitment and program activities.
There is little information about disability access, adaptive instruction, transportation, language access, culturally responsive practices, or other potential barriers.
EXPECTED PARTICIPATION: There is a small documentation issue.The Project Basics section identifies 300 expected participants and/or audience members. However, the project narrative says the academy itself will serve up to 120 youth, while another response refers to 122 children.
This may be completely reasonable if the 300 includes the audience at the culminating community event, but the application does not explicitly explain the difference.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This applicant clearly notes the number of arts and cultural professionals that execute its programming, all who have strong education and experience. I really appreciate the examples of educators with master's degrees, college students who are teaching, as well as the assistant director who was previously a student. There is a clear support system who those are perhaps less experienced. This is strong support that they can achieve the organizational mission.

RELEVANCE OF ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING: The applicant provides strong evidence that arts participation is central to the project rather than peripheral to it. Students receive instruction in instrumental music, vocal ensemble, theater, dance, visual arts, and creative writing, integrating multiple artistic disciplines into the six-week academy.
The breadth of artistic experiences is a significant strength.
ACTIVE ARTISTIC PARTICIPATION: The application provides strong evidence of active creative participation because children learn and practice multiple art forms rather than serving primarily as audience members.
The culminating showcase gives participants an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned to families and the broader community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

INTEGRATION OF ARTS & LITERACY: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of a distinctive program model integrating arts instruction with literacy and academic skill development.
JRFD explains that music instruction and ensemble participation are coupled with math and literacy activities and that the organization believes exposure to music and arts contributes to academic success. The concept is compelling.
What is missing is more detail explaining how the integration actually occurs. For example, how does creative writing connect with music? How does theater reinforce reading? How does ensemble instruction connect with math?
The application asserts the relationship more than it demonstrates the curriculum.
QUALIFIED ARTISTIC INSTRUCTORS: The applicant provides strong evidence of qualified music instructors, with four music teachers holding bachelor's degrees in music education and two also holding master's degrees.
The reading/theater teacher has graduate-level education in literature, while college students provide dance instruction under supervision of the summer director.
The qualifications are particularly convincing for music.
There is less information about qualifications for visual arts, dance, creative writing, and theater, despite those being identified as significant components of the project.
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT: The applicant provides fair evidence of artistic development, primarily through its description of instruction, ensemble participation, and a culminating showcase.
The application could be substantially stronger by describing:
- what artistic skills participants are expected to develop;
- how progress is assessed;
- what students create or perform;
- how instruction changes according to age/experience;
- how returning students advance;
- how the culminating showcase reflects learning.

The programming presented seems exciting and the team gathered looks robust in their background and and experience.

This program does pay four music teachers with appropriate educational experience, one literary education expert, and some pre-professional/college student dance instructors. Serving either 80, 100 or 120 children (the application provides different projections, likely reflecting fluctuation in participants each year) is admirable. It's unclear if all educators are working with groups of children, but assuming 8 instructors working with 80 students makes each a group of 10 (for example), it feels like the group sizes are manageable enough for meaningful learning and growth.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE: The applicant provides strong evidence of longstanding community-service experience.
JRFD became a 501(c)(3) in 2008 and traces its roots to community programming beginning in 1987. Its work evolved from community hunger meals to tutoring, music and arts instruction, summer programming, and literacy development. There is clearly an established history of service.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

PROJECT TEAM: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of an appropriate project team, including a summer director with a master's degree in social work and urban youth experience, music educators, a reading/theater instructor, college dance instructors, an assistant director, and 14 high-school assistants.
FINANCIAL CAPACITY: The applicant provides fair evidence of financial capacity but the project budget contains significant inconsistencies that make it difficult to fully understand the financial plan. The detailed budget identifies $69,500 in project income compared with $34,800 in reported project expenses, leaving $34,700 in project income unexplained. Additionally, the presentation of the $6,000 facility-rental in-kind contribution and the reported expense total would benefit from clarification.

I would love more information on how success looks to to in reference to your program.

The budget is a bit confusing with two in-kind amounts valued at $6,000, which might actually be two separate in-kind line-items or may be a duplication on the expenses. Either way, this program projects a very healthy surplus, which is great, but the application does not clarify why the program needs excess funding from CAC, and what the surplus might be directed toward.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Lake View Cemetery Foundation

Project Title: 2027 Summer Concert Series at Lake View Cemetery

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The outreach that the applicant does to make sure that its free programming is available to all is great. However, evidence of public benefit could have been stronger by providing examples of where its community has been invited into conversation regarding programming. Do they have a say in the kinds of music that is presented in the concert series as part of the feedback process? Some concrete examples from past series and their respective popularity could strengthen this section. It could be as simple as, "in past years, our most popular shows included jazz, R&B, classical" out of the previously mentioned genres.

CLEARLY IDENTIFIES ITS COMMUNITY: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of the community it seeks to serve, defining it geographically and broadly rather than around a particular demographic population.
Lake View describes its location at the intersection of Cleveland, East Cleveland, and Cleveland Heights and within the University Circle arts and culture district. The organization identifies its community as people across ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, racial and ethnic identities, and religious beliefs who may benefit from the site's arts, culture, history, horticulture, and green space.
MEANINGFULLY CONNECTS THE PROJECT WITH THE COMMUNITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of public-facing community engagement through five free outdoor concerts featuring local musicians and intended for audiences of different ages and interests.
The series features rock, soul, jazz, gospel, R&B, and classical music. The applicant anticipates families with children and adults of all ages and projects approximately 2,500 attendees.
FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of financial accessibility because all five concerts are offered free of charge. The budget reinforces this point by showing $0 in ticket/admission revenue.
The applicant also explicitly states that CAC funding would help it continue offering the concert series without charge.
OUTREACH: The applicant provides strong evidence of a diversified outreach strategy using email, social media, Lake View's website, local event-promotion sites, local-publication advertising, and promotional materials distributed through area shops, restaurants, and libraries.
The outreach plan extends beyond the organization's existing mailing list, which is important for demonstrating broader public access.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

INCLUSION & BELONGING: The applicant provides fair evidence of an intentional inclusion and belonging strategy.
The organization emphasizes that concerts are open to everyone, are free, offer multiple musical genres intended to appeal to Cuyahoga County's diverse population, and are scheduled on Sunday afternoons to maximize the ability of residents to attend.
The application demonstrates access well: free + public + broad promotion + varied music + weekend scheduling.
But it provides considerably less evidence concerning how barriers to participation have been identified and addressed.
For example, the application does not discuss physical accessibility, transportation, accessible seating, parking, language access, accommodations, or targeted engagement with communities that historically may not view a cemetery as a cultural gathering space.
Given the unique setting, there was an opportunity for a compelling discussion about how Lake View makes this historic space feel welcoming and culturally relevant to different communities.
COMMUNITY VOICE & FEEDBACK: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of responsiveness to its audience by collecting attendee feedback to inform and improve future events.
This is positive, but the application doesn't tell us what it has learned from that feedback or provide an example of a programming change resulting from it.
SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ARTISTS:The applicant provides strong evidence of direct support for local musicians, providing paid public-performance opportunities and exposure to audiences the musicians might not otherwise reach.
The applicant specifically identifies this as a benefit of the series. 2027_Project_Support_Grant_Lake...
The budget backs up that statement: $8,400 of the $17,516 project budget is allocated to musicians, making artist compensation the project's largest cash expense.
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This organization cites a wide range of arts and culture benefits to the surrounding communities (arboretum, historic architecture, wellness activities), in addition to the free concert series. That said, the application states that CAC support is specifically for the concert series, which is reinforced by the budget document. This application states that the organization is unable to identify the demographics of its visitors, so it is difficult to assess whether access and participation is equitable among all area residents.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This applicant shows a great commitment offering a wide range of programming, as well as recognizing that giving local musicians a platform for performance contributed directly to their capacity building.

RELEVANCE & VARIETY OF ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING: The applicant provides strong evidence of varied and potentially engaging musical programming through five concerts featuring local artists representing rock, soul, jazz, gospel, R&B, and classical music.
The range of genres supports the applicant's intention to attract audiences with varied musical interests.
SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ARTISTS: The applicant provides strong evidence of direct support for local musicians, providing paid public-performance opportunities and exposure to audiences the musicians might not otherwise reach.
The applicant specifically identifies this as a benefit of the series.

The budget backs up that statement: $8,400 of the $17,516 project budget is allocated to musicians, making artist compensation the project's largest cash expense.
ENGAGING CULTURAL SETTING: The applicant provides strong evidence of a distinctive cultural setting that adds another dimension to the concert experience.
Lake View is a historic 285-acre garden cemetery containing architecturally significant buildings, monuments, memorials, sculpture, gardens, and an extensive arboretum. Concert attendees are invited to experience these cultural and historic resources in addition to attending the musical performances.
ARTISTIC SELECTION AND CURATORIAL PROCESS:
The application provides fair evidence regarding the artistic/curatorial process used to develop the concert series.
We know that Foundation staff contracts local performers and that Special Programs Manager Adam Clemens has a background in music and the arts.
However, the application doesn't explain:
- how musicians are selected;
- how the five concerts are programmed as a series;
- how genre decisions are made;
- whether audience feedback influences artist selection;
- how new or underrepresented artists are identified;
- what makes the proposed 2027 programming distinctive from prior years.
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ART: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of an engaging audience experience through free live musical performance in a distinctive historic environment.
However, this is fundamentally a presentational model: musicians perform and audiences attend.
The musical diversity, local artist participation, artist compensation, and historic setting are strong. The primary gap is limited information about artistic selection, curation, and the intentional development of the 2027 series.

This project really excited me. Using cemeteries as a place for learning and art and as a gathering place not just to remember loved ones but as a community touchstone is something that I am very much passionate about and the programming described here sounds like such a treat for the community.

Glad to see the largest part of the concert program budget dedicated to compensating musicians, which the application states are local talent.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE: The applicant provides strong evidence of institutional stability and experience.
Lake View Cemetery dates to 1869, while the Foundation was established in 1984 to support preservation, education, and public programming. The Foundation reports professional fundraising, program-management, and event-planning staff.
EXPERIENCED PROJECT TEAM: The applicant provides strong evidence of an experienced and appropriately structured team. Roles are clear and directly related to implementation.
PROJECT PLANNING & LOGISTICS: The applicant provides strong evidence of the operational capacity necessary to execute the concert series.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Foundation staff handle performer contracts, pre- and post-event promotion, and event logistics, while trained volunteers assist attendees, provide information, and support event operations.
EVALUATIONS: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of program evaluation through attendee feedback used to plan and improve subsequent events.
An example of an actual improvement resulting from past feedback would have elevated my assessment to strong evidence.
FINANCIAL CAPACITY: Lake View's detailed budget is clean, balanced, internally consistent, and closely aligned with the narrative.
The applicant provides strong evidence of responsible and transparent project budgeting.
The $17,516 project budget is balanced, identifies the source of matching funds, appropriately reflects volunteer in-kind support on both sides of the budget, and allocates the majority of cash expenditures directly to musicians and costs necessary to produce the public events.

Key personnel listed seem to have many years of experience in their roles. The organization seems to be successful in engaging volunteers and this application is made stronger by the calculation of their in-kind contributions of time/labor.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: LakewoodAlive

Project Title: Front Porch Concert Series 2027

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The applicant's thorough explanation of how it engages its diverse community through its accessible venues/locations, programming selections, and partnerships shows its dedication to building and strengthening relationship, being inclusive and engaging diverse populations, and being accessible and inviting to its community and the broader public. This section could be strengthened by including more information about how programming recommendations from the community (who are not volunteers) are collected.

LakewoodAlive identifies Lakewood as an inner-ring community of approximately 50,000 residents within 5.5 square miles. The application notes that 10.3% of residents live in poverty, nearly 40% of Lakewood City Schools students receive free or reduced-price lunch, and 35 languages are spoken at the high school. It also identifies an increasing number of seniors experiencing poverty.
This is significantly stronger than simply stating that the project serves “the general public.” The applicant demonstrates familiarity with the community in which the project operates.
MEANINGFULLY CONNECTS THE PROJECT WITH THE COMMUNITY: The applicant provides strong evidence that the project is intentionally designed as a community-building activity rather than solely as a series of musical performances.
The concerts are presented in public gathering spaces, including the Main Library in downtown Lakewood and Madison Park in the historically underserved Birdtown neighborhood. The applicant explicitly connects the project with strengthening community, activating public spaces, supporting neighborhood vitality, and creating welcoming places for residents to gather.
FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of financial accessibility because all nine concerts are offered free of charge.
LakewoodAlive explicitly identifies free performances as a strategy for removing financial barriers.
GEOGRAPHIC & TRANSPORTATION ACCESS:
The applicant provides strong evidence that accessibility has been considered in selecting project locations.
Concerts occur in accessible public spaces that can be reached by foot, bicycle, public transportation, or automobile. The applicant also notes that Lakewood has more than 180 miles of sidewalks and that both concert locations are accessible through multiple transportation modes.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

INCLUSION & BELONGING: The applicant provides strong evidence of intentional efforts to foster inclusion and belonging through free participation, diverse artistic representation, accessible public spaces, partnerships, neighborhood-based programming, and family-friendly engagement.
The applicant states that artist and genre selection is informed by its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan. It partners with artists, Lakewood Public Library, Lakewood City Schools, sponsors, and identity-based organizations to promote the series. Staff and volunteers actively welcome attendees, answer questions, and provide sidewalk chalk to encourage families to gather and interact.
INTENTIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH AN UNDERSERVED NEIGHBORHOOD: The applicant provides strong evidence of intentional geographic inclusion through programming in Birdtown, which it identifies as a historically underserved and significantly impoverished neighborhood.
The series concludes with two performances at Madison Park, and LakewoodAlive reports that it has spent nearly a decade intentionally bringing resources into this neighborhood.
COMMUNITY REACH: The applicant provides strong evidence of meaningful public reach, projecting approximately 1,500 attendees across nine concerts.
The organization also reports broader experience producing free large-scale events that collectively attract approximately 50,000 people annually.

This concert series seems like a massive benefit to the community by bringing everyone together to enjoy some good music together. I appreciate the attention to economic accessibility by making the series free to all.

Appreciate that this application references a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan and seems to understand the racial and economic demographics of its community. This application could benefit from explaining how the organization measures the progress towards their DEI plan.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The applicant's programming exhibits artistic and cultural vibrancy through its process of selecting performances a year in advance and including a large group of people in these conversations, depending ensuring that that programming is relevant to or created with its community.

VARIETY & RELEVANCE OF ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING: The applicant provides strong evidence of culturally varied and engaging programming through a nine-concert lineup intentionally designed to include local and regional musicians representing multiple genres and cultural backgrounds.
INTENTIONAL ARTISTIC SELECTION: The applicant provides strong evidence of an intentional curatorial process rather than simply contracting available performers.
Planning begins nearly a year in advance. Staff and volunteers research artists, gather recommendations, and use regional arts resources—including the Cleveland Arts Events Artist Directory—to develop a lineup intended to reflect the diversity of Cuyahoga County.
EVOLUTION OF THE ARTISTIC PROGRAM: The applicant provides strong evidence that the series has evolved artistically in response to the organization's broader community orientation.
The Front Porch Concert Series originally emphasized jazz but has expanded to include artists and genres representing a broader range of musical and cultural traditions.
SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS: The applicant provides strong evidence of meaningful financial support for participating artists.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The project allocates $10,700 of its $17,200 budget directly to artist compensation, with artist payments ranging from $1,100 to $1,500 across nine performances. Budget FPC
That means approximately 62% of the entire project budget directly compensates artists.
QUALITY OF PRESENTATION: The applicant provides strong evidence that appropriate resources are committed to the quality of the live-performance experience.
In addition to artist fees, the budget includes $5,400 for a professional sound technician — $600 for each of nine performances.
The application identifies David Kennedy, who has 20 years of experience, as the sound professional supporting each concert.
ARTISTIC ENGAGEMENT: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of audience engagement with the arts.
The concerts create accessible opportunities for audiences to experience a varied range of live music, but the primary model remains presentational—artists perform and audiences listen.
That is not inherently a weakness. However, there is less evidence of deeper artistic participation, artist/audience dialogue, educational interpretation, workshops, or other opportunities for audiences to engage directly in the creative process.

Glad to see the budget prioritizing artist fees and related expenses that support professional creatives.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY & EXPERIENCE: The applicant provides strong evidence of organizational experience and established community programming capacity.
LakewoodAlive was founded in 2004 and has evolved from a downtown revitalization organization into a citywide nonprofit addressing housing, small-business development, neighborhood vitality, and community events. Its free large-scale events collectively attract approximately 50,000 people annually.
PROJECT LONGEVITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of demonstrated project sustainability and experience, with the Front Porch Concert Series entering its 17th season.
A 17-year program history significantly reduces uncertainty around the organization's ability to execute the project.
QUALIFIED TEAM: The applicant provides strong evidence of a clearly defined and experienced implementation team.
Executive Director Jo Higgins has event-management experience and has managed the series for four years. Event & Volunteer Coordinator Megan Futo brings large-scale event experience. Marketing Coordinator Ava Olic has four years of experience with the series and manages outreach to approximately 10,000 newsletter subscribers and a social-media reach exceeding 20,000. Development Manager Kathleen Upper supports fundraising, while experienced sound professional David Kennedy provides technical production.
PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION: The applicant provides strong evidence of advance planning and operational readiness.
Planning begins nearly a year before implementation and includes artist research and selection, contracting, scheduling, sound production, marketing, staffing, event logistics, and contingency planning for inclement weather.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

FINANCIAL CAPACITY:The applicant provides strong evidence of responsible financial planning through a balanced $17,200 project budget, diversified project revenue, substantial direct investment in artists, and clearly identified production and promotional expenses.

This program has continued well over 20 years. Although the strong reliance on volunteers to execute can be concerning for some organizations, the continuity of this concert series and its expansion into genres beyond jazz suggest it is likely to sustain in this grant cycle and well beyond. This application could benefit from key performance metrics and goals to describe long-term expectations, beyond the number of performances.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Larchmere PorchFest

Project Title: Larchmere PorchFest 2027

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Larchmere PorchFest brings a diverse population together to engage with each other.

This reviewer appreciated the program development process outlined in the application, including the labor-intensive process of collaboration. Specific mention is made of the number of community associations, volunteers, neighborhood residents, and other creative workers (musicians, poets), which demonstrates a fundamental belief in the power of co-creation and power-sharing.

The organization did a strong job showing the Public Benefit of its project by detailing how it involves local businesses and neighborhood orgs in its planning process.

Evidence of a long-established presence in the community with volunteer opportunities. Reaching up to 5,000 is impressive.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The Larchmere PorchFest will include diverse genres of musical performances to include as many cultures as possible.

The org did a fair job illustrating the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of its project. In addition to the details of the planning process that were shared in the project Description, the actual details of the fest would have been helpful: schedule of the day, number of hones/venues & performers/bands, additional activities, etc. (much must be inferred from the attached map). Also, a list of recent bands & performers along with their genres would illustrate the diversity of offerings.

The organization, planning, and execution seems to incorporate many different artistic mediums as well as many opportunities for people across many demographics.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org did a strong job showing its organizational capacity. This is a "working board" that will hopefully grow one day into a governance board with paid staff. Until then, this project is a labor of love produced by dedicated and experienced individuals.

Really strong application with clear organizational and community support.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: LGBT Community Center Greater Cleveland

Project Title: Pride in the CLE 2027: Speak Out Stage

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

CLEARLY IDENTIFIES ITS COMMUNITY: Evaluation statement:
The applicant provides strong evidence of a clearly defined community based primarily on identity and shared experience, while also recognizing significant diversity within that community.
The applicant defines its community as LGBTQ+ people throughout northeast Ohio across ages, races, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic backgrounds, abilities, and faiths. It further describes serving people across the lifespan, from children and families to older adults.
MEANINGFULLY CONNECTS THE PROJECT TO IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY: The applicant provides strong evidence that the project is intentionally connected to its identified community, not simply presented to that community.
The Speak Out Stage is described as a platform specifically for local LGBTQ+ artists, performers, activists, youth, artists of color, and emerging artists. Programming includes live music, spoken word, dance, drag, performance art, DJs, storytelling, and interactive experiences.
COMMUNITY VOICE IN PROJECT PLANNING: The applicant provides strong evidence of community-informed planning, with community members participating in shaping rather than merely attending the project.
A diverse ambassador committee consisting of staff, board members, and representatives from more than 15 LGBTQ+ organizations helps integrate community feedback into Pride programming. For 2027, the Center specifically plans to involve youth through the Pride Ambassador Group, gather feedback from recent performers, and incorporate youth recommendations into performer recruitment, programming, and audience-engagement strategies.
INCLUSION & BELONGING: The applicant provides strong evidence that inclusion and belonging are embedded in the project's design and purpose.
The Speak Out Stage intentionally centers LGBTQ+ voices across different identities and experiences, with particular attention to youth, young adults, emerging artists, artists of color, and performers with intersecting identities whose voices the applicant describes as underrepresented in Greater Cleveland's public arts spaces.
FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of financial accessibility because the Speak Out Stage is part of a free public festival.
Its central location within the Cleveland Mall also allows festival attendees to encounter performances as they circulate among community organizations, vendors, food trucks, and the nearby Family Space.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY:The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence that accessibility is incorporated into event planning, but the application could provide greater specificity regarding accommodations. The narrative explicitly identifies “safety and accessibility planning” as part of the 2027 implementation process, and approximately 200 volunteers support logistics, accessibility efforts, and attendee engagement.
SCALE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: The applicant provides strong evidence of substantial public reach through its placement within a major public festival, although the specific audience reach attributable to the CAC-supported Speak Out Stage is not separately quantified.

This organization clearly understands and serves its local LGBTQ+ community.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

BREADTH OF ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES: The applicant provides strong evidence of diverse and engaging artistic programming encompassing live music, spoken word, dance, drag, performance art, DJs, storytelling, and interactive experiences.
CULTURAL RELEVANCE: The applicant provides strong evidence that artistic content is culturally relevant to the community being served, because the stage specifically elevates LGBTQ+ artistic expression, storytelling, lived experience, and cultural visibility.
SUPPORT FOR LOCAL & EMERGING ARTISTS: The applicant provides strong evidence of meaningful opportunities for local and emerging LGBTQ+ artists, particularly youth and young adults.
The 2026 stage featured more than 19 performers across disciplines, ages, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences. The applicant reports increasing participation among youth and emerging artists and intends to expand those opportunities in 2027.
ARTISTS COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP: The applicant provides strong evidence of an unusually close relationship between artistic expression and community voice.
Artists are not simply booked as entertainment. The stage is intentionally designed as a platform through which LGBTQ+ artists communicate stories, experiences, identities, creativity, and perspectives to the broader community.
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT: The applicant provides strong evidence of active audience engagement, including interactive performances and a centrally located stage designed to encourage attendees to stop, listen, dance, interact, and connect with performers and community resources.
The application reports that the stage became one of the festival's most dynamic gathering spaces in 2026, particularly among young and diverse audiences
CURATORIAL PROCESS: The applicant provides strong evidence of an intentional and community-informed curatorial process.
Program Manager Alyssa Roberts leads planning in collaboration with artists and community partners, while focus groups, youth participation, performer feedback, and the Ambassador Group inform recruitment and programming.

The Speak Out stage (great name by the way) seems like an amazing opportunity to give the community a voice, expression and amazing art. This event can't help but to be vibrant!

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Disappointed to see that the amount paid to artists/creative professionals is a relatively small portion of the budget. However, the program does seem to feature a wide range of art forms and performers. The emphasis on empowering youth in programmatic decisions ensures relevance to the community.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The applicants notes a strong and large network of supporters that make up its steering committee and volunteer corps. This, along with the explanation of the planning process led by qualified staff, shows its commitment to setting goals, measuring progress, and evolving, and evaluating organizational processes and structures to ensure a culture of belonging where everyone can thrive.

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY: The applicant provides strong evidence of substantial institutional experience and stability.
The Center was established in 1975 and has operated for more than five decades, evolving from a grassroots organization into a regional nonprofit providing direct services, advocacy, education, community programming, and cultural events.
EXPERIENCE DELIVERING THE PROJECT: The applicant provides strong evidence of demonstrated capacity to deliver the proposed program, with Pride in the CLE entering its 12th year and the Speak Out Stage already operating as an established component of the festival.
QUALIFIED TEAM: The applicant provides strong evidence of an appropriately structured implementation team with clear responsibilities.
A steering committee includes staff, board members, LGBTQ+ advocates, community leaders, artists, and corporate partners. Program Manager Alyssa Roberts has overseen the Speak Out Stage for three years; Managing Director Gulnar Feerasta oversees Pride in the CLE; and Volunteer and Community Engagement Manager Denise Astorina coordinates approximately 200 volunteers.
PARTNERSHIP & OPERATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: The applicant provides strong evidence of significant partnership and operational infrastructure, including collaboration with local government, law enforcement, sponsors, nonprofits, performers, community partners, volunteers, and more than 15 LGBTQ+ organizations represented through the ambassador structure.
PLANNING:The applicant provides strong evidence of thoughtful implementation planning encompassing artist curation, community focus groups, volunteer coordination, equipment and logistics, safety, accessibility, and collaboration with community partners.
FINANCIAL CAPACITY: The applicant demonstrates substantial financial capacity through diversified revenue and significant resources supporting a large-scale public event; however, the detailed project budget identifies $500,360 in income against $543,864.71 in expenses, leaving approximately $43,505 in expenses without an identified corresponding revenue source. Additional explanation of how the organization plans to address this difference would strengthen the financial presentation.
ACCESSIBILITY: The applicant provides strong evidence that accessibility is incorporated into project planning and resourcing. In addition to identifying accessibility planning in the project narrative and assigning volunteers to accessibility efforts, the detailed project budget dedicates $9,402.50 specifically to accessibility-related expenses.

Despite my prior critique of the limited budget for artist fees, the overall program budget is diversified, with very impressive earned revenues alongside donations and in-kind support.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

CUYAHOGA ARTS & CULTURE
Public funding. Strong nonprofits.

Organization: Linking Employment, Abilities & Potential

Project Title: Quantum LEAP Talent and Art Show

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Overall, LEAP helps and advocates for adults with disabilities and helps provide resources for employment, housing, and self-independence skills.

Wonderful program description in that it targets a historically underserved and underfunded segment of the creative sector, namely artists with disabilities.

The organization did a strong job showing the Public Benefit of the project. It is building on a successful inaugural project. It also did a strong job defining its community.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

From the application, this event will help engage residents with disabilities.

The org did a strong job illustrating the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of the project. Experienced and skilled artists are involved in the project.

Artistic focus is strong throughout the application, as well as a clear understanding and detail in who their target audience is and what their needs are.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

This reviewer appreciated that the project personnel are artists with lived experience at the intersection of arts and disability. I appreciate the lead-up workshops that help program participants hone their creative pieces before the large-scale demonstration. Admirable work.

The org did a strong job showing the organizational capacity to produce the project, which is apparent from the history that shows the strength of the parent organization.

Providing more information on if there will be volunteers to support this work would be helpful.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Little Italy Redevelopment Corporation

Project Title: Little Italy Summer and Holiday Art Walks

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 5.4

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I would have appreciated more dialogue and specificity around who comprises the Little Italy community being referenced throughout the proposal. While it may be reasonable to associate the neighborhood with residents and families of Italian descent, I would be hesitant to make that assumption without supporting context. Neighborhoods evolve, and particularly within today's increasingly multicultural communities, geographic identity does not necessarily correspond to a single cultural or ethnic identity. If Little Italy is now home to a range of cultural, racial, generational, or socioeconomic communities, I would encourage the organization to speak to that complexity more explicitly. Providing this context would help reviewers who may not be familiar with the neighborhood better understand who the project is intended to serve and how the organization's work responds to the community as it exists today.

Organization is producing an event that is open to and will benefit the general public.
It seems as though the event is being created for rather than with the community they intend to serve.
No clear audience is defined beyond immediate little Italy community. Unsure if this it a meaningful program for the community beyond the artists/retailers in hosting neighborhood.
This area would have been strengthened by including information on how participating artists are selected for engagement in the event.
Including detailed information about how event attendees (and community members who might not be attending) are surveyed and feedback is gathered/considered to inform programming would strengthen the overall project.

I think there is public benefit in exploring both the culinary offerings, historical context, and the arts already present within a specific community/geographic location. That being said, I'm unsure who the intended audience is or how they'd be marketed to and the direct impact you'd like to have. I understand the preservation aspect of the project but beyond that no specific public benefit was named.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This is a really specific and cool project of which the value is apparent. The application would be strengthened by more specifics, i.e. information regarding the how artists are chosen for the art walk.

Based on the information provided the event only seems relevant/engaging to the community based on the fact that it's been around for 50 years.
There is no evidence that the applicant is engaging with anyone beyond the artists/retailers directly involved in hosting/presenting at the event.

I would have liked to know more about the art walks, it may just be because it's been such a longstanding tradition but very little was said about the actual project or things a participant could expect. This isn't to say I can't make assumptions especially with so many logistical planning meetings and buy in from little italy itself. I just wish a better picture could have been painted as I would be interested in something similar.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I appreciate that the majority of the Art Walks' components are owned and managed by the leadership team, which demonstrates that the organization has existing capacity and expertise to support the project's operational needs. This level of internal ownership also gives me confidence that the requested funding can be focused on the areas where additional resources are genuinely needed rather than unnecessarily subsidizing costs the organization is already equipped to absorb.
I also appreciate that the organization is requesting less funding than it could potentially seek. That restraint demonstrates financial responsibility and resourcefulness, while also recognizing the broader ecosystem of organizations competing for limited grant resources. By identifying what the project actually needs rather than simply maximizing the request, the organization creates an opportunity for available funds to support other potentially impactful projects throughout the community as well.

Applicant identifies key individuals and their roles to successfully carry out the proposed project. CAC request show in budget line item exceeds allowable amount, in-kind figures presented in income section do not align with what's listed in expense section.

The Little Italy Summer and Holiday Art Walks are long-standing arts events that have clearly demonstrated their staying power within the Little Italy neighborhood. The project team, consisting of merchants, artists, and representatives from Little Italy Redevelopment, appears to provide adequate oversight. However, I would have liked to see stronger evidence of broader community and merchant investment through individual and business contributions. As presented, 53.8% of the project's income comes from a single source, raising questions about the diversity of financial support.
While the team includes business owners who take responsibility for various components, including social media, the walking map, print media, and poster creation, the application left me somewhat unclear about the project's central coordination and oversight. The individual responsibilities are identified, but the application provides less information on how these efforts come together as a cohesive whole, how decisions are made collectively, and how the team keeps the various components

on track. The Art Walk's 42-year history certainly demonstrates that the model works. However, the application could have more clearly articulated how the project functions from an organizational and project management standpoint.
I also noted that the grant request amount stated in the application does not match the amount identified in the project budget. Attention to these details is important so panelists have consistent, accurate information when evaluating the project.

In terms of organizational capacity, I feel like it's strong and that it's a community effort with multiple decades of experience doing the project and improving upon it.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: LYLESART

Project Title: The Artography Community Photo Project

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

LYLESART explicitly names being accessible and inviting to its community and the broader public as key for their programming. Their Artography Community Photo project in particular backs this up by moving their project to different locations across Cuyahoga County as well as strategically placing them in public spaces. As a panelist, I wanted to have more clarity around how many individual spots these disposable film cameras are places throughout the project period, and how many people they might be reaching.

As a photographer myself, I understand the power of not only stopping to look at your community but documenting the beauty of it through photography. This project stands to not only give community members the opportunity to look up from their phones to take in the beauty and wonder of their neighborhood but to give community members a chance to tell the story of their community through their eyes using photography. The public benefit of this is endless.

Multiple phases of community engagement and educational opportunities with thoughtful partnerships supported by a letter from an educator in the school district. 15,000 participants is significant, though it's clear that some participants are receiving a more in-depth experience while others are briefly engaging.

CLEARLY IDENTIFIES ITS COMMUNITY: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of an identified community, with a primary focus on young adults ages 13–25, particularly youth in underserved communities, while also seeking participation from families, residents, businesses, artists, schools, libraries, organizations, and other community stakeholders. The applicant states that many young adults in Northeast Ohio have limited access to creative processes within their communities and positions Artography as a vehicle for documenting people, places, relationships, and experiences. The case would be stronger with more specificity about the particular young people the project intends to reach—for example, their neighborhoods, schools, barriers to arts participation, or relevant demographic/community context.
MEANINGFULLY CONNECTS THE PROJECT WITH THE COMMUNITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of an inherently participatory project model that invites community members to document their surroundings and experiences rather than functioning solely as an audience.

More than 150 disposable cameras will be distributed or temporarily installed in community locations. Members of the public will be able to use the cameras during 48–72-hour intervals before staff retrieve and process the film. Youth participants will subsequently work with local photographers to document personal relationships and community subjects that are meaningful in their lives.
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY VOICE: The applicant provides strong evidence that youth voice and personal perspective are central to the artistic process.
Youth participants are encouraged to photograph relationships, places, and subjects significant to them using their own aesthetic and lived experience. The applicant describes the resulting work as a visual documentation of stories and perspectives from communities experiencing underrepresentation.
INCLUSION & BELONGING: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of an intentional commitment to inclusion, particularly through engagement with youth in underserved and marginalized communities and through a collaborative project model. The applicant describes Artography as addressing inequities and encouraging youth and adults to collaborate, develop teamwork, solve problems, and create meaningful projects together.
PARTNERSHIP & COMMUNITY PRESENCE: The applicant provides strong evidence of meaningful institutional partnerships with Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Cleveland Public Library. The applicant reports that leadership has administered Artography for seven years in partnership with CMSD and Cleveland Public Library.
DEMONSTRATED HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:The application's description of the earlier East Cleveland Portraits project is useful evidence.
The applicant explains that its 2018 and 2019 project created an interactive visual record of relationships between community and family. Participants photographed themselves and their surroundings, resulting in candid images reflecting identity, diversity, shared humanity, and community life. The identified project locations reinforce those partnerships by placing workshops directly in schools and the public exhibition at the Garden Valley Branch of Cleveland Public Library.
PROJECTED REACH: The applicant identifies substantial anticipated public reach but provides limited evidence supporting the projected 15,000 participants/audience members. Greater distinction between direct participants and exhibition/public audiences would strengthen the Public Benefit case.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

STRENGTH OF ARTISTIC CONCEPT:The applicant provides strong evidence of an engaging artistic concept that combines analog photography, public participation, youth artistic development, mentorship, community documentation, and exhibition.
ACTIVE ARTISTIC PARTICIPATION: The application provides strong evidence of active artistic participation, with community members and youth serving as image-makers rather than simply audiences for professionally produced artwork. Youth receive hands-on learning and mentorship from local photographers while using photography to explore relationships and subjects meaningful to them.
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT & MENTORSHIP:The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of artistic development through workshops, mentorship, photography practice, collaborative learning, and exhibition opportunities.
QUALIFIED ARTISTIC TEAM: The applicant provides strong evidence of relevant artistic and community experience among key team members.
EXHIBITION PUBLIC PRESENTATION: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of a public presentation component through an exhibition at Cleveland Public Library's Garden Valley Branch. The

application would be stronger if it explained how photographs are selected, curated, printed, interpreted, and installed, whether youth participate in those decisions, how long the exhibition remains on view, and how audiences engage with the resulting work.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of organizational experience, having operated since 2014 with an established focus on arts programming, youth development, STEAM education, mentorship, and creative learning.
EXPERIENCE WITH PROJECT MODEL: The applicant provides strong evidence of relevant implementation experience, reporting seven years of Artography programming with Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Cleveland Public Library and identifying the 2018–2019 East Cleveland Portraits project as an earlier foundation for the current model.
TEAM CAPACITY: The application provides fair-to-strong evidence of an appropriate project team, including organizational leadership, a community-support specialist, practicing artists, photographers, educators, and institutional collaborators. It is not clear who does what during implementation.
FINANCIAL CAPACITY: The applicant provides strong evidence of a balanced and diversified financial plan. Project income and expenses both total $27,255, the $1,594 in-kind contribution is appropriately reflected on both sides of the budget, and the project is supported by foundation funding, individual contributions, board support, and other organizational resources in addition to the CAC request.

With diversified revenue sources and reasonable expenses, this program, which has continued successfully for many years, reaches a respectable number of participants with a modest budget.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: M C Chatman Center For Humanitarian Services

Project Title: 20th Annual Multi-Music Fest

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate the use of ticket giveaways to create access for populations that have historically been strategically undervalued. Rather than relying solely on a general free-ticket offering and hoping it reaches those who could benefit most, the organization appears to be leveraging established partnerships with social service agencies and other community organizations to connect these opportunities directly with people who may otherwise face barriers to attending. This demonstrates a thoughtful approach to access, using existing relationships and trusted community partners to help ensure that increased affordability translates into actual participation.

This is a good application with a strong artistic project that has a well defined public benefit. The application would be further strengthened by incorporating greater specificity into the budget's revenue streams and clarifying the exact credentials and expertise of the project staff.

Organization has a clear public benefit. They are actively engaged with community partners to market the event so that they can successfully reach and engage with their target audience as well as being accessible to the general public.

I mean allowing people to experience hip hop especially from seasoned artists is definitely a treat, and can cause conversation about the impact of art especially a more modern form that has evolved from its roots. Where I want to know more are the actual offerings instead of seeing "community outreach services" or even what else one can experience at this festival. It was a little too general and the project didn't seem fleshed out. Also intended community was not defined, and also generalized. That said I can enjoy some of the tangible benefits within the second half of the application.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I believe the music festival has strong potential to achieve many of the organization’s stated goals, including fostering cultural pride and connection. However, I would have appreciated the narrative going deeper into how the festival is expected to create those outcomes. Incorporating participant

stories, research, or anecdotes from previous festivals could have helped demonstrate the impact beyond inherent assumptions, like cultural celebration produces cultural pride. For example, sharing what participants have previously expressed, what the organization has observed through past festivals, or what evidence informs the selected activities would provide a stronger connection between the project's design and its intended outcomes.
I was encouraged to see that the organization plans to draw upon its previously conducted needs assessment and community feedback when determining the activities offered through this festival. This demonstrates a willingness to listen to the community and allow participants and partners to influence the evolution of the work, rather than assuming the organization already knows what its community wants or needs. That feedback loop is particularly valuable for a recurring project, as it creates an opportunity for the festival to remain responsive and continue developing alongside the communities it serves.

Applicant clearly demonstrates artistic and cultural vibrancy through the quality of performers secured, engaging with a diverse team of professionals and partners to market the event and ensure content is relevant the audience

The planned 20th Annual Multi Music Fest presents a strong and compelling approach to bringing a cross-section of people together through a positive cultural experience that promotes connection and community well-being. The inclusion of nationally and internationally recognized hip-hop artists demonstrates the organization's commitment to bringing high-quality artistic experiences to the community and recognizes hip-hop as an important and influential cultural art form.
The organization makes a compelling case that the festival is about more than the music. It intentionally creates opportunities for people to come together, increases accessibility, and fosters a sense of belonging through a shared cultural experience. Strong community outreach, meaningful partnerships, and ticket giveaways further demonstrate an intentional effort to reduce barriers and broaden participation.
With 20 years of history, the festival combines artistic quality, cultural relevance, accessibility, and community engagement to create a rich, vibrant cultural experience for residents throughout Greater Cleveland.

I think there could have been more mention of the intersection of hip hop and it's origins - I think we got a single line but really defining and teasing out the significant of this connection could have strengthened the application. I also want to commend the application on naming the actual artists in attendance.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The project's 20th anniversary is a meaningful milestone and provides a strong indication of the organization's demonstrated ability to successfully mount and sustain this work over time. Having produced the project for two decades suggests an established understanding of the operational and artistic requirements necessary to bring it to fruition. I also appreciate the indication of a robust project team supporting this year's festival. However, I would have appreciated more detail to orient me to who specifically will be responsible for amplifying and implementing the project, even if that meant highlighting a few key members of the leadership or production team. Providing that context would help

demonstrate how the organization's current capacity and expertise are being applied to this particular iteration of the project.
I appreciate the inclusion of detailed expense information in the budget materials; however, I found the income side less specific. In particular, the materials did not provide enough detail for me to determine where the proposed $5,000 match from sponsorships and donations will come from or how those funds were projected. Given the importance of that matching support to the overall budget, I would have appreciated additional information about anticipated sponsors, individual giving, historical fundraising performance, or other committed and projected sources of income. That additional specificity would make it easier to assess the project's overall financial feasibility.

Applicant demonstrated organization capacity by presenting a robust and comprehensive plan for connecting and engaging with the audiences they intend to serve, soliciting feedback and ensuring their audiences voices are heard and considered when planning programming.
Organization did not use budget template. The budget provided shows expenses for the last several years and the current anticipated budget but there is no income or in-kind listed and the request amount is not included in the upload.

While I would have appreciated seeing the proposed budget specifically for the 2027 Multi Music Fest, the historical budgets provided helpful context for understanding the financial scope of the festival. Given the size and complexity of producing an event of this magnitude, the organization's history of successfully managing previous festivals provides useful perspective. Hopefully, the organization is building on its financial experience year over year to inform planning, budgeting, and the successful execution of the 2027 festival.

There seems to be community buy in through organizational partners and the longstanding annual festivities.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Mandel Jewish Community Center of Cleveland

Project Title: Cleveland Jewish FilmFest

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7.6

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

It is refreshing to see an organization continue to lean into remote opportunities as part of its accessibility strategy. Maintaining a virtual option creates meaningful access for people who may not be able to attend in person, whether because of disability, transportation or other logistical barriers, or simply because they live outside of Cleveland but value the festival's programming. Given how much technology and virtual engagement infrastructure have evolved, particularly through the COVID-19 pandemic, which remains part of our broader social and cultural ecosystem, it would be a missed opportunity not to leverage those tools when they can meaningfully expand access. I commend the organization for recognizing that accessibility can include creating multiple ways for people to participate.
I also appreciate that the film screenings will take place across multiple venues throughout Cleveland. Bringing the festival into different locations can help reduce geographic barriers to participation and create opportunities for audiences to experience the work within their own communities, rather than requiring everyone to travel to a single centralized location.
Together, the virtual and multi-venue approaches demonstrate a thoughtful consideration of how people can access the festival in ways that work for their circumstances.

Applicant outlines partnerships they're engaged with to create accessibility and encourage participation from diverse audiences.
The section could have been strengthened by including detailed information on how feedback is solicited form their community to ensure programming is relevant and meaningful to community.

I think there is a great public benefit in uplifting the jewish community and not only that but the subsets of identities that may hold that intersectional identity. I think there is something to say about including more individuals who may not be a part of the community but the selection seems expansive already.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the organization's history of collaboration, and the continuation with YouthAbility for the upcoming Film Festival. However, I would have appreciated more consideration of how people with disabilities might be meaningfully activated beyond baseline volunteer opportunities. Given the partnership, this could be an opportunity to think more expansively about participation. Expanding the role of the partnership further demonstrates a commitment to meaningful inclusion and accessibility. Additionally, while I appreciate the organization's stated desire to welcome new populations, I would have appreciated more specificity around which communities the festival is seeking to engage beyond existing film enthusiasts and Jewish audiences. If the festival has successfully cultivated new audiences over the years, sharing demographic, attendance, or other engagement data could help demonstrate that progress and provide insight into which outreach strategies have been effective. This would also help clarify what "new audiences" means for the organization and how the festival plans to continue expanding its reach.

Applicant sites past partnership examples the speaks to their efforts around diversity and inclusion efforts.
Applicant mentions specific community groups are served through specialized programing - including specific details about who those partnerships are, what programming was made and how they came about would present a stronger case for how they are presenting a relevant and engaging project.

The Mandel JCC Cleveland FilmFest contributes to Greater Cleveland's artistic and cultural vibrancy with a diverse selection of films that explore the stories, perspectives, and experiences of the Jewish diaspora. The project celebrates the artistic contributions of Jewish filmmakers and storytellers while providing audiences opportunities to engage with Jewish culture, history, and contemporary experiences through film. Strong partnerships with respected cultural organizations and nationally recognized venues further expand the FilmFest's reach and strengthen its contribution to the region's broader arts and cultural landscape.

This is where the intersection of art and culture collide and I can enjoy when this is done skillfully. I like that the platform is both in person and virtual- however I would have liked to understand a more cohesive theme or selection process for the films. The application says it is relevant to the jewish community and others however those themes are never shown.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The project appears to have a strong and well-developed leadership structure, particularly for an organization with one staff member.
The combination of three volunteers, a 30-person committee, and a marketing partnership with Mandel JCC demonstrates a meaningful network of people and organizations contributing to the festival's success. That distributed support gives me confidence that the organization has cultivated relationships and shared ownership around the project rather than relying entirely on paid staff capacity.
My primary question is around capacity and long-term sustainability. With one staff member responsible for coordinating such a substantial network and project, I would be interested in understanding how responsibilities are distributed, what systems are in place to support the staff

member, and how the organization plans to sustain or potentially expand its capacity as the festival continues to grow. The volunteer and committee structure is a clear asset, but ensuring that the work remains manageable and does not create an overreliance on one person will be important to the project's continued success.

This is a very comprehensive application that presents strong organizational capability. Of particular note are the varied revenue streams of which individual donations are at the top, demonstrating community support for this work.

Key staff member is qualified to successfully carry out proposed project.
Providing additional detail about the individuals who preview & selects films along with their qualifications would have strengthened this section.
Budget is balanced and appropriate.

Because this organization was a merger of four others it seems like it has a strong foundation. That being said the leadership strikes confidence in me.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Mayfield Township Historical Society

Project Title: Mayfield Township Historical Society Speaker Program Support

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 6.5

2027 Grant Amount: $1,350

PUBLIC BENEFIT

This applicant's programming is directly dependent on the stories and contributions from their community, defined as those coming from the communities in and around the former Mayfield Township. Panelists' understanding of how the speaker series is directly related to their community could have been strengthened by including specific examples of past "early pioneers, landmarks, and entertainers both local and national." How did these past topics, as well as the ones for the proposed programming, relate to the communities served?

The applicant provides strong evidence of a geographically and affinity-defined community consisting of residents of the former Mayfield Township and surrounding Cuyahoga County neighborhoods, as well as members and non-members who share an interest in local history.
The applicant provides strong evidence that the speaker series creates opportunities for residents to learn about local history, share memories, ask questions, and interact with others who have a common interest in the region's history and culture.
The applicant provides strong evidence of financial accessibility because all seven programs are offered free of charge. The applicant provides strong evidence that the physical location supports accessible public participation, including use of an ADA-compliant community facility.
OUTREACH:The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of a reasonable outreach strategy appropriate to the scale of the project, using local newspapers, Facebook, email, and the Historical Society newsletter to promote the speaker programs. The channels are clear, but there is limited evidence of intentional outreach beyond the Society's existing historical-interest constituency
INCLUSION & BELONGING: The applicant provides fair evidence of inclusion and belonging through open participation, volunteer opportunities, free programming, and an accessible facility; however, the response focuses primarily on general organizational volunteerism rather than explaining how the 2027 Speaker Program intentionally reaches and welcomes diverse audiences.

It's unclear how intentional this organization is about outreach to diverse communities, but it does seem mindful of some forms of accessibility.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of cultural relevance through programs concerning local history, cultural heritage, architecture, cemeteries, sports, notable citizens, pioneers, landmarks, and entertainers associated with the region.
The applicant provides fair evidence of a program-selection process.The basic mechanism is there, but we don't learn:
what criteria are used to select speakers; how historical/cultural expertise is evaluated;
whether community interests influence selection; how different perspectives are incorporated; whether programming intentionally changes from year to year.
The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of audience engagement, because attendees can learn, ask questions, share memories, interact with speakers, and socialize following presentations.
The organization clearly performs culturally relevant work. The application does not demonstrate the 2027 speaker series itself with the same level of specificity.

The Mayfield Township Historical Society meetings seem to bring history to live. By giving space to the community to remember the stories of the community and to crate memoires in the moment, keeps the history of the community alive and present so that it isn't lost to time. This is so culturally relevant as we continue to lose the stories of the past.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The applicant provides strong evidence of organizational stability and sustained community service, having operated since 1976 and maintained a historic museum since 1986
Volunteer capacity: The applicant provides strong evidence of substantial volunteer commitment relative to organizational scale, reporting 2,405 volunteer hours during 2025.
Volunteers support museum operations, educational activities, hospitality, research, quilting, grounds, outreach, and speaker-program logistics.
Project management: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of basic project-management capacity, with the secretary responsible for speaker research and scheduling and volunteers supporting promotion, refreshments, setup, greeting, and related activities.
Team qualifications: The applicant provides fair evidence of team qualifications, describing experienced volunteers with educational, business, cultural, and community backgrounds but providing limited information about individual responsibilities and qualifications directly related to implementing the proposed speaker series.
Financial capacity: The applicant provides fair-to-strong evidence of an appropriately scaled financial plan, leveraging membership revenue, volunteer labor, free facility use, and CAC support to deliver seven free public programs.
The budget is clear at a high level but provides limited detail about speaker compensation and marketing expenses. Greater itemization would help the panel understand how CAC funds specifically support the seven programs.

Very modest budget, with most cash dedicated to paying speakers. The application does not indicate that this organization has specific goals or strategies for expansion.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Metro West Community Development Organization

Project Title: 2027 Art Garden Festival

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 7.25

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The applicant will partner with a couple of community organizations to help ensure that the community is engaged with the event.

I applaud the project's dedicated focus on community building through culturally significant engagement. This project proposal indicated a belief in the co-creation process. Moreover, I was impressed by the underlying goal of fostering a more engaged civic population with a role in the shaping of shared civic spaces. I felt this was a tremendous project with necessary partners (from government agencies, block clubs, and nonprofits). The project strives for inclusivity through process and not merely attendance at the end of the day.

The organization did a strong job of showing the Public Benefit of its project by detailing how it builds on existing partnerships with the City, community orgs, and individual artists to develop each year's program.

More information on how the festival will highlight new infrastructure and what the new infrastructure is would give more context. There is just a lot of missing information for me about what is actually occurring and how it will impact the community.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The Art Garden Festival will include local artists to transform a vacant lot into artwork for the community to enjoy.

The org did a fair job illustrating the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of the project. In addition to the planning details shared in the Project Summary (Section 5), specific details of the day's (or days') events would have been helpful. Since multiple attachments are allowed, a list of recent performing and visual artists would have enhanced the page of photos that was submitted.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

There seems to be a well-thought-out plan on how to reach artists and local organizations. Using art as the focal point is a great vehicle for connection.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org did a fair job showing its organizational capacity to produce the project. Staff names, in addition to titles and years of experience, would have been helpful

These are very vague details on who will be involved and how they are qualified. It is unclear if there are already people in these roles.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: MidTown Cleveland

Project Title: Juneteenth: Celebrating Togetherness

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 7

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Juneteenth Celebration event is a public event for everyone to enjoy and engage with Black History in the area.

The organization did a strong job showing the Public Benefit of its project by detailing its community and by showing how it understands and shares power with its community,

Resident-led is a great approach to programming. More information on how this will be done would be helpful in understanding the full execution of the project.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The Juneteenth Celebration event will include local artists, musicians, vendors, etc., which will further educate the public on the history of Juneteenth.

This application lacked sufficient information as to the scale, scope, or intention of the artistic offerings/activities that would be available during the Juneteenth Celebration. This reviewer was unsure of the artistic intent or direction of the event, beyond honoring the important legacy and meaning of Juneteenth.

The org did a fair job illustrating the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of its project. The Project Summary was written in the past tense as if it were a Final Report for the 2026 project. It also did not detail the actual components of the project: 2027 date, timeline, expected/committed participating artists, planned activities, etc.

It is unclear how the arts will be utilized throughout this programming. Cultural connection is very clear.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Assessing the ability of the applicant to successfully plan and manage this project was a difficult task. Limited background and specificity about the event, the artists involved, or the creative strategy made it difficult to score. Future applications would be strengthened by additional information about programmatic design, process, and intended outcomes.

The org did a fair job showing its organizational capacity. The "Engagement Team" is not defined by name, specific duties, or experience/skills.

More information on how large the current team is would be helpful in understanding capacity.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Museum of Creative Human Art

Project Title: Expanding Access: Uplifting Underrepresented Voices in the Arts

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 7.25

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

This section could have better demonstrated how building partnerships makes its programming accessible and inviting to its defined community by giving specific examples of past/current partnerships (which institutions, schools, etc.). Which neighborhoods are you doing programming in? This would be especially helpful since there is only one location listed for public events.

The application's values, intended community, and engagement philosophy are strong. The evidence becomes less complete when we ask exactly who participates, in what activities, at which locations, at what cost, through which partners, and with what accommodations.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy — Evaluation Statement
The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy through a culturally relevant programming model centered on underrepresented artists, youth engagement, creative learning, and community participation. MOCHA proposes exhibitions, artist talks, workshops, youth arts education, and opportunities for emerging and established artists to exhibit work, facilitate workshops, share their creative practices, and strengthen their professional development. The project aligns well with MOCHA's identified community by prioritizing Black, Brown, emerging, and other underrepresented artists and creating opportunities for participants to see their experiences and identities reflected through the arts. The project is supported by qualified artistic and curatorial leadership with experience in visual art, exhibitions, public art, arts education, cultural programming, and community engagement.
While the overall artistic concept is compelling, the application provides limited detail about the specific artistic programming proposed for the April–July 2027 project period. It does not identify the number or themes of exhibitions, participating artists, workshop topics, artist talks, youth sessions, curatorial approach, or anticipated participation within each activity. Greater specificity about the actual 2027 programming and how artists and participants will engage would strengthen the panel's ability to assess the project's relevance and artistic impact. Overall, the concept, cultural relevance, and artistic leadership are strong, but the evidence supporting the specific 2027 activities is less fully developed.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

This project gets to the heart of artistic vibrancy. The proposed series of talks, exhibitions and workshops will help cultivate new artists and will further the knowledge of existing artists. I am quite impressed with MOCHA, its connection to the community and with the talent that they have cultivated for their team.

The wide range of programming seems very responsive to artist and audience needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates fair evidence of Organizational Capacity, with particular strength in the qualifications and experience of its leadership. MOCHA identifies experienced artistic and administrative leadership with backgrounds in visual art, exhibitions, public art, arts education, cultural programming, artist engagement, operations, and community outreach. The organization also describes a thoughtful planning approach that incorporates community conversations, partnership development, venue coordination, artist engagement, and program design. These elements provide confidence that the organization possesses relevant experience and relationships to implement community-based arts programming.
However, the application provides limited detail regarding implementation of the specific 2027 project. The project period is identified as April through July, while the narrative refers to a “year-round series,” and a detailed schedule, staffing responsibilities, number of activities, and confirmed project partners are not provided. The financial plan also requires clarification. Although the $10,000 budget is balanced overall, it reports $2,500 in in-kind support as income and $1,500 as an in-kind expense, without explaining the difference or identifying the nature of the contributed support. MoCHA_project-support-budget-te… Overall, qualified leadership and relevant experience support the organization’s capacity, but greater clarity regarding implementation, roles, timeline, partnerships, and budget details would provide stronger evidence of readiness to successfully manage the proposed project.

This application lacks specific, measurable goals for programmatic or financial growth. When was this organization formed? The application states the founder has extensive experience, but it is unclear how long MOCHA has existed and what specifically it has accomplished in the past (other than general description of activities and the images attached).

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: NAMI Greater Cleveland

Project Title: Hope 'n Mic 2027

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

NAMI GC has shown a clear capacity to meet and serve the Cleveland community through diversity in the arts. I believe that their mission aligns well with the CAC's values, and I'm impressed by their dedication to public service. They have a strong focus on bringing in local talent through spoken word, visual arts, music, and many other venues. They were able to provide clear examples of the impact that Hope 'n Mic has had on the public through the promotion of mental health and general well-being.

I appreciated the intentional focus on creating a space where individuals affected by mental health challenges can feel heard and showcased through the arts. The inclusion of artists with lived experience, along with connections to mental health resources and community organizations, helps create a project that feels deeply responsive to community need. While the project serves an important audience, I was curious whether there are opportunities to engage with broader community members who may not already be connected to NAMI (or mental health support services), helping to further normalize conversations around mental health for all residents. Bottom line: is there a way for this impactful event to serve more than the 100 anticipated in attendance?

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I can easily see how NAMI GC has crafted relevant programming for the public. Through diversity in culture, disability representation, and even artistic expression, they have provided clear examples of their impact on the greater Cleveland community. The professionals behind their work all have clear backgrounds in arts and culture as well as direct experience with their mission.

It was helpful to read the performer spotlights, but the bios don't speak to the kind of workshop being offered and how they relate to mental health.

The 2026 lineup of artists helped me to see the diversity and vibrancy of the artists/genres.

This felt exceptionally strong. I appreciated that the artists and workshops appear to evolve each year, allowing the event to remain fresh and reflective of the voices participating in it.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

I can see evidence of an effort to engage local artists by having the call for proposals; however, I don't see evidence of an equitable decision-making process, or that the process is intentional in engaging a diverse team of artists.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

NAMI GC demonstrates deep organizational capacity to foster a culture of belonging through programs outside of Hope 'n Mic. They shared their general programming, including support groups and other events, that connect individuals with others who have similar lived experiences. They mentioned their growth in response to previous feedback, which is a good indicator of their ability to assess their weaknesses and evolve to meet their goals. They also seem to be in a strong financial position through corporate sponsorship and outside funding.

Having more information about timelines and how the organization will support the artists in preparation would have helped me understand the stability of programming better.

I'm glad this event has a history of service! I have no reservations based on what was presented or the org's capacity. As the event continues to grow, I would be interested in learning more about how participant experiences and outcomes are evaluated to help inform future programming and demonstrate longer-term impact.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: New Avenues to Independence

Project Title: Music for All: Expanding Access to Music Therapy and Performance for Adults with Disabilities

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

New Avenues to Independence has a close relationship with their community and a deep understanding of the needs of the IDD population. Alongside two highly inclusive public performances, they have year-round arts programming through their Day Program's music therapy. They are clearly demonstrating a steadfast dedication to the arts and to members of the public with IDD.

This music therapy program is accessible, free, and creates a sense of belonging for those they serve. The program is a way for individuals with developmental delays to connect, and connection through the arts is fundamental to the human spirit.

What dedication to the wellness and stability of individuals with IDD ... especially with your steadfast commitment to consistent music therapy initiatives.

I enjoyed learning more about this project and its service to those in the disabled community without standard access to share their talents (while also fostering understanding and connection among audience members). While the project creates opportunities for performers and their families, I was curious to learn more about how the organization plans to attract and engage new community members who may not already be connected to New Avenues.

With accessibility at the heart of its mission, I certainly see evidence of the applicant being conscious of how to respond and invite its community. However, I'm in search of evidence that could help me understand the projected number of attendees of 190 in the context of the organization's service population of 126.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Their mission goes beyond artistic performances and displays. They show a willingness and ability to develop talent within their community through ongoing rehearsals and music therapy sessions. These

talents will also be shared with the greater Cleveland population, giving a clear opportunity for IDD education and connection with the public for an under-acknowledged group.

I love that one of their goals is for people with disabilities to be viewed as artists.

You are activating a component of the arts that is particularly effective and valuable as a supportive modality.

I love that this project combines music therapy, music instruction, and public performance opportunities into an artistic experience. The project demonstrates an understanding of how the arts can build confidence and create connection. I especially appreciated that the performances are positioned not only as therapeutic experiences but also as opportunities to celebrate artistic achievement and talent.

I can see the evidence of the team's--or rather Ms.Colvenbach's--qualifications to operate the program. I understand that the performers of the concert will be individuals who receive the applicant's ongoing offerings of music therapy and other music-rela

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I can see through their budget sheet that they plan to receive substantial funding through individual contributions and other foundation supports. They have clear structures that allow continuous support and outreach to the IDD community and the greater public. They're also recruiting interns, bringing in new people who have a passion for the IDD community and are still gaining experience.

Tremendous fiscal investment in cultural and arts professionals.

The organizational capacity presented is strong, with highly qualified staff members and a demonstrated history of serving the disabled community. I appreciated the organization's investment in training future music therapy professionals through its internship program.

I see some evidence of a strong financial position, as this is a program that will break even. However, I see that New Avenues' Matching Funds will be a major portion of the income--I presume that means deploying general operating support for the program. I would like more information about this line item.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: New City Cleveland

Project Title: New City Cleveland (NCC) Buckeye-Woodhill Summer Arts Celebration 2027

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 6.8

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

NCC's Summer Arts Celebration offers a free, family-friendly event with clear commitments to public access, and they describe thoughtful efforts to welcome a wide range of attendees. Pairing music with community storytelling gives neighbors more than one way to take part. Their application describes the value of the arts to community connection largely in general terms, however, and it is less clear what specific benefit the event will create beyond the celebration itself. More detail on which community members are most likely to be reached, and what connections are expected to continue afterward, would help show how this event contributes something distinct.

They are responding to feedback from the community and making the event accessible. I appreciate that they are including a free shuttle from the RTA station.

I appreciated the background about the neighborhood and the historical background about the growth and evolution of the organization.
Transportation considerations are present.

I appreciated how strongly this project is grounded in the Buckeye-Woodhill community. The application demonstrates an understanding of neighborhood needs and reflects efforts to remove barriers to participation through elements like free admission and transportation support. The fact that the event emerged from resident feedback was particularly compelling. I was left curious, however, about how residents will be involved in shaping or contributing to the artistic elements of the event beyond attendance, and whether there are opportunities for deeper community ownership of the experience.

I can see strong evidence of the applicant's understanding of the community's needs, with its choice of location and referencing the community's consistent desire for safe and family-friendly programming.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Their event features a wide range of art experiences, including music and storytelling, which adds variety and gives residents opportunities to participate as well as watch. The application does not describe how artists will grow from their experiences, what themes and traditions the programming will

draw on, or what sets this celebration apart from other summer community events. As a result, the artistic vision is difficult to distinguish, and their application relies more on the general idea that arts strengthen communities than on a specific creative approach. More detail on programming and artistic goals would be helpful.

The event is written about broadly. Knowing more about what attendees will experience (types of music, potential artists, specific activities) would help me as a review know more fully the artistic and cultural vibrancy of the day. That said, creating arts and cultural experiences for the neighborhood is a significantly worthy endeavor.

I would have liked to see more specificity regarding the artistic programming itself (ex. the background of the artists, types of performances, overall vision to connect these performers, and/or how the programming reflects the identity of the Buckeye-Woodhill community). Additional detail would have helped me better understand the project's impact.

I can see the applicant is intentionally programming in a manner that is family-friendly to stay relevant and responsive to the community. On the other hand, I don't see a lot of evidence of the applicant's interactions with arts professionals (how they're engaged, capacity-building).

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

NCC seems to be in good standing to carry out their festival. Their staffing is sound, and their record of building strong relationships suggests that they can effectively bring partners and community members together. NCC also demonstrates how they have evolved over time, which reflects a willingness to grow and adapt. It is less clear how this project has changed in response to community input. The budget is reasonable, and they appear financially healthy. Volunteer time is valued at the national rate, which is slightly higher than Ohio's state rate, so noting the source of their valuation would make the in-kind contribution more precise.

Well-rounded team – partnering with "Renovare Music", the organization's board, volunteers, neighborhood leaders, and corporate sponsors. I question why the expenses are less than the income for a one-day event.

While this project has community at its core, the application didn't provide details on what success would look like beyond attendance. What evaluative measures are in place, and how do these relate to community outcomes? The promotion plan was broad and vague ("community partners, schools," etc.). While I appreciate that the investment is community-focused, I was hopeful for a bit more detail on the execution.

I can see evidence of how the team will be implementing the Project responsibly, but not how they are qualified or diverse.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: No Exit

Project Title: No Exit Presents: The Music of Raymond Scott with Either/Orchestra and Guests

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

It is encouraging to see the organization's mission reflected in the project's use of multiple ADA-compliant venues, creating opportunities for participation across different spaces while considering physical accessibility.
I also appreciate that the programming extends beyond performances to include educational components, offering audiences additional ways to engage with and learn from the work.
At the same time, given the project's invitation of "Try us, you might like us," I would have appreciated more information about the strategy for reaching first-time attendees and people who may face barriers to participation. More information about how the organization identifies and addresses access points would help demonstrate that the project is not simply inviting new audiences, but intentionally creating conditions for them to participate and return.

This is a very strong and clear application that provides a demonstrable public benefit through that narrative.

Project has a public benefit and highlights accessibility through venues selected, event being free of charge and artist selection.
This sections would have been strengthened by naming community partnerships, and how the community is actively engaged in providing feedback that is utilized to inform programming.

I think there is a public benefit to uplifting a maybe not so well known American jazz composer, and then mixing that with contemporary works influenced by this composer. I can appreciate the educational aspect of it, the accessibility, and exposure especially with how popular jazz is becoming. This being said, I feel like there could have been more specificity with a defined population.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the partnership with Either/Orchestra and its focus on Ethiopian sounds, particularly alongside the project's honoring of a jazz icon, Raymond Scott. Together, these elements create an

opportunity to recognize the contributions and influence of Black and African communities while also demonstrating how musical traditions move across cultures and generations. I find this especially compelling as an example of multiculturalism in practice: jazz itself has deep roots in Black American cultural expression, while the inclusion of Ethiopian musical traditions illustrates how those sounds and ideas can intersect with and influence artists and communities beyond their original contexts. The participation of a white artist such as Raymond Scott also provides an opportunity to consider how musical influence can travel across racial and cultural boundaries while still recognizing the communities whose creative contributions established these traditions.

Organization has identified ways to promote DEI by their concert locations.
This section would have been strengthened by outlining how their community is being engaged to create programming with not for.

This is a strong project that adds another dimension to Cleveland's rich musical landscape. In a city widely recognized for its classical music tradition, presenting three free concerts featuring the works of jazz icon Raymond Scott expands opportunities for audiences to experience a different part of American musical history.
The depth of artistic work behind the project is also noteworthy, including research, score preparation, collaborative rehearsals, and the development of No Exit's signature educational materials. The intention to provide "multiple points of entry" for audiences is particularly effective, making the work accessible to those already familiar with Raymond Scott and those discovering his music for the first time.

This is one of the projects that had the most historical details attached to the history of WHY we're doing the project. It also had very measurable metrics like audience numbers, performances, and works expected to be presented. I think combining classical jazz with contemporary jazz is innovative and that it can be picked up with the rising popularity.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Key staff is experienced and qualified to successfully carry out proposed project.
Budget is balanced, in-kid is listed in income but not noted under expenses.

It seems like the scale of the people working on the project have prior experience in event planning, in education, and expertise in the artistic practice.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: No Surf House

Project Title: No Surf Fest

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 7.75

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

No Surf House are able to house touring musicians to further increase the music scene in Cleveland.

This reviewer appreciates the underlying mission of No Surf House to respond to a community issue. Namely, the affordability of housing/lodging for musicians. I applaud the effort to provide no-cost or low-cost lodging for traveling musicians, as that eliminates a critical barrier to early-career musicians being able to develop and audiences to see/hear them. The proposed festival is a great opportunity to demonstrate the creative force that such housing-justice work undertakes.

The organization did a strong job showing the Public Benefit of its project by clearly defining its communities - both the neighborhood in which the project occurs and the community of musicians it also serves.

Payment to artists/musicians sets this up for giving back to the community. Clear that they are integrated in the community where they will do the festival.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The No Surf Fest is a venue for Ohio's musicians to perform and engage the community.

The org did a fair job illustrating the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of the project. In addition to the photos that were submitted, a list of the bands/acts/performers featured in 2026 (or contracted/under consideration when this grant application was written) would have been helpful, along with a complete list of additional activities that were being planned as part of the festival for 2026.

Clear evidence of artistic vibrancy. More information on how the acts/musicians are chosen would give more context as to if they are local and where the connection points are.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org did a strong job defining its organizational capacity by detailing the individual staff members, their duties, and levels of experience.

Even with a small team, there is evidence that they are capable of executing this work.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: North East Ohio Bengali Association

Project Title: Anandadhara : Stream of Joy 2027

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

NEOBA describing specifics of past programming - of how many people participated, partner organizations, and programming content and time length - gives a great insight into how they are inclusive and building/strengthening relationships with their community. As they are looking to be able to engaged more youth and their families, it is clear that they want to be accessible and inviting to its community/broader public.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through a clearly defined, intergenerational community and a participatory model that engages residents as creators and performers rather than solely as audience members. NEOBA primarily serves Bengali families connected by language, heritage, and cultural traditions while intentionally welcoming non-Bengali residents and audiences interested in South Asian arts and cultural exchange. Anandadhara demonstrates substantial community participation: the 2026 program involved 86 performers across more than 150 roles, including 25+ children, providing meaningful opportunities for youth and adults to participate as dancers, singers, actors, and choreographers. The project also supports intergenerational learning and cultural continuity while introducing Bengali performing traditions to broader audiences. Accessibility is addressed through plans for an ADA-accessible venue, reserved seating, an accommodation-request process, and event-day accessibility support. The application could be strengthened by confirming the 2027 venue and providing clearer evidence of how audience and participant feedback informs future programming and artistic decisions. Overall, the project demonstrates strong community connection, active participation, inclusion, cultural exchange, and intergenerational engagement.

NEOBA is working hard to preserve Bengali heritage for families that share those cultural traditions while welcoming all communities to experience their offerings, such as in a successful Diwali Mela. The proposed program seems to continue this balance of specialized focus and welcoming inclusion.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through an intensive program specifically designed for immigrants, refugees, low-income residents, and others facing barriers to employment and economic mobility. Open Threads clearly defines its community, reporting participants from 29 countries speaking more than 24 languages, with 46% of ISP participants between 2021 and 2024 earning less than $20,000 annually and 80% identifying as women. The program removes barriers

through scholarships for eligible low-income participants, instruction and materials in participants' primary languages, translation support, and a small six-person cohort designed to create an individualized and supportive learning environment. Referral partnerships, including Catholic Charities, support outreach to refugees and newly arrived residents, while industry partnerships provide pathways from training to employment. Although the project directly serves only six participants, each receives substantial engagement through 64 hours of hands-on instruction followed by a paid micro-apprenticeship, demonstrating depth rather than broad reach. The application could be strengthened by explaining how current participant and alumni feedback influences curriculum and program design. Overall, the project provides strong evidence of accessibility, inclusion, meaningful participation, community responsiveness, and sustained engagement.

what a cool project! Classes teaching people to sew is very needed. Teaching a skill like sewing to members of the community will help keep textiles out of landfills by helping people to mend and alter what they have instead of relying on cheap fast fashion. It also has the potential to create future businesses and business owners. The micro-apprenticeships are a fantastic idea! Keep up the amazing work!

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Although the number of participants served seems relatively small, the impact per participant (as evidenced by past success) is very meaningful and lasting for each participant. Direct outreach and partnerships ensure this program serves those with the greatest need and interest.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy through a clearly articulated and culturally relevant performing arts program that combines Bengali classical and folk traditions, drama, contemporary music, and Bollywood within a deliberate artistic arc. Anandadhara provides substantial opportunities for community members to participate as artists, with the 2026 program engaging 86 performers across more than 150 roles, including 25+ children performing alongside adults. The project supports artistic development through structured rehearsals, sectional coaching, mid-cycle checkpoints, full run-throughs, mentorship, technical preparation, and production management. The intergenerational model supports both preservation of Bengali performing traditions and development of younger artists while making the work accessible to broader, non-Bengali audiences. The proposed expansion toward a full-day festival provides additional opportunities for artistic participation and public engagement. The application could be strengthened by providing greater specificity regarding the final 2027 artistic lineup, performance segments, professional artists, and distribution of the $2,000 allocated for Arts & Cultural Professionals. Overall, the project presents a cohesive, engaging, participatory, and culturally significant artistic experience supported by a thoughtful preparation process.

A showcase centering Bengali art and culture is the definition of cultural vibrancy. The opportunity for Bengali people to display and teach their culture and the opportunity for non-Bengali people to learn about and indulge in Bengali culture will bridge communities, offering connections and fostering togetherness. More communities should follow the example of this organization.

Wide range of artistry and skill levels engaged .

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Between visual art, drumming and dance, there are multiple art forms employed in engaging the young participants. It feels like a stretch to cite "the art of roller skating", but the tie-in to dance does reinforce the creative movement aspects to roller s

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

NEOBA is clearly led by a large team that is making sure that their mission is executed by setting goals, measuring progress, and evolving, including the use of debriefs right after events are held. This section could have been strengthened by providing specific about the number of people on the Board of Directors, and how many board members are on sub-committees.

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Organizational Capacity, with particularly strong project-management and governance systems for a relatively new, volunteer-led organization. Although NEOBA identifies 2025 as its foundational year, it reports successfully producing large public events and has established clearly defined roles for its Board, President, Managing Group, Steering Committee, Treasurer, Secretary, Production Manager, Event Director, and functional teams responsible for cultural programming, logistics, communications, finance, venue, and safety. The organization describes a structured event lifecycle incorporating planning, approval gates, rehearsal checkpoints, readiness reviews, technical coordination, event-day management, and post-event evaluation. These systems provide meaningful evidence of implementation readiness. The financial plan is less fully resolved. Projected income of $17,000 exceeds expenses of $16,500 by $500, the final venue associated with the $6,000 rental expense has not yet been confirmed, and the budget does not identify a dedicated accessibility expense despite accessibility commitments in the narrative. The $5,000 valuation of volunteer event management is clearly calculated and reflected on both sides of the budget. Overall, NEOBA demonstrates strong operational planning and role clarity, while its short organizational history, unconfirmed venue, and budget questions temper the Organizational Capacity assessment.

The application indicates that this is a very young organization, but also takes care to detail intentional development of staff/volunteer and board roles and structures. In the budget, it is unclear if the "other - volunteer event management" is a hard cost administrative staff or contractor that oversees volunteers or if it is an in-kind valuation of donated volunteer time. Using a different row for this budget item would improve clarity. Otherwise, the budget revenues are diversified and expenses reflect the program description.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: North Pointe Ballet

Project Title: Cuyahoga County's Accessible Performances of "The Nutcracker"

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 8.4

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

North Pointe Ballet has a strong ability to share power within its community. They have a direct relationship with all of those who have special needs and a clear capacity to respond to and provide for populations that have historically had limited access to ballet.

Inclusivity is clearly important to them – ADA accessibility, ASL narrations, sensory-friendly performances. I like the "what to expect at the ballet" video. It's cute and can help 1st time performance attendees feel more comfortable.

Highly accessible. Inclusive and engaging communities that are not as often engaged with or woven into the arts.

Wow - what a cool concept of making ballet accessible to so many in the community! I appreciated the organization's commitment to audiences (and performers) who have historically faced barriers to participation in the arts. The combination of sensory-friendly performances, ASL and spoken narration, and inclusive audience engagement strategies (very refreshing to read about!) demonstrates a unique approach to expanding access and engagement. I was equally impressed by the organization's efforts to move beyond accommodation and toward true inclusion. The incorporation of disabled dancers and adaptive performance elements creates opportunities for participation that feel authentic.

Considering the project itself is to increase the accessibility of a dance production, the applicant is certainly very intentional about making the project accessible. Considering the nature of the project, I am missing evidence of how people who can use these accessibility features will be invited.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This is a robust artistic program, and the scale of their project is impressive. The program centers on a single show series, which somewhat limits the range of artistic experiences available to the public. Nevertheless, NPB has provided multiple ways for the audience to engage with the Nutcracker during its

run with the organization. I think that a showcase involving exposure to varying arts backgrounds and/or dance performances could make for a stronger program.

The addition of a liftgate system to make the stage accessible to performers who use wheelchairs is outstanding.

The pictures were great to see and reflect on. The worksheet was helpful.

The project demonstrates a balance between honoring classical ballet traditions and expanding who gets to participate in and experience them. I was particularly drawn to the ways the organization continues to evolve its productions to reflect a broader range of performers, abilities, and audience needs. I finished reading the application and began daydreaming about what if every performing arts company was this intentional with access AND artistic excellence at the top of mind (rather than just the artistry).

The applicant is a qualified team to carry out the project. In addition to that, however, I don't see evidence of qualifications in terms of the arts and cultural professionals who will be involved in the project, such as an American Sign Language directo

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

NPB appears to have a solid capacity to carry out this project. They have strong predicted box office revenue, along with clear support from other funding strategies and outside donations. They have also been responsive to feedback on how to make their shows and even costumes more accessible to a broader range of people with differing needs. Their staff seems well-equipped to maintain and build upon their inclusive mission.

It's not clear whether the performances are taking place in 2026 or 2027. The dates within the narrative are in 2026.

Project timeline and planning are very clear. Goals are clear.

Great examples here! Props to the inclusion of community feedback being continuously baked into your work.

Again, I can see qualified staff leading the project. I also see strong evidence of a clear timeline; however, the date of the relaxed performance is a little bit confusing since it takes place before the rehearsals. In good faith, I presume it's an hones

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: North Union Farmers Market

Project Title: Music at the Market

Panelists: Brian Carter, Korie Griggs, Meghana Karnik, Christopher Schram

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

North Union Farmer's Market is establishing the importance of supporting and shopping local in every aspect.

The organization does a strong job showing the Public Benefit of its project with a wide-ranging community of farmers markets patrons and local musicians and artists.

HUGE reach and community engagement.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The program will promote local musicians of every genre and include local vendors.

This reviewer appreciates the recognition of the importance of food justice, especially in historically underinvested neighborhoods. Further, the inclusion of local musicians as an integral part of the growing farmers market project, not simply as entertainment. Booking a diverse group of performers allows for audience members to see themselves, their cultures, and their cultural expressions in a way that promotes belonging.

The org did a fair job illustrating the artistic and cultural vibrancy of its project. Future applications would be strengthened by specifically stating that musicians are paid for their performances and how much. I had to infer that they are paid from part of a sentence in Section 8 about the team ("...and payment of musicians") and from the project budget attachment. However, Section 14 (the budget narrative) states," ...by inviting them to perform at the markets FREE OF CHARGE." This confused me significantly. Further, instead of a PDF of photos of random musicians at markets, an attachment that is a comprehensive list of a previous year's hired musicians that shows the diversity of musical genres and the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of the musicians would strengthen this application.

Great opportunity for artists to engage with the community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The org did a strong job defining its organizational capacity. It has an experienced team handling the project.

Clear outline of roles and responsibilities.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless

Project Title: Healing Walls: A Trauma-Informed Community Mural at the Navigation Center

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 9.25

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Healing Walls Project is an exemplary project that truly shows how this organization understands, respects, and shares power with its community. With community members, actively contributing to listening sessions, conversations, and more, it is clear that NEOCH is invested in listening to the and remaining accessible from the planning stage to the unveiling. This section could have been strengthened by providing specific estimates around how many community members have been/may be engaged in each step of the planning process.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through a deeply participatory approach that centers individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability while engaging the broader downtown Cleveland community. Community members, particularly people with lived experience of homelessness, will participate in listening sessions, design workshops, conversations, artist presentations, and feedback opportunities that directly influence the mural's themes, imagery, narrative, and final design. Trauma-informed practices emphasizing collaboration, empowerment, respect, cultural responsiveness, accessibility, and safety support meaningful participation across backgrounds and artistic abilities. The living memorial component extends engagement beyond installation by allowing community members to add names, symbols, and commemorative elements honoring individuals lost while experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The mural's highly visible location at the Navigation Center and free public unveiling further expand public access and dialogue. The application could be strengthened by identifying specific physical, communication, language, and disability-access accommodations and clarifying how the projected thousands of annual viewers will be measured. Overall, the project provides strong evidence of community voice, inclusion, belonging, meaningful participation, public access, and sustained community connection.

This project seems like it will be a continuous touchstone for the community. The creation of the mural is community budling and healing. The fact that the mural will be a living one, giving space to add memorials to those who have yet to pass on is rooted in active healing. I am excited for this project and the benefit it will bring to the community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Community-driven design and implementation, guided by a professional muralist, this project represents public arts ability to heal and inspire in both its development and long after its installation. Very glad to see an organization that doesn't necessarily specialize in the arts take this approach.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy through a relevant public-art project integrating professional mural practice, community storytelling, collaborative design, trauma-informed creative engagement, and memorialization. Participants will contribute stories, themes, imagery, and ideas that directly inform the mural's design, creating a meaningful connection between lived experience and the resulting artwork. Themes of dignity, belonging, resilience, healing, hope, remembrance, and community care are closely connected to the community centered by the project. Artist-led workshops, community engagement sessions, collaborative planning, installation, and public programming provide opportunities for creative participation, while the living memorial creates an evolving artistic element that can continue to engage the community after completion. The financial plan meaningfully prioritizes artistic labor, allocating $4,000 of the $10,000 project budget to the professional mural artist. The application could be strengthened by clearly identifying the lead mural artist and qualifications, specifying the number and structure of artist-led workshops, and clarifying whether participants will physically assist with painting or installation. Overall, the project presents a cohesive, community-responsive, participatory, and enduring public-art experience.

Glad to see that the largest budgeted expense is to compensate arts professional(s).

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The support materials provided give panelists a great understanding of NEOCH's strong capability to plan and execute the creation of this proposed mural. The documentation of mural planning and implementation gives insight into the previously described stages of creation, as well, showing the org processes and structures at work to sustainably create this artwork.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through NEOCH's long operating history, established Navigation Center, experienced community-engagement staff, grant-management experience, and relevant internal artistic capacity. NEOCH has extensive experience managing community-based initiatives and working directly with people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Multiple staff members are practicing artists, and the Housing Initiatives Director holds a master's degree in Art Therapy with experience in trauma-informed creative engagement. The project presents a logical implementation sequence from community listening and design workshops through mural installation and public unveiling, although a more detailed project timeline and workshop schedule would strengthen implementation readiness. The uploaded $10,000 budget is balanced and prioritizes $4,000 for professional artist compensation; however, the application form reports only $5,000 in total project income, conflicting with the detailed budget and narrative showing $5,000 CAC support, $2,500 cash match, and $2,500 in-kind support. Clarification of this discrepancy and the valuation of in-kind staff time/materials would strengthen the financial plan.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Northeast Ohio Hispanic Center for Economic Development

Project Title: La Placita Pop Up Markets

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The organization's years of presence in the community is meaningful, particularly at a time when many Latino communities are navigating heightened concerns around immigration enforcement, belonging, and personal safety. In that context, an organization's sustained commitment to showing up for and alongside its community can be an important foundation for trust.
I also see potential for that trust to create benefits beyond the organization itself. When a community has spaces and institutions where people feel welcomed, recognized, and safe to participate, those relationships can create positive ripple effects across the broader community. This program becomes one expression of that larger ecosystem: not simply providing an artistic experience, but reinforcing a sense of belonging and demonstrating what sustained investment in a community can make possible.

Applicant has presented a very strong case for public benefit. Outlining how the community will be directly served and engaged, measures being taken to ensure access, diverse participation and representation, along with opportunities being created for the community and the program goals.

I see there being public benefit in having a center of sorts that can act like an "agora" of sorts however I see the public benefit as rather muted from an artistic sense. I can see this being a vibrant cultural hub but at times the narrative didn't explain enough about actively engaging the community instead of passive engagement. I did however like the explicit mention of things being offered in two languages and the defined community as being the latinx one.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The use of CentroVilla25 as the event location demonstrates what can become possible when communities reimagine and repurpose spaces that might otherwise be overlooked or forgotten. Transforming an existing building into a place for cultural activity not only expands the physical capacity available to the Latinx community to gather, create, and celebrate, but also creates opportunities for the broader public to encounter and participate in these cultural offerings. I appreciate this as an example of

how investing in cultural infrastructure can have a benefit beyond a single program: the space itself becomes an ongoing resource for community connection, artistic expression, and public engagement.

Applicant has presented a strong case for artistic and cultural vibrancy outlining how partnerships foster inclusion and direct interaction ensures programming is relevant to community.

La Placita is a beloved community event that celebrates Latino culture through live music, cultural performances, local vendors, and family-friendly activities. Its evolution over the years into a vibrant cultural tradition speaks to its significance within the Cleveland community and its ability to create a strong sense of place, identity, and belonging.
The mix of artistic performances, cultural traditions, and community participation creates a rich cultural experience while giving Latino artists, businesses, families, and residents opportunities to celebrate and share their culture with the broader community. La Placita is a strong example of how arts and culture can bring people together while contributing to Greater Cleveland's cultural vibrancy.

In terms of cultural exchange and expression, I would say it's pretty strong but I'm unsure of the artistic aspects or merits. The narrative of the application was leaning towards a for-profit/entrepreneurial endeavor and I felt like more of the offerings could have been expanded on. I also felt like the project was meant to be passive in engagement when for arts- while it can be passively consumed I would have liked for there to be more of a plan or structure.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I appreciate the additional context about the organization's history, particularly how its approach to sustainability has helped generate a business and cultural hub through the center. This feels like a meaningful form of sustainability because the organization is not simply maintaining itself, but cultivating infrastructure and activity that can support a broader ecosystem. The longevity of the organization, coupled with the continued engagement of stakeholders and surrounding businesses and cultural partners, suggests that the center has developed a level of community investment and support that extends beyond any individual program.
The project also appears to have a solid team, and I appreciated that leadership was clearly identified and described in the application. This helped me better understand who is responsible for carrying the work forward. Additional context about the team's relevant experience, previous project outcomes, or specific roles in delivering similar initiatives would further strengthen my confidence in the organization's capacity to successfully execute this project.

This is an incredibly thorough application with strong organizational support, capacity, and expertise.

Organization has a robust team to successfully carry out proposed project.
Budget is balanced, in-kind figures presented in income and expense sections are off slightly.

Because of the extent, reach, and community buy in I have no doubt that the projects put on will be successful.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Northeast Ohio Musical Heritage Association

Project Title: Lake Erie Folk Fest 2027

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7.6

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

As the organization transitions to its new location in University Circle, I appreciate on of the intentional efforts to build relationships with local students and businesses. Establishing these partnerships can help the organization become more meaningfully connected to its new surroundings rather than simply relocating into the neighborhood, and creates opportunities for mutual exchange between the organization and the broader University Circle ecosystem.
I appreciate the narrative's broad target audience and its stated commitment to diversity; however, the term appears frequently throughout the narrative without always being accompanied by detail about what that commitment looks like in practice. The proposal would be strengthened by providing more specificity around the organization's integration efforts across its audiences, artists, volunteers, and partners. For example, how are diverse communities being engaged in shaping the work, represented among participating artists, or invited into volunteer and leadership opportunities? Moving beyond the language of diversity to demonstrate the specific practices, relationships, and outcomes behind it would provide a clearer picture of how the organization is cultivating an inclusive ecosystem.

Applicant has clear public benefit, has outlined partnerships and ways in which it's listened to and responded to the community they serve to be more inclusive, accessible and inviting.

This long-standing music festival demonstrates strong public benefit through broad community support and a clear commitment to accessibility, welcoming, and inclusion. This is particularly noteworthy for a small, largely volunteer-driven organization coordinating a festival of this scale.
The festival brings together artists and audiences from diverse backgrounds and a broad geographic area. Collaborations with nonprofit and educational partners further extend its community reach and create a strong network for presenting and engaging audiences in folk music. The move to Case Western Reserve University also provides an opportunity to connect with new and younger audiences, helping expand access to and participation in this established cultural tradition.

What I noticed was that the wider community is too general for targeted audience especially since this seems like traditional music would by nature have a slower pick up than more popularized music. I

would've liked to see more named communities, identified blind spots or particular age groups/demographics targeted.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Applicant has presented a strong case for creating a relevant and engaging project by outlining the ways in which they continue working to be inclusive and accessible, utilize feedback and partnerships to inform programming. St

I think that keeping folk arts, and traditional music at the forefront especially in an ever changing society is important. It seems like this is that intentional space to showcase marginalized artists and groups and like people are excited to engage with this show.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

This is a strong application. Of note is the surplus demonstrated by the budget and the varied revenue streams which are anchored by individual donations. Also of note is their recent move to a new space underscoring capacity building and forward momentum.

Staff and volunteers are well equipped to successfully carry out the proposed project.
Organization is projecting a large surplus putting them in a good financial position. Providing detail on why this surplus is projected and what they intend to do with it moving forward would have strengthened this section.

I really enjoyed reading that yall had a strong volunteer base that helps this event go on - and that you partner with other community organizations to set this up and move forward.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: NuPoint Community Development Corporation

Project Title: NuDay at the Park 2027

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 8.2

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I greatly appreciate that the project begins with community input. This demonstrates an understanding that successful public-serving work is built on community buy-in and shared ownership, rather than simply delivering a predetermined program to a community. The proposed use of meetings, surveys, and outreach provides multiple avenues for people to contribute their perspectives and help shape the project. I find this particularly compelling because it positions community engagement as foundational to the project's development and success, rather than as something that occurs only after the core decisions have already been made.
Building on that approach, I appreciate the organization's intentionality in identifying African Americans as a predominant target audience while also using community research to develop a more holistic understanding of the community. Rather than defining the community solely through needs or challenges, the proposal appears attentive to its existing assets, strengths, knowledge, relationships, and cultural resources, and to how those assets can actively inform the construction of the project. That distinction demonstrates a more asset-based approach to community engagement and creates opportunities for the community to be recognized not only as an audience or beneficiary, but as a source of knowledge and capacity that can shape the work itself.

Overall, this is a very strong, comprehensive application. Regarding the budget, there is a typo that lists $90K under arts and cultural professionals when it is assumed $9K was meant. Otherwise this is a really cool program that has identified a clear problem and took clear action to resolve it.

Applicant has present a very strong case for public benefit citing examples of how they are understanding, respecting and engaging with their community to develop the project alongside their intended audience.

I think that this project is very community focused and put the people first. It has a named community both geographically and ethnically, and its planning phase includes getting qualitative feedback. That being said, due to limited details on programming I can't really speak to overall benefit other that community and social engagement.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

applicant has presented a strong case for a relevant and engaging project - outlining how they ensure relevancy within the community, showcasing diversity and representation within the project, and ways they prioritize accessibility.

The NuDay Festival is an important community-based cultural event for residents of the Union Miles and Mt. Pleasant neighborhoods. The breadth of thoughtfully planned programming, including live music, dance, visual arts experiences, cultural demonstrations, youth activities, and opportunities for community engagement, creates a rich and vibrant arts experience within the neighborhoods it serves. Produced by a long-standing organization deeply rooted in the community, this one-day festival provides culturally relevant programming for all ages while celebrating local creativity, culture, and community identity. The combination of artistic disciplines, cultural expression, and intergenerational participation makes this a particularly strong example of artistic and cultural vibrancy at the neighborhood level.

I think in terms of logistical planning and strategic planning, this is one of the stronger applications I've read. However, some of the cultural and artistic offerings are kept broad and are only up for assumption by the reader. Additionally, the line up seems tentative and therefore it's hard to assess overall diversity of the experience residents would have.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I appreciate that the narrative provides greater visibility into the level of work required to produce the festival, particularly the planning, research, development, outreach, and coordination taking place throughout the spring and summer ahead of the August/September event. One-off events can sometimes be perceived as having limited organizational impact because the public-facing experience happens on a single day, so it is valuable to see the substantial work happening behind the scenes to make the festival possible. This context reinforces why funding is important not only for the visible event itself, but also, for example, staff time and research and development required to build a successful and sustainable project. Making that labor visible helps demonstrate that the festival represents an ongoing investment rather than simply a single-day activity.
I noticed that Inez is identified within the narrative, but I would have appreciated more specificity about the broader team responsible for carrying out the project. Identifying key team members and their respective roles or relevant experience would help provide a clearer picture of the organization's capacity to execute the work described.
I also had a question regarding the budget: the narrative describes the festival as a free event, while the budget includes $1,000 in projected revenue (i.e. ticket sales). I recognize there may be context behind this projection, for example, a particular component of the festival may generate earned revenue, but I would have appreciated clarification on this apparent discrepancy and how the projected $1,000 in ticket revenue will be generated while maintaining the stated commitment to a free event.

Applicant has successfully planned and has the ability to manage and carryout the proposed project with the robust team outlined.
Budget is balanced and reasonable. The organizational capacity seems to be well fit to handle the event of this caliber.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: OCA Greater Cleveland

Project Title: Lunar New Year Celebration in AsiaTown

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 6.4

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate that this project meaningfully leans into the concept of "by and for," particularly through its focus on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.
The Lunar New Year celebration provides an opportunity to honor AAPI heritage through leadership from people who identify as AAPI, the recruitment of AAPI artists and talent, and an intentional invitation for the broader community to experience and learn from these traditions.
I see value in that combination of community ownership and public engagement, as it creates opportunities for intercultural exchange, multiculturalism, and exploration of the intersections that exist across and beyond AAPI communities.
At the same time, I would be curious to hear more about how the organization understands and navigates inclusivity within the broad AAPI umbrella. AAPI identity encompasses many distinct cultures, histories, and traditions, from Laos to Hawai'i to South Asia, and these communities do not necessarily share the same cultural practices or celebrations. For example, not every Asian culture celebrates Lunar New Year, like South Asian communities who have entirely different cultural traditions and holidays. I do not believe a project needs to be representative of every AAPI community to be meaningful, nor should "inclusion" require trying to make one program serve everyone. Rather, I would appreciate more context around how the organization communicates the particular communities and traditions being centered, while creating opportunities for those who may not directly share the Lunar New Year tradition to participate, learn, or connect. That distinction could help demonstrate how the organization approaches inclusion as both specificity and connection, rather than treating AAPI identity as a monolith.

Overall, this is a strong application with a clear public benefit.

Applicant outlines project that has perceived value/benefit to the Asian community but does not outline the ways in which they connect/engage with the community they intend to serve in order to provide meaning relevant programming.

OCA Greater Cleveland's two-day Lunar New Year Celebration appears to be a significant cultural event within the AsiaTown neighborhood. The application notes that the celebration is centrally located,

highly accessible to the general public, and the largest Lunar New Year event in the area by reach. With more than two dozen performances offered free and open to the public, there is clearly a substantial amount of artistic and cultural programming.
However, I would have appreciated more detail and specificity that conveyed the vibrancy and significance of the event. I wanted to learn more about the performances, participating artists, cultural traditions represented, and the overall experience for attendees. The application also provides limited information about the target audience and who the event seeks to engage. While I could make assumptions based on the nature and location of the celebration, as a panelist, I would prefer to have that information clearly articulated in the application so I can better understand and evaluate the project's intended reach and cultural impact.

I think there is a cultural and artistic importance to Lunar New Year and that when exposed to authentic traditions cultural exchange can occur and its mutually beneficial for everyone. That being said there wasn't a defined community beyond the residents of the geographic location and no intentional targetting.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The applicant does not outline ways in which they are engaging with or soliciting feedback from their intended audience to ensure relevant programming.
Including how they solicit input/feedback that informs programming, or ways in which they are developing capacity of the arts professionals would have strengthened this section.

While I think this kind of event may be common, the offerings do vary depending on location, organization and capacity. I did see mention of a multitude of different offerings and I feel that when executed properly it can go well. I also feel like there was minimum information however other than the event being a two day affair.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Team is qualified and well equipped to carry out proposed project.
Budget presented is balanced and reasonable.

I wish I could've had a bigger bio for each member especially considering in the initial organization over view history we don't get a sense of the resources the local chapter has.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Ohio City Inc

Project Title: Ohio City Oktoberfest

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

It is encouraging to see an organization that identifies itself as a convener and placemaker actively putting those values into practice. I appreciate that community feedback is being used to inform and modify the event, demonstrating a willingness to let the neighborhood shape how the project develops rather than treating the event as a predetermined offering. The continued development of local partnerships, multilingual communications for promotion, and grassroots outreach further demonstrate an intentional effort to meet people where they are and reduce barriers to participation. Taken together, these strategies suggest a holistic approach to serving the neighborhood, one that recognizes that meaningful place-based work requires listening, relationship-building, language access, and sustained engagement alongside the event itself.

This application is strong and comprehensive with a clear public benefit.

Applicant demonstrates public benefit connecting with a wide and diverse range of individuals and organizations to participate in the event to then serve the broader public.

OCI's application is well written and gave me a clear understanding of the target audience and how the Ohio City Oktoberfest reflects and helps preserve the neighborhood's unique character and "vibe." As a well-attended annual event, the free, inclusive, and family-friendly festival creates opportunities for residents of all ages to participate. Adults can enjoy traditional Oktoberfest offerings while children have access to age-appropriate games and activities. The inclusion of local nonprofits, service providers, artists, and makers further strengthens the event's connection to the community.
I particularly appreciated the demographic information describing the racial and economic diversity of Ohio City. Learning that 31% of families live in poverty provided important context for understanding the value of keeping the event free and accessible. The broad community participation speaks to the sense of belonging and welcoming that OCI is working to foster in one of Cleveland's vibrant and diverse neighborhoods.
The festival also provides tangible community benefit by supporting local vendors, artists, musicians, nonprofits, and businesses, allowing the event's impact to extend beyond the festival itself and into the surrounding neighborhood.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

I think the community benefit is large especially when you already target a very vibrant and traffic heavy location. That being said, I can see this project as being strong for uplifting social cohesion and for boosting the smaller business and individuals in the area but don't see the reciprocity of it for attendees.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I was somewhat disappointed that the narrative did not provide more context for why Oktoberfest was selected as the cultural framework for the event. Given the organization's stated commitment to being a convener and placemaker, I would have appreciated a deeper explanation of how this tradition connects to the history, demographics, and cultural identity of Ohio City. For example, is there a meaningful German or German American presence within the neighborhood, and is that community helping to inform the event's development? The proposal cites the percentage of residents who identify as white, but that statistic alone does not necessarily demonstrate a connection to German heritage or explain why Oktoberfest is particularly relevant to the neighborhood. More specificity around the cultural rationale, and whose traditions, histories, and voices are informing the celebration, would strengthen the project's connection to its place and its broader community-engagement goals.

It's not clear how this event is relevant and engaging to the community beyond a free gathering opportunity to that exposes the community to the arts.
Applicant notes community engagement efforts but is vague - including details about how feedback was solicited, what was learned and implemented would have strengthened this section.

I think this is a piece that could have been better expanded upon. The narrative of the grant was written in a for-profit economical way and that's not to say there isn't merit in this. However if we are talking about artistic and cultural merit there was nuggets of it hidden throughout the application. I think where logistics and numbers were present there was a lack of voice and like the arts/cultural components were somewhat of an afterthought.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Team is qualified and well equipped to successfully carry out the proposed project.
Organization seems to be in a strong financial position based on budget provided.

The application is well written with pertinent numbers, and strategic planning and this isn't the first time the festival is put on. I have confidence in the execution of this project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation

Project Title: Old Brooklyn Farmers Market Live Art Series

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 8.2

2027 Grant Amount: $7,290

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Old Brooklyn Farmers Market is a well-chosen setting for reaching a broad public. It is easily accessible by public transportation, accepts SNAP and WIC, and already draws residents of many backgrounds. Embedding arts activities in a space people visit for everyday needs definitely lowers the barrier to participation. They are less clear about what the arts programming adds for the community beyond a pleasant market experience. They do not describe exactly what communities the arts activities are designed to reach beyond the general market visitors and what lasting benefit is expected for residents or the local arts community.

I appreciated how deeply rooted this project is in the priorities of the Old Brooklyn community. By integrating arts and cultural experiences into an established farmers market that already serves as a well-known gathering space, the project removes barriers to participation and reaches residents where they already are. The emphasis on accessibility (really appreciate the inclusion of these elements), free admission, and community-informed programming is compelling.

There is clear evidence that the applicant is respecting and sharing power with this community, They are providing free music and arts to the already public farmers market. The fact that it's very conscious about programming performances that are for a wide age range also shows that it understands that visiting the farmers market is a family affair.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

They offer a wide range of activities, including live music, hands-on pottery, and performances and demonstrations by local artists. The hands-on offerings give attendees a chance to participate, not just watch, and the commitment to highlighting local artists is a positive. They seem more focused on showcasing artists than supporting their development, however. They do not describe what artists gain from taking part beyond compensation or what artistic goals their programming is meant to serve. Because the activities described are mainly additions to the market, their artistic vision is less defined than the logistics, and my overall impression is of a community market with arts offerings more than an arts-centered project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

It's good to see that they are collecting feedback through surveys to understand attendee experiences and ensure the programming reflects the neighborhood's interests and needs. I appreciate the focus on fair compensation for the artists.

The project prioritizes arts access/exposure for individuals who may not typically attend traditional arts venues. I was especially drawn to the way artistic programming is integrated into a larger community experience while still highlighting (and appropriately compensating!) local artists.

I see some evidence that the project will help develop the arts and cultural professionals in the area by programming them and providing employment opportunities. I can also see how these programs will be curated to respond to the needs of its community.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

This is a long-established market, and its history gives their project great credibility. Their budget is exceptionally thorough, with a clear line-by-line breakdown of expected costs and fund usage. I am confident that OBCD can carry out their plans as described.

I have concerns about the budget deficit, and the budget they outlined is confusing.

Budget breakdown is thorough and reasonable. Artist and cultural professionals are paid, with an acknowledgement of the need for fair compensation.

The farmers market has been operating for more than a decade, and the staffing structure, volunteer network, and operational model presented are strong - I have no doubt in the organization's ability to successfully deliver the project.

The project is definitely led by a qualified team. Without going beyond this application, I don't have evidence to see whether the team is diverse. The fact that the budget of the musical performances are included in the overall project budget makes it ha

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: One South Euclid

Project Title: South Euclid Food Truck Park Concert Series

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 8.4

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate the explicit detail provided about how and when promotion will be executed. The combination of digital, print, and word-of-mouth strategies demonstrates an intentional effort to reach audiences through multiple communication channels rather than relying on a single method of engagement. This approach can help broaden accessibility by recognizing that community members receive information in different ways and may have varying levels of access to digital platforms. The inclusion of interpersonal, grassroots outreach alongside traditional promotional methods also suggests attention to reaching people who may not otherwise encounter the event through standard advertising channels.

Applicant meaningfully connects with it's community not just during the project but planning phase as well, involving them in ongoing engagement to build relationships and ensuring representation during scheduled performance, and gathering feedback that is implemented in programming.

This annual South Euclid festival is a unifying event that brings the community together in a way that feels much like a community reunion, providing a welcoming space for residents to gather, connect, and experience a sense of belonging. As a free event offering arts and cultural programming, the festival provides an accessible opportunity for the entire community to participate and celebrate together. The application is further strengthened by clearly outlining the audience demographics, providing helpful context for who is being served and how the festival reflects the diversity of the South Euclid community.

I have to say that I'm enjoying the applications because there was a great melding of economic entrepreneurialship and the arts and cultural focus. I think that there is a benefit to the culinary arts and exposure to different cultures via their foods but there was also a performing arts component that I appreciated along with other events. It's a very active and intentional engagement of audiences

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the organization explicitly identifying an intention to broaden and deepen diversity following the program's inaugural year. The recognition that this can occur across multiple dimensions, including the performers engaged, genres presented, and communities reached, suggests a willingness to learn from the first year rather than simply replicate the same approach. I find this particularly relevant given the South Euclid context; a community with a majority-Black and relatively young population. More intentionally reflecting the people who live in the area through both artistic representation and audience engagement could help the program become more meaningfully connected to its local community as it develops.

Overall, this is a comprehensive application with artistic and cultural vibrancy.

Organization is creating relevant and engaging community through ongoing interaction, participation and collaboration on needs and desires of the community they are serving.

I really enjoyed the application because it melds performance arts, culinary arts, professional development and economic development. I was a little suspicious of the application upon reading the title but I was delightfully proven wrong as I felt this application hit most of the metrics and points I was looking for.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Organization is well suited to carry out proposed project with key staff members outlined and considerate and detailed project management.

While i'm not 100% sure that the organization has put on similar events before (beyond the first iteration of this project) I have confidence in their ability to transfer the skills and the technical knowledge to put on this sort of event based on previous examples mentioned.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Open Doors Academy

Project Title: Arts and Culture Summer Camp Program

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Open Doors Academy offers a seven-week-long program focused on serving primarily low-income youth, and it is a worthwhile effort to bring summer programming to the students who most benefit from it. The program is rooted in innovative approaches to arts education, which give students a direct connection to their local community and the arts at large. I appreciate their partnerships with local artists across the Cleveland area.

The organization says they eliminate cost barriers, but its not clear what the cost to the student/family is, if any.

I appreciated the organization's commitment to serving youth from underserved communities and the intentionality in removing barriers to participation through transportation, meals, and free programs. I appreciated the inclusion of specific partnerships listed (local artists and organizations) that are already known in the community.

I can see strong evidence of the applicant understanding, respecting, and sharing power with this community. The entire program is to respond to the community's needs.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The program offers direct cultural programming as well as a multitude of approaches to arts exposure. They intentionally recruit and retain a team of professionals from a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, and they place a clear emphasis on culturally responsive educators and lessons. The summer camp format allows for immersive time with the arts.

I appreciate that they strive to engage with artists who reflect the community.

The photos helped paint a great picture of the work of ODA.
I appreciate the recognition of having artists who reflect the demographics of the youth. This helps this see possibilities and inspires hope!

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

I liked the variety of artistic disciplines included throughout the summer and the purposeful recruitment of diverse staff to match the demographic of the students. While the description of the camps was engaging, I would have liked to learn more about the artistic outcomes of the experience.

I can see strong evidence that the applicants realize the importance of engaging a diverse team of cultural professionals to implement the program because the diversity of the team will increase the relevance of the program to the community

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The program has substantial support from foundations, other contributors, and in-kind contributions, and the level of in-kind donors is especially impressive. Their staff and board are diverse, and the application describes clear organizational structures that foster their mission. They appear responsive to the general needs of the community. It is less clear how they gather and act on specific feedback, or how students themselves help shape the program, and more robust examples of co-creation with participants would make the case more complete.

The budget includes almost $400k in in-kind support. Would like more information, since 90% of their income is in-kind.

It would be helpful if, in the budget narrative question, the organization had explained the high in-kind amount of $399,500.

The application narrative was strongly presented here (qualified staff, history of running this program, etc.), but it lacked detail on the nearly $400k listed in in-kind support. With such a large amount of in-kind needed to run these camps, I wanted to read a bit more to ensure the sustainability of the program model.

I can see a strong and diverse staff running the program. Also clear evidence of a strong financial position, with the program that breaks even on its own. I am missing evidence of how the project will be monitored against its planned progress.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Open Threads

Project Title: Industrial Sewing Program

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through an intensive program specifically designed for immigrants, refugees, low-income residents, and others facing barriers to employment and economic mobility. Open Threads clearly defines its community, reporting participants from 29 countries speaking more than 24 languages, with 46% of ISP participants between 2021 and 2024 earning less than $20,000 annually and 80% identifying as women. The program removes barriers through scholarships for eligible low-income participants, instruction and materials in participants' primary languages, translation support, and a small six-person cohort designed to create an individualized and supportive learning environment. Referral partnerships, including Catholic Charities, support outreach to refugees and newly arrived residents, while industry partnerships provide pathways from training to employment. Although the project directly serves only six participants, each receives substantial engagement through 64 hours of hands-on instruction followed by a paid micro-apprenticeship, demonstrating depth rather than broad reach. The application could be strengthened by explaining how current participant and alumni feedback influences curriculum and program design. Overall, the project provides strong evidence of accessibility, inclusion, meaningful participation, community responsiveness, and sustained engagement.

what a cool project! Classes teaching people to sew is very needed. Teaching a skill like sewing to members of the community will help keep textiles out of landfills by helping people to mend and alter what they have instead of relying on cheap fast fashion. It also has the potential to create future businesses and business owners. The micro-apprenticeships are a fantastic idea! Keep up the amazing work!

Although the number of participants served seems relatively small, the impact per participant (as evidenced by past success) is very meaningful and lasting for each participant. Direct outreach and partnerships ensure this program serves those with the greatest need and interest.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The ISP program shows that Open Threads is building the capacity of arts and cultural professionals by providing both artistic instruction and a micro-apprenticeship, intentionally preparing their community members for future employment. The description of the program is very specific, detailing the new skills students will walk away with as well as how many people are involved, where the programming is occurring, and more. Very well-written!

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy through intensive, hands-on engagement with textile and garment-making practices. Participants receive 64 hours of instruction using industrial straight-stitch, cover-stitch, double-needle, and walking-foot machines and create items including tote bags, aprons, zipper pouches, and T-shirts before progressing to a paid micro-apprenticeship. The program provides meaningful opportunities to develop craftsmanship and technical proficiency, and Lead Instructor Charles Poindexter brings relevant experience in industrial sewing, pattern creation, production logistics, entrepreneurship, and lived experience as a former ISP participant. The application identifies textile and garment manufacturing as a living cultural art form; however, the narrative emphasizes workforce development, production skills, employment, and economic mobility more strongly than artistic expression or cultural exploration. Greater detail regarding design, creative decision-making, individual expression, textile traditions, participants' cultural influences, and opportunities to publicly share completed work would strengthen this criterion. Overall, the project demonstrates substantive creative making and skill development, but the evidence supporting the artistic and cultural dimensions of the proposed program is less fully developed than its vocational outcomes.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through more than two decades of organizational experience, an established industrial sewing program, clearly assigned staff responsibilities, a detailed implementation model, and active referral and employment partnerships. The eight-week program is particularly well defined, identifying cohort size, instructional schedule, 64 hours of training, specific equipment and projects, progression requirements, paid micro-apprenticeship, and post-program employment support. Lead Instructor Charles Poindexter brings relevant professional and lived experience as a former ISP participant; Program Support Coordinator Lynn Phares supports operations and employment placement; and Executive Director Kerem Gencer manages strategy and partner relationships. Industry partnerships and documented employment outcomes further demonstrate implementation capacity. The $10,000 budget is balanced overall and includes foundation support, earned revenue, and in-kind resources, but the in-kind contribution requires clarification. The budget reports $1,000 in in-kind income and $1,500 in in-kind expense, while the narrative describes up to $1,000 in volunteer hours plus up to $1,500 in donated materials. Additional explanation of personnel, space, and in-kind calculations would strengthen the financial plan. Overall, operational readiness is strong, with budget consistency representing the principal capacity concern.

Earned revenues and in-kind contributions help to sustain this organization outside of charitable support.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Open Tone Music

Project Title: Open Tone Music Amistad Caribbean Arts Program

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Strong evidence of public benefit. Students learn music, dance, and the arts while exploring culture through history, food, and language. Giving students the opportunity to collaborate, perform, and share the music with a wider audience expands this public benefit.

This is a really unique project! The intentional focus on connecting youth with the music, stories, and art of the African Diaspora through hands-on experiences would yield a large public benefit. I loved the inclusion of the community celebrations for students to share their learning. This would engage multiple generations and further increase impact.

I can see strong evidence of public benefit as the program aims to fill a need of immigrant children, especially those of Caribbean descent. It is responding to a gap in what the community currently has in terms of school.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The program is remarkably vibrant. Its programming ranges from historical presentations of African diaspora music to a focus on specific instruments, including drumming education, along with jazz and blues and musical skill-building across different genres. They serve the diaspora through Black, Latino, Caribbean, and immigrant communities, and their programming honors the traditions of each. They also bring food, music, and visual arts together, recognizing food itself as an art form.

Soliciting feedback from students, artists, and stakeholders will give this program continued impact. The compilation video gave me an excellent sense of the artistic and cultural vibrancy of this program. The percussion library is amazing.

It would have been great to have example links for the dance and storytelling pieces.

The emphasis on learning directly from teaching artists who actively preserve and practice the traditions they teach is outstanding. Additionally, this program extends beyond music instruction into so much

more (language, food, etc.). This feels more immersive and memorable for those involved through the inclusion of multiple disciplines and the context of the actual culture.

I can see strong evidence that the project recruits qualified artists from the Caribbean traditions to teach the program, incorporating a process of reflection to maintain the relevance of the program.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Amistad is well supported by other grants, individual contributions, and other forms of financial support. The organization demonstrates that it is responsive to feedback from students and families, teaching artists, and the greater community, giving a voice to all who participate in their programming.

In the project summary, it would have been helpful to have a short description of what it looks like to be a youth participant. What are the youth doing when "they leave knowing their voices matter ..."?

Thank you for your willingness to gather feedback from students, families, teaching artists, and community partners to continue to make this program, already with a strong history it seems, even better. No hesitations from me about capacity based on what was presented in this application.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Pakistani Cultural Garden

Project Title: Pakistani Cultural Garden 2027 One World Day Celebration

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 7

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I am genuinely touched by the Pakistani Cultural Garden's mission. They are fully dedicated to uplifting members of the Pakistani community and sharing their culture and art with the Cuyahoga county population. Their proposal describes their outreach plans in general terms, relying mainly on social media, word of mouth, and announcements through the Cleveland Cultural Gardens Federation. I would like to see more detail on how exactly they will reach the broader community beyond those channels and a clearer timeline for their event promotion.

This celebration has a significant benefit for the Pakistani community and provides a cultural exchange to the greater Cleveland community.

A great way for the community to learn about Pakistani culture and meet community members. This is an example of a cross-cultural exchange.

I thought the 2027 programming expansions were thoughtful and strong. However, I thought the marketing plan presented was weaker in nature (social media, word of mouth, and reliance on the Federation). I would have liked to learn more about how the organization engages community members throughout the year, beyond One World Day, and how it measures the impact of these cultural exchange efforts on participants..

The public benefit of the project is evident, serving as a touchstone for culture, identity, and intergenerational connection for the Pakistani families in the county. I can see some evidence of strengthened relationships with the community by promoting the event through social media and other channels.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The mission naturally lends itself to artistic and cultural diversity, and I genuinely appreciate reading about their devotion to Pakistani arts. Beyond their executive director, they describe their team in general terms, saying that they will engage outside artists and performers with relevant experience. It is

less clear where these artists will come from, how they will tie into the local community, and how the public will be engaged in shaping the programming. I would have liked to see how the director plans to bring in performers who connect to Cuyahoga country.

This year, they are expanding their offerings and deepening the educational component of the festival. I would like to see more visuals or a video to get a richer understanding of their contribution.

While the proposed activities sound engaging, I was hoping for more detail regarding the artists or specific artistic experiences that will be featured. Other than the Dholki music lessons for younger visitors, most other activities were presented broadly (which I'm sure they are quite unique in content).

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

They have solid financial backing from various avenues. I am curious about the background of the ten board members. The application describes the areas of expertise they will bring, but not what other artistic and cultural representation the board may have beyond a direct connection to their community. I do strongly believe that they may have the capacity to ensure a culture of belonging, though I wish I could have seen more about how exactly they plan to do that beyond offering free public access to the event itself.

Well-defined goals. It was clear what you plan to do and how it has expanded.

I appreciated the clear planning structure and highlighted expansions. As the organization continues to grow, I would be interested in learning more about evaluation methods and how programming decisions are informed by their community.

I can see evidence of a robust and qualified team to deliver this program. I am searching for evidence of how the applicant is incorporating setting goals and measuring progress into the planning process.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: PALS for Healing

Project Title: Healing Through Art Therapy

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Through their use of "completed artwork, pre- and post-individual surveys, post-workshop surveys, & community partner assessments," PALS for Healing has a robust system for various ways that it can receive feedback from their community and respond accordingly by shifting their arts therapy programming.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through responsive, accessible programming for individuals and families experiencing trauma and grief and for community members seeking to support them. The 2027 project is informed by prior participant feedback, program requests, community partner assessments, and the organization's strategic planning process. P.A.L.S. reduces geographic and transportation barriers by providing more than half of its services off-site in schools and community locations throughout Cuyahoga County while also operating accessible offices in Independence, Westlake, and Beachwood. The project anticipates reaching 690 people through individual, family and group art therapy, multiweek and single-day workshops, public events, trainings, and community artmaking. The organization also demonstrates intentional accessibility through adjusted group sizes for participants with aides and varied abilities, accessible locations, targeted programming, and dedicated accessibility funding. Evaluation methods include pre- and post-surveys, workshop surveys, community partner assessments, completed artwork, and participation tracking. The application could more clearly describe specific practices that foster belonging beyond demographic representation and explain how participant feedback has changed particular program elements. Overall, the application provides strong evidence of accessibility, community responsiveness, sustained participation, evaluation, and meaningful community connection.

Art therapy will always be a benefit for the community and I commend this organization for finding a way to bring this benefit to the community. Helping over 300 people and families to heal through art is an amazing feat!

Service off-site and through partnerships such as Cuyahoga County Juvenile Human Trafficking Division help PALS reach clients and participants where they are.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy through extensive participant-centered artmaking facilitated by registered art therapists, mixed-media artists, and master's-level art therapy interns. Creative participation is central to the project and occurs through individual, family and group art therapy, multiweek and single-day workshops, public community events, professional trainings, and art-based experiential activities. The project team brings substantial specialized training in selecting and using art media within trauma-informed and culturally responsive environments, and the program intentionally emphasizes engagement in the creative process rather than artistic proficiency. Public events further extend artmaking beyond therapeutic settings to broader community participation. The application, however, describes the project's therapeutic outcomes more fully than its artistic and cultural outcomes. Greater detail regarding specific media, artistic techniques, creative decision-making, participant artistic development, cultural expression, and outcomes such as creative confidence or sustained arts engagement would strengthen this criterion. Overall, the application provides strong evidence that meaningful artmaking occurs and that qualified practitioners facilitate it, but less complete evidence explaining the artistic and cultural development resulting from those experiences apart from their therapeutic benefits.

Professionally administered community events empower individuals who may believe they are not "good" at art (as the application states).

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through P.A.L.S.' established operations, specialized staff, multiple Cuyahoga County locations, community partnerships, structured planning process, and established evaluation practices. Since opening in 2016, the organization has grown to seven part-time staff, operates three office locations, provides programming in schools and community settings, and serves as a training site for master's-level art therapy students. The project is led by qualified art therapy professionals and mixed-media artists, and annual planning incorporates staff leadership, a board-approved strategic plan, participant feedback, and community partner assessments. The financial presentation, however, requires significant clarification. The submitted budget reports $238,241 in income and $237,000 in expenses, including $160,000 in earned revenue and $175,000 for Arts & Cultural Professionals, but does not explain how this large budget relates specifically to the CAC-supported project rather than broader annual operations. Additionally, $5,000 in in-kind income has no corresponding in-kind expense, income exceeds expenses by $1,241, and the specific use of the $7,500 CAC request is not identified. Overall, programmatic and staffing capacity are strong, while budget specificity and consistency temper the capacity assessment.

Staff diversity and credentials speak highly their readiness for serving a very diverse population.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Parma Symphony Orchestra

Project Title: Guest Artists to Perform with the Parma Symphony Orchestra

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 6.25

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

This application's Public Benefit aspect could have been strengthened by including specifics about the music pieces that are being considered and/or have been performed in the past, and how they held "wide appeal to all of the various diverse populations in Cuyahoga County." What are those pieces, and why do they hold appeal? What are audiences mentioning in their surveys about music they want to hear, and what is their "why'?

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Public Benefit through affordable community orchestral programming, intentional youth engagement, audience-informed repertoire planning, and outreach throughout greater Parma. PSO seeks to introduce younger audiences to orchestral music by showcasing individual instruments during concerts and providing opportunities for children to try instruments before performances. Outreach will include public, private, parochial, charter, and homeschool communities as well as social media and local media. A notable strength is the organization's use of audience surveys: attendees at March and May concerts identified favorite composers and desired repertoire, and those results were provided to the Musical Director and Board to help plan the upcoming season. The application could be strengthened by more specifically defining the community beyond “all of Cuyahoga County and beyond,” providing current ticket prices and strategies for reducing financial barriers, and describing physical, communication, and disability-access accommodations. Greater detail about partnerships and outreach to residents not already engaged with classical music would also strengthen the evidence. Overall, PSO demonstrates meaningful community connection, particularly through youth engagement and audience input, but its broader inclusion and accessibility strategies are less fully developed.

The organization surveys their audience for input on favorite composers and compositions, which is a thoughtful way to steer programming towards audience preference.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy through an established community orchestra, experienced artistic leadership, returning guest soloists, varied orchestral

repertoire, and meaningful participation by local musicians and advanced students. The project will bring previous guest artists back to perform with PSO, expanding the artistic experiences available to local audiences while providing community musicians opportunities to collaborate with accomplished performers. Musical Director Dr. Randolph P. Laycock brings more than 47 years of leadership with the orchestra and selects repertoire from a range of composers and orchestral literature. Audience surveys also inform season planning, connecting community preferences with artistic decision-making. Youth engagement is supported through instrument showcases and opportunities for children to try orchestral instruments before performances. The application could be strengthened by clearly identifying each proposed guest artist, the concerts and repertoire in which they will participate, and how those artistic choices expand or deepen the orchestra's programming. Evaluation also focuses primarily on attendance rather than artistic learning, audience response, or musician development. Overall, the project demonstrates a relevant and engaging orchestral experience supported by experienced leadership, local artistic participation, guest-artist collaboration, and community-informed repertoire planning.

I commend this organization for not only bringing new music to the community but for also being mindful of the diverse make up of the community and offering a little something for everyone.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through PSO's long operating history, experienced artistic leadership, established performance schedule, volunteer governance structure, fundraising activity, and stable venue relationship. The current organization has operated continuously since 1968, presents four concerts annually, and is led by Musical Director Dr. Randolph P. Laycock, who has served the orchestra for more than 47 years. The project team also includes an Assistant Conductor, Business Manager, Board of Directors, and fundraising leadership, with the Board meeting monthly to oversee orchestra business. Project planning includes board endorsement, direct guest-artist outreach, an established performance venue, and estimated travel, lodging, and stipend costs. The primary concern is financial clarity. The project budget reports $31,000 in income against only $13,675 in expenses, creating an unexplained $17,325 difference. The budget also includes $5,000 for administrative personnel without explanation, no marketing expense despite an extensive publicity plan, and no identified accessibility costs. Overall, PSO demonstrates substantial organizational experience and leadership capacity, but the significant imbalance and limited detail in the project budget weaken confidence in the financial plan for this specific project.

It's unclear why the budgeted revenues are nearly three times larger than expenses. While it is great to see an organization build up reserve funds, without a clear explanation of how the surplus funds are allocated, it is hard to justify recommending this organization for additional funds from a public source.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Polish Village Parma

Project Title: Polish Constitution Day Parade & Festival

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 7

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

It is clear by the way anyone is able to participate in or attend the Polish Constitution Day Parade and Festival, that the applicant is dedicated to being accessible and inclusive of its community. This could have been further strengthened by including specific examples of past participating collaborators and artists. For example, Polish Village Parma could have included examples of the different businesses or clubs that have marched before, as well as how outreach to them happened.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through a free, family-oriented parade and festival that anticipates reaching approximately 2,500 people and invites broad community participation. Parade participation and festival admission are free, reducing financial barriers, and businesses, schools, churches, clubs, nonprofits, community organizations, and individuals may participate directly. The project connects residents with Polish culture and history through music, folk dance, traditional costumes, youth singing, poetry, food, and education about Poland's May 3, 1791 Constitution and its relationship to the U.S. Constitution. Although rooted in Polish heritage, the applicant describes Polish Village as a multicultural neighborhood and explicitly welcomes residents of all cultural backgrounds. Planning includes Polish Village Parma, the Polish American Congress, and the City of Parma. The application could be strengthened by describing specific disability and communication-access measures, targeted outreach to the diverse populations identified in the neighborhood, and how attendee or participant feedback informs future events. Overall, the project provides strong evidence of financial access, broad participation, cultural education, community celebration, and meaningful public reach.

A Polish parade and festival is a wonderful way to introduce the community to the Polish culture. By learning about our neighbors culture is an amazing way to foster understanding and unity.

This application gives a de facto description of inclusive engagement, stating that because the surrounding business district has demographic diversity and this event is free, it is reaching a broader community. The preservation of Polish history and culture is worthy of support, but this application would benefit from either adding specific methods for measuring the diversity of participants or intentionally reaching out/designing for inclusion - if that is actually a priority and not just an effort to respond to a prompt in this application

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy through a multidisciplinary public celebration grounded specifically in Polish cultural traditions and history. Programming includes a live polka band and dancing, regional Polish folk dances performed in traditional costumes, youth choral singing, poetry readings, school marching bands, Polish foodways, and interpretation of Poland's May 3, 1791 Constitution and its historical relationship to the U.S. Constitution. These elements provide audiences with multiple opportunities to experience Polish culture through music, dance, literature, costume, food, history, and active social participation. The project also supports cultural preservation and transmission by presenting traditional practices in an accessible public setting while inviting people from many cultural backgrounds to participate. The application could be strengthened by identifying the participating artists and cultural organizations, describing their qualifications and compensation, and explaining how performers, repertoire, dances, poetry, and other cultural content are selected. Additional information about how the artistic program evolves or incorporates input from cultural practitioners would further demonstrate intentional artistic planning. Overall, the project presents a relevant, engaging, and culturally grounded experience with strong evidence of multidisciplinary cultural expression and public engagement.

The parade seems to have catalyzed important improvements in Ward 2, but it's difficult to understand how this program will use funds to grow, reach new audiences, or directly support more creatives. The application suggests that funding is to continue a long-running parade, and much of the ancillary improvements/benefits mentioned do not seem to be part of a strategic plan.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through an experienced all-volunteer organization, longstanding community and municipal partnerships, an established planning process, and more than 15 years of successful implementation of this specific event. Approximately 12 Polish Village Parma volunteers participate in planning, including individuals with accounting, government, and nonprofit experience, while the Polish American Congress contributes organizational leadership and the City of Parma provides police, auxiliary, and service support. Most committee members have worked on the event since 2011, providing significant institutional knowledge. Planning begins in January, with promotion beginning in March. The $15,000 project budget is balanced and appropriately reflects $5,000 in volunteer in-kind support on both income and expense sides. Greater detail would strengthen the financial plan, particularly regarding the calculation of volunteer hours, distribution of $3,000 in artist/professional expenses, and components of $4,000 in production/technical costs. The application also provides little information about formal evaluation, attendance tracking, participant feedback, or measures of cultural impact. Overall, the applicant demonstrates strong practical capacity to implement the recurring parade and festival, with budget detail and evaluation methodology representing the principal opportunities for improvement.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Reaching Heights

Project Title: Reaching Heights Summer Music Camp 2027

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Reaching Heights is a worthwhile program with a clear interest in bringing chamber music and orchestral music instruction to young people. The application notes that scholarships are available, though more than half of students pay full tuition, and it is less clear who the scholarships reach and how the programs ensure access for underserved students. The demographic information provided describes the larger school district and not the program's own participants. The application could be better supported with information on current or past participants. The program is also held at a single location. I would like to see more detail on how students get there and whether transportation is provided, especially for students on scholarship.

I appreciate that this camp benefits students who have a range of musical abilities and backgrounds, and that the professional educators meet students where they are to help them succeed.

Having previous campers come back to help/mentor is a great way to keep investment. This fuels tradition.
With music education budgets shrinking, this is a vital arts resource.
Knowing how many students participate and how many benefit from scholarships would help define accessibility.

This program is clear in its impact, and the community need that it works to serve. I was especially drawn to the multi-generational nature of the program, with professional musicians, educators, college students, and high school mentors all contributing to the experience (many of whom were former campers!).

I can see strong evidence of the applicant understanding and respecting their community because the program is there to answer a communal need. The applicant is also very intentional and is making the program accessible by having free performances

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The program offers instruction in orchestral music, a demanding art form with a long tradition. The application does not describe culturally specific programming, so it is less clear how the content itself connects to the communities the program hopes to reach. It would be stronger with examples of how students' perspectives and backgrounds shape what they learn and perform.

Students have the opportunity to work with professional musicians, who meet them where they are in their ability and help them feel successful.

This camp is unique in its inclusion of deeper musical concepts (music theory as an example) in tandem with training and performance opportunities. The blend of music educators and professional musicians (I understand that some may be both) adds to the vibrancy of this summer camp program.

I can see some evidence of the applicant engaging professionals to operate the program. However, there is not enough information to assess if they're engaging a diverse team of professionals and helping those professionals build their capacity, besides hiring them to teach.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Reaching Heights appears to be in sound financial standing, with reliable support from its tuition program. Its faculty is drawn from the local population, alumni, and professional musicians with deep backgrounds in music itself. It is less clear how the program will ensure a culture of belonging. This is not because Reaching Heights seems unlikely to do so, but because the application describes the population it serves in fairly general terms. Greater specificity about who those students are and how their needs shape the program would make their case considerably stronger.

This project seems to have a firm foundation from its years of service and support from a variety of musicians in the community. I was impressed by the program's track record of sustained participation, and the scholarship support available to ensure access.

I see strong evidence of the program being led by a qualified team and a robust cohort of educators and teachers. I am searching for the goals of the program and metrics that would help measure its success and progress.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Resonance Project

Project Title: Resonance Project: Season Three (Winter-Spring)

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 6.4

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Resonance Project has an appealing mission of introducing a wider audience to classical music and making the form feel welcoming to people who may not have encountered it. They mention ADA access, which is a positive baseline, and state a commitment to accessible programming, outreach, and audience engagement. These goals are described in general terms, and this application does not say what they will look like in practice. It is unclear exactly how new listeners will be reached and engaged with beyond the audience that already exists.

The project is working to reach audiences who typically don't listen to classical music. Being able to read their recent survey results was helpful in understanding the project's public benefit and impact on the community. Their concerts are pay-as-you-wish, which expands the accessibility of their work.

Having an increasing number of HS students as volunteers demonstrates that the organization is reaching a wider audience.
They put on fiscally accessible concerts (pay as you wish).

I appreciated the organization's commitment to creating approachable entry points into classical music through audience interaction, storytelling, and affordable ticketing options. However, I was hoping to learn more about who is being reached through these efforts and how the organization is engaging audiences beyond those already interested in classical music. The marketing plan was presented generically. Additional information about specific community partnerships or perhaps outcomes from previous seasons would have strengthened the focus on expanding audience growth (and reaching new demographics here).

I can see some evidence of the applicant's intention to make the project more accessible with pay-what-you-can tickets, and the project being performed in an ADA-compliant venue. However, there is little information about how the project demonstrates connection, respect, and understanding for the community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Classical music has a long and rich tradition, and The Resonance Project's series, designed as an introduction to the genre, could give the greater Cleveland community an inviting way into it. They mostly lean on the general value of classical music and offer little about the artistic approach of this particular season. It is less clear whether local artists will be centered or what format will help first-time listeners connect with the music. As a result, the artistic vision is difficult to distinguish from a standard concert series. More detail on the audience's experience would help show what makes this series distinctive.

The list of composers from marginalized groups helped my understanding of the Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy they bring to the community. Musical fusions, little-known composers, and censored music are great ways to connect with new audiences.

I was impressed by the organization's willingness to highlight lesser-known composers and underrepresented voices through its programming. The artistic vision feels both sophisticated and accessible, creating entry points for audiences with varying levels of familiarity with classical music. Bravo!

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Resonance Project appears structurally sound and has the basic operations in place to carry out their season. The main concern is the funding picture. The majority of their project support comes from this grant request, with expected earned revenue as the only source of comparable size. That is manageable for a single event, but I am curious about the season's sustainability and what their plan would be without additional funding. It is also less clear how the program has grown in response to the community. RP describes programming that they design and that the audience receives, and they offer few examples of how community input has shaped their mission over time.

How you listed out those involved was helpful -- made it a lot easier to understand all the great individuals involved.
More specifics for question 7 (how you will connect with your community through your project) would help reviewers understand more fully how you are bringing in more and more individuals to an art form that historically has not been diverse. What relationships in your communities are being created, strengthened, etc.?

The leadership team seems solid and established. I would have loved to see more detail regarding project goals, evaluation methods, and how audience feedback informs programming. What is the long-term impact of these seasons, and how are you capturing/sharing this data to tell this story?

Without information on how the project is being planned or how the staff will help carry out the mission and their responsibilities, I don't have sufficient evidence to assess its organizational capacity

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: RhythmiCLE Sound Tap Company

Project Title: RhythmiCLE Sound Tap Project

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7.4

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I greatly appreciate the organization's intentional efforts to reduce barriers to participation. The combination of offering one class at no cost, collecting tap shoes that can be made available for public use, and providing scholarships demonstrates an understanding that inaccessibility can take many forms, particularly financial barriers and the cost of necessary equipment. These are thoughtful, tangible strategies that can help make participation more attainable for people who may otherwise be unable to access the program.

Applicant is meaningfully connecting with community by being inclusive and specifically implementing programming and offerings to eliminate barriers to participation beyond simply cost.
Applicant notes a gap in representation in this genre locally and they are helping fill this gap.
This section would be strengthened by outlining any partnerships and/or how the community is directly involved or feedback is provided/considered in program development.

I hope the organization continues to strengthen its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and accessibility as it grows, while remaining connected to tap dance's roots as a Black American art form. Continuing to honor that history through who has access to training, participation, and performance opportunities can further strengthen the organization's cultural impact and sense of belonging.

I think that the applicant is filling in a gap that doesnt seem to be available typically for residents of the area and is being intentional about removing access to barriers and trying to reconnect their racial/ethnic identity to an artform that may have been estranged from that history.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I appreciate the moments throughout the narrative that explicitly acknowledge tap dance as a Black American art form. This demonstrates an investment in understanding and honoring the form's origins, while also showing a willingness to hold that history publicly rather than allowing it to be separated from the contemporary practice of the organization. I found the comparison to Eurocentrism particularly

compelling, as it creates space to examine how different dance forms, one rooted in Black American cultural expression and another with European origins (i.e. ballet), have historically been funded, presented, and valued differently. Naming these disparities can be an important part of educating audiences and challenging assumptions about whose cultural traditions receive institutional recognition and resources.
At the same time, after reviewing the application support materials, I would have appreciated seeing greater representation from the Black community within the organization itself, particularly among leadership and students. Given the organization's stated commitment to recognizing tap's Black American origins, I would be interested in understanding how that history is reflected not only in the organization's educational and public-facing messaging, but also in who is shaping the organization and participating in its programs. That internal alignment could further strengthen the organization's efforts to honor the art form while creating meaningful opportunities for the community from which it originated.

This is a good application with clear artistic vibrancy.

Applicant is presenting an engaging project based on the variety of offerings aimed to engage the local community in different capacities throughout the project.
This would have been further strengthened by talking about needs identified by the community and how this project was developed with/alongside to ensure it is wanted and relevant in the targeted community.

This grant application was exciting to read. Tap dance is an art form rarely highlighted in grant applications, and the organization's dedication to providing high-quality tap instruction while preserving the art form's rich heritage and fostering new talent is exceptional.
RhythmiCLE Sound Tap Company builds upon that commitment by bringing together live tap dance and jazz music through master classes, tap jams, and a full-length public concert. As a first-of-its-kind opportunity for the region, the project provides both artists and audiences with meaningful exposure to traditional tap dance while creating opportunities for professional training, artistic exchange, and performance.
I also appreciated the application's discussion of tap as a Black American art form with roots shaped by histories of oppression and inequality, and its recognition that tap has not always received the visibility afforded to other mainstream dance forms. This cultural context adds depth and significance to the project. Entering its third year, the festival is establishing an important space for preserving tap's history, developing artists, and expanding appreciation for the art form in Greater Cleveland.

In terms of details about the particular project this is one of the strongest from talking about the history of african americans and tap dance, to offering different levels for anyone to participate, and also bring in artists who are qualified I believe

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I appreciate the explanation of the project team and the roles described, but I would have benefited from a stronger foundation regarding exactly who is carrying out the work. For example, the director is briefly referenced, but additional information about their background, relevant experience, and relationship to this project would help me better understand the expertise and capacity behind the

work. Providing this context for key team members would make the organization's ability to successfully execute the project more tangible.
I also appreciate the thoughtfulness reflected in the budget narrative. While I certainly hope the organization receives the full level of funding needed to realize the project as envisioned, I respect that the organization has considered what adjustments could be made should anticipated funding not materialize. That willingness to pivot demonstrates resourcefulness and an understanding that sustainability sometimes requires adapting the scope or approach while remaining committed to making the project happen.

The transparency regarding the budget is appreciated, namely the contingency plan in place should they not receive funding.

The capacity of the key personal and related staff or volunteers needed to implement and carryout the project is not made clear within the application. There is certainly evidence of planning and hiring staff to carry out project but capacity to manage the various programs, people and partnerships is unclear. Budget is not balanced and is currently projecting a deficit for project. Applicant included how they would mitigate a deficit, however it demonstrates poor management to start off in the negative and work their way out of it rather than reducing costs or planned events to present relevant and meaningful programming within current means/available budget.

I appreciate the realistic approach to the project budget, particularly the recognition that the project may not receive the full amount requested from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Planning for this possibility demonstrates thoughtful financial preparation and an understanding of the need to consider multiple funding scenarios.

The project applicant/facilitator seems to have a history of putting on these projects and also has connections to be able to excute the project mentioned in the narrative.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Rising Well

Project Title: Rising Well Art Therapy and Community Art Show

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 8.6

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

It is encouraging to see that this program extends well beyond a one-time event or short-term intervention, with nearly a full year of programming providing meaningful continuity for participants. I was particularly impressed by the organization's commitment to consistency, as sustained engagement can create opportunities for participants to build trust, develop relationships, and experience growth over time. Much like other forms of therapeutic support, the ability to return to a familiar practice and relationship repeatedly can be an important part of creating the conditions for meaningful outcomes.
I also appreciate the accessibility that art therapy can offer as an additional pathway for expression and participation. Not everyone readily communicates, processes, or connects through conversation alone, and the arts can provide other ways to explore experiences, communicate ideas, and engage with others. In that sense, incorporating artistic practice can broaden the ways participants are able to participate in the program, recognizing that expression does not have to be limited to verbal communication.

This is a very well-written and overall excellent application. To further elevate the proposal, the narrative would be strengthened by providing more clarity on what the art therapy classes actually entail. Clarifying what these sessions look like in practice will help reviewers better visualize the program and its intended impact.

Applicant presents a strong case for community benefit, thoroughly detailing how they listen and respond to their communities needs, presenting relevant and desired programming, and also how they ensure programming is flexible to accommodate a wide variety of needs to be inclusive.

Rising Well's Art Therapy program demonstrates strong public benefit by providing trauma-informed, arts-based experiences for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Weekly two-hour group sessions create a safe and supportive environment where participants can engage in creative expression while supporting emotional well-being, connection, and healing.
The project is particularly meaningful because it provides consistent access to the arts for individuals who may face significant barriers to participating in traditional arts and cultural opportunities. By

combining creative expression with a trauma-informed approach, the program demonstrates how the arts can contribute to individual well-being, dignity, connection, and a sense of belonging.

I think the concept is very interesting because it seems well developed and multilayered in its approach to using the arts as healing and as a mode of expression. I think that the public benefit is mostly limited to the participants and clients under clinical care and I would have liked to see broader engagement to the rest of the community. I felt like this could have been expanded upon by touching more on the art showcase or additional benefits about mental health awareness, destigmatizing therapy, and etc.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I think culminating the project with a public showcase is a thoughtful way to extend the impact of the work beyond the participants themselves. Given the project's intention to reduce stigma surrounding behavioral health and housing instability, the showcase creates an opportunity to remind audiences that these circumstances can affect people across many different seasons of life and do not diminish the shared humanity of those experiencing them. I appreciate the emphasis on recognizing our commonalities while creating greater space for empathy, dignity, and mutual care. There is something particularly powerful about inviting the public to encounter participants through their creativity rather than through assumptions or stigmatizing narratives.
I also appreciate the level of specialization and care being brought to this Art Therapy project, particularly through the use of a needs assessment. This suggests the organization is intentionally listening to both practitioners and participants to ensure the offerings are in holistic alignment with the people involved. That approach stands out because programs can sometimes default to a "one-size-fits-all" model when capacity, resources, or willingness to adapt are limited. Here, the needs assessment demonstrates a commitment to tailoring the work to the actual needs and experiences of participants, which I believe strengthens both the program's accessibility and its potential impact.

Applicant clearly demonstrates how they create relevant and engaging program for participants. Outlining how it is developed with with input, measures taken to address barriers but also to present a feeling of safety, security and belonging for participants.

I think that in terms of artistic merit it ranks somewhere in the mid to high level for me. I say this because typically expressive arts therapy has the very clear intention of being for clinical, therapeutic processes and close second to that is the development of art and reconnection to passion and the self. I again feel like there could have been a better reception from me had there been an expansion about the art showcase or maybe even had more concrete benefits for the wider audience.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Key staff are well qualified to carry out proposed project. Organization presents thoughtful planning and management of program to ensure it's success. Budget is balanced and appropriate.

The team is made up of licensed professionals with a plan to keep clients first, and active in their care.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: RollinBuckeyez Foundation

Project Title: Creative Skate

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 6.75

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Public Benefit through affordable community orchestral programming, intentional youth engagement, audience-informed repertoire planning, and outreach throughout greater Parma. PSO seeks to introduce younger audiences to orchestral music by showcasing individual instruments during concerts and providing opportunities for children to try instruments before performances. Outreach will include public, private, parochial, charter, and homeschool communities as well as social media and local media. A notable strength is the organization's use of audience surveys: attendees at March and May concerts identified favorite composers and desired repertoire, and those results were provided to the Musical Director and Board to help plan the upcoming season. The application could be strengthened by more specifically defining the community beyond “all of Cuyahoga County and beyond,” providing current ticket prices and strategies for reducing financial barriers, and describing physical, communication, and disability-access accommodations. Greater detail about partnerships and outreach to residents not already engaged with classical music would also strengthen the evidence. Overall, PSO demonstrates meaningful community connection, particularly through youth engagement and audience input, but its broader inclusion and accessibility strategies are less fully developed.

It's great to see a neighborhood-based program encourage physical activity and creative expression, free of charge to participants.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I was curious about how Creative Skates incorporates community reflection into its process. The applicant mentions that the Founder and ED is deeply rooted in the community. Going into further details and mentioning specifics about what these relationships, including the mentioned officials, looks like.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy through an established community orchestra, experienced artistic leadership, returning guest soloists, varied orchestral repertoire, and meaningful participation by local musicians and advanced students. The project will

bring previous guest artists back to perform with PSO, expanding the artistic experiences available to local audiences while providing community musicians opportunities to collaborate with accomplished performers. Musical Director Dr. Randolph P. Laycock brings more than 47 years of leadership with the orchestra and selects repertoire from a range of composers and orchestral literature. Audience surveys also inform season planning, connecting community preferences with artistic decision-making. Youth engagement is supported through instrument showcases and opportunities for children to try orchestral instruments before performances. The application could be strengthened by clearly identifying each proposed guest artist, the concerts and repertoire in which they will participate, and how those artistic choices expand or deepen the orchestra's programming. Evaluation also focuses primarily on attendance rather than artistic learning, audience response, or musician development. Overall, the project demonstrates a relevant and engaging orchestral experience supported by experienced leadership, local artistic participation, guest-artist collaboration, and community-informed repertoire planning.

What a cool project! Not only are kids learning how to roller skate but the opportunity to express themselves by painting helmets and roller skate cover is so awesome. The skate choreography is the icing on the cake. Any opportunity kids have to artistically express themselves is much needed!

Between visual art, drumming and dance, there are multiple art forms employed in engaging the young participants. It feels like a stretch to cite "the art of roller skating", but the tie-in to dance does reinforce the creative movement aspects to roller skating.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through PSO's long operating history, experienced artistic leadership, established performance schedule, volunteer governance structure, fundraising activity, and stable venue relationship. The current organization has operated continuously since 1968, presents four concerts annually, and is led by Musical Director Dr. Randolph P. Laycock, who has served the orchestra for more than 47 years. The project team also includes an Assistant Conductor, Business Manager, Board of Directors, and fundraising leadership, with the Board meeting monthly to oversee orchestra business. Project planning includes board endorsement, direct guest-artist outreach, an established performance venue, and estimated travel, lodging, and stipend costs. The primary concern is financial clarity. The project budget reports $31,000 in income against only $13,675 in expenses, creating an unexplained $17,325 difference. The budget also includes $5,000 for administrative personnel without explanation, no marketing expense despite an extensive publicity plan, and no identified accessibility costs. Overall, PSO demonstrates substantial organizational experience and leadership capacity, but the significant imbalance and limited detail in the project budget weaken confidence in the financial plan for this specific project.

Budget document looks to be missing revenue descriptions. The program is expensive for 30 participants served, seemingly driven by the cost of materials.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Rose Centers for Aging Well

Project Title: Feeding the Soul through Arts and Culture

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 8.4

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Consistency can be difficult to achieve, not only because one-off programming can limit sustained engagement or because funding systems create uncertainty, but because the lives of seasoned fxlks themselves are often shaped by constant and increasingly unpredictable change. In that context, I find it wise that the organization is building partnerships with Cognova Health and Art House, organizations that are already trusted by and familiar to the seasoned community. These relationships appear to provide more than a convenient point of access; they create continuity through institutions where participants already have established connections. I appreciate the organization's recognition that presence matters, and that meaningful engagement requires moving beyond baseline participation to build familiarity, trust, and depth over time.
The narrative also demonstrates a strong understanding of the community, particularly through its willingness to engage research alongside relationship-building. What struck me most is the difficult reality that, for many within the seasoned population being served, participation in the arts can feel like a luxury when immediate survival needs take priority. This helps reinforce the organization's argument for why a program like this is critical, particularly when fxlks may understandably withdraw or choose isolation rather than invest energy in creative or social activities. At the same time, there is an important irony in that choice: reduced social connection and creative engagement can affect quality of life and, potentially, livelihoods as well. As the narrative suggests, we are often taught to separate creativity from wellbeing, when in reality the two can be deeply interconnected. This project's emphasis on arts integration offers an opportunity to challenge that learned separation and recognize creative participation as part of a holistic approach to wellbeing, connection, and sustaining artful lives.

This organization provides a clear and important public benefit and service to its stated community.

Applicant has thoroughly outlined a clear public benefit where community input/feedback is considered and utilized in program development. Program is intentionally creating meaningful connections for the community and fostering a sense of belonging.

I want to say that the subset of the population you're working with is too constrictive but also in the US this is an often forgotten population that does need the additional support. This is one of the instances

in which we're targeting multiple intersectional identities with age being the springing board, and we're looking at holistic health through arts and culture and that is of merit.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY
Applicant is presenting a quality and relevant project. Programming is but directly for community/participants with their input. Partnerships are noted and leveraged to ensure participated are received quality instruction from those most qualified to provide it. A variety of programming it planned to ensure diversity and accessibility.

Feeding the Soul through Arts and Culture demonstrates artistic and cultural vibrancy by bringing a diverse range of creative experiences directly to approximately 250 adults age 60 and older across four Cleveland senior centers. The variety of programming, including seated dance, rhythm and tap workshops, watercolor painting, collage, printmaking, seasonal art, and legacy projects, provides meaningful opportunities for physical activity and creative expression that older adults on fixed incomes may otherwise have limited access to.
The legacy projects are particularly meaningful, using storytelling and self-expression to honor the experiences and voices of older adults while encouraging creativity and connection. Overall, the project recognizes that access to meaningful arts and cultural experiences should continue throughout all stages of life and demonstrates how the arts can promote creativity, social connection, and active aging.

What I also enjoyed about this is that you just didn't mention art and cite research as a means of creating credibility, you also gave us the different art forms to be implemented and even the adjustments like the chair dancing for accessibility purposes. I think that through this you can be both artistic, create culture, and include mental health in meaningful ways.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY
The team section currently "checks the boxes" by identifying staff members and their roles, but I would have welcomed more storytelling about the people behind those titles. Additional context about their professional and community experiences, relevant knowledge, and previous work would help demonstrate how their individual backgrounds contribute to the organization’s ability to successfully execute this project. Understanding not only who is on the team, but what each person brings to the work, would make the organization’s capacity feel more tangible and provide greater confidence in how the team is positioned to carry the project forward.

Applicant has a well rounded team to successfully carry out the project and provide appropriate planning and evaluation.
Budget is balanced - I do question why so much more is going to admin than the artists/professionals who are presenting the programs outlined and why no supplies or material costs are included in the budget. It raises the question if the presented budget truly accounts for all costs associated with proposed project.

I don't have much too say about organizational capacity other that they invoke confidence in me with their logistical approach, their experience, and the targeted number of participants they'd like to engag.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Schmooze Ohio

Project Title: Schmooze Ohio Networking Event

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 6.5

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through a free networking and resource-building event specifically designed for Cleveland's film and entertainment community. Schmooze Ohio clearly identifies its community as filmmakers, actors, producers, directors, writers, musicians, production crew, aspiring professionals, and community members interested in supporting independent entertainment. The organization was created to address a lack of centralized networking and collaboration opportunities, and the proposed event responds directly by connecting participants with peers, industry information, casting opportunities, resources, and potential collaborators. Free attendance removes an important financial barrier, while outreach through social media, arts organizations, film programs, community groups, industry networks, and media is designed to reach both established professionals and newcomers. Partnerships with local production and film organizations further strengthen community connection. The application expresses a commitment to welcoming people of all backgrounds, identities, abilities, and experience levels but provides limited detail regarding specific accessibility accommodations or targeted inclusion strategies. It also provides little evidence of how participant feedback from prior events informs planning. Overall, the project demonstrates meaningful community connection, free access, relevant partnerships, and a clear response to an identified need within Cleveland's creative community.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This proposed programming, a networking event for local filmmakers, is a solid example of an organization building the capacity of arts and cultural professionals, helping them to thrive. However, artistic and cultural vibrancy can be better communicated by including more work samples from past Schmooze Ohio events, as well as clarifying how attendees feel valued and respected. This would give more insight to panelists about how involved its community is involved in the process, as well as how the event has helped them thrive over the years.

The application demonstrates fair evidence of Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy through an event designed specifically for Cleveland's film and entertainment community, with local film-trailer presentations providing the clearest opportunity for attendees to experience current creative work. The project is

supported by experienced film professionals, including casting director and producer Tina Hobbs and filmmaker/producer Mike Berry, who supervises media collection and the trailer presentation. The event is highly relevant to filmmakers, actors, writers, directors, producers, musicians, crew members, and aspiring entertainment professionals and provides opportunities for networking, resource sharing, industry information, and collaboration. However, the application emphasizes professional networking, branding, industry news, casting opportunities, and career development more strongly than direct artistic participation or artistic learning. It provides limited information about the number and type of films presented, how trailers are selected, whether filmmakers discuss their work, how diverse artistic voices are represented, or how attendees engage with the creative content. Greater detail regarding curation, facilitated artistic dialogue, screenings, workshops, demonstrations, or other opportunities for participants to create, interpret, or deeply engage with artistic work would strengthen this criterion. Overall, the project is clearly relevant to the creative sector, but its artistic experience is less fully developed than its professional networking function.

Networking helps to build capacity for film professionals. The application states that this is filling a gap in their creative ecosystem, but it is difficult to believe that some of the partner organizations mentioned working in the film space are not also hosting networking events.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through an established annual event, experienced board leadership, relevant industry partnerships, and an ongoing planning process. Founded in 2017, Schmooze Ohio has developed a team with complementary expertise: Tina Hobbs brings more than 14 years of casting and film-production experience; Mike Berry has produced more than 10 feature films and supervises media collection and the trailer presentation; Micole Robinson contributes financial expertise; and Sharon Bell brings nonprofit operations experience. Planning occurs throughout the year and includes venue selection, marketing, film-trailer collection, industry-news development, sponsorship outreach, partner coordination, volunteer management, and event logistics. The $10,000 budget is mathematically balanced, but greater financial detail is needed. The $3,000 “Sponsors/In Kind Materials” line does not distinguish cash sponsorship from in-kind support, while no corresponding in-kind expense is shown. Half of the project budget is identified only as $5,000 in “Production/Event” costs, and artist/professional and administrative expenses are not itemized. The application also provides little evidence of formal evaluation or measurable outcomes from prior events. Overall, the organization demonstrates credible leadership and implementation capacity, while budget specificity and evaluation represent the primary weaknesses.

This organization has stacked their team with some heavy hitters. With nearly 10 years as an established organization Schmooze (great name by the way) seems poised to produce an organized and efficient event.

Minor detail, but the provided budget does not include totals, and it is unclear what expenses are offset by the in-kind contributions. This application lacks details regarding specific goals and measures.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Seat of the Pants

Project Title: PERFORMANCE+ World Premiere Production of ALL THE EMILIES IN ALL THE UNIVERSES, by Ian August

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

This applicant clearly communicated their plan for their next production and its corresponding community engagement programming, showing how they are not only being inviting to their community, but also being accessible by offering PWYC ticketing for certain performances. They're also creating space so the group that the play is about - those who have lost newborn children - have a space to engage with this content in community.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through a thoughtfully designed project that integrates community participation directly into the theatrical process and themes of the production. Seat of the Pants defines its community through three concentric circles: Hispanic and Black residents of Clark-Fulton; individuals and organizations connected to pregnancy and infant-loss grief recovery; and Northeast Ohio theatre audiences. Public engagement extends beyond performance attendance to include free open rehearsals, three grief-support workshops facilitated by PAIL Society, two community build sessions, and post-show conversations featuring neighborhood and community partners. All activities other than performances are free, and two of nine performances will be pay-what-you-want to reduce financial barriers. Programming occurs in both Tremont and Clark-Fulton to address transportation considerations, and partnerships with The Hildebrandt, Pivot Center, First Year Cleveland, and PAIL Society provide community connections. The application could be strengthened by identifying specific disability-access measures such as captioning, ASL, audio description, mobility access, or sensory accommodations and by providing more evidence of resident feedback influencing initial project design. Overall, the proposal demonstrates substantial evidence of meaningful community connection, access, participation, partnership, and dialogue.

Community partnerships with other cause areas, such as PAIL Society, expands on the power of live theater to empower individuals and communities.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application demonstrates exceptionally strong evidence of Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy through the world premiere of Ian August's science-fiction play All the Emilies in All the Universes and an interdisciplinary PERFORMANCE+ model integrating theatre, filmmaking, visual art, design, and community fabrication. A filmmaker will create television cooking-show episodes incorporated into the production, while five visual artists based at The Hildebrandt will create artwork for the scenic environment. The company's site-specific approach is particularly compelling: an old trucking bay will be transformed into four versions of the same living room representing alternate realities occurring simultaneously. Seat of the Pants also demonstrates a sustained commitment to process-driven ensemble practice, extended rehearsal, artist experimentation, and public access to rehearsals. Its 15 ensemble members and guest artists bring extensive experience across theatre, film, visual art, design, choreography, dramaturgy, and production. The detailed budget demonstrates direct compensation for actors, directors, designers, filmmakers, production personnel, and other artists. Community members also participate artistically through hands-on build sessions with scenic, costume, and props designers. Overall, the proposal provides unusually strong evidence of artistic ambition, multidisciplinary collaboration, experienced artists, site-responsive design, artist support, and opportunities for audiences and residents to engage directly with theatrical creation.

The performance proposed sounds intriguing. What an interesting take on grief and loss. This performance has the ability to help heal a lot of people.

Community build sessions for scene and costume shop expands the way this organization serves its community. This organization is incubating new works and employing numerous creative professionals.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through more than a decade of organizational experience, an exceptionally experienced multidisciplinary ensemble, advance project planning, clearly integrated partnerships, and a detailed and balanced financial plan. Seat of the Pants has operated since 2012 and demonstrates intentional evolution from single productions to multi-show seasons, ensemble development, extended rehearsal processes, new-play development, and free artist workshops. The project team includes 15 ensemble members and guest artists with extensive professional experience across theatre, film, visual art, design, production, choreography, dramaturgy, and related disciplines. Implementation is already underway, with artistic partnerships and hiring occurring in summer 2026, scheduling and design planning in fall, and rehearsals and construction beginning in early 2027. The $30,200 budget balances exactly and provides detailed costs for actors, directors, designers, filmmaking, spaces, materials, audience engagement, and production needs. Revenue includes prior ticket income, private donations, sponsorships, and CAC support, with CAC representing approximately one-quarter of the project budget. The primary opportunity for improvement is evaluation: the application provides limited information regarding participant surveys, audience feedback, partner assessment, artistic outcomes, or how learning from this project will inform future programming. Overall, the organization demonstrates substantial artistic, operational, partnership, and financial capacity to successfully implement the proposed project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Sew4Service

Project Title: Fiber Arts Classes and Events

Panelists: Dana Manyothane, Deanna Poelsma, André Solomon, Valentin Urrutia, Courtney Young

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

This is a very comprehensive and well written grant application that maintains a clear, demonstrable benefit. Moreover, the letter of support provided was compelling.

Applicant has outlined clear public benefit where they will present meaningful programming for the community they intend to serve by leveraging partnerships collecting and considering participant feedback for program development.

This proposal presents a strong approach to public benefit by bringing hands-on fiber arts programming to Cuyahoga County Public Library branches throughout the county. Using familiar and accessible community spaces to offer instruction in sewing, quilting, crocheting, and other fiber arts has the potential to reach a broad range of residents while encouraging creativity, skill development, and social connection.
The established library partnerships, experienced instructors, and inclusion of Fiber Fest 2027 strengthen the proposal and demonstrate thoughtful planning for community engagement. I particularly appreciate the use of multiple library locations, which expands the geographic reach of the project and provides residents across Cuyahoga County with opportunities to participate in and connect through the fiber arts.

I mean I think there is a huge public benefit for here because this type of art form, the fiber arts, can be both artistic in nature and also yield very tangible results of expression as well as utility. I also see that they're offering different forms and mediums that can be appealing for people with different tactile needs. I also recognize that this kind of art form can teach real skills that people can take home and also be used as a social experience. I wish the applicant would have written more specific targeted efforts for an audience instead of the wider public or those already interested in the fiber arts.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Organization is creating a relevant and engaging project by utilizing participant feedback in program creation and leveraging partnerships to reach wider more diverse audiences. Variety of programming is offered to create inclusion.
This sections could have been further strengthened by detailing ways in which they are working to reduce barriers to participation beyond beginning/advanced class offerings. Some examples might be programming that's easier/more accessible for those with arthritis or other hand strength issues, hosting the events at the library or near public transportation route for ease of physical accessibility, low cost/sliding fee scale for classes for low income individuals etc.

I really enjoyed this aspect of the application because the artistic merit was present throughout the entire narrative. There was obvious variability in the offerings from the type of medium to the arts festival, and traditions or cultural textiles that people could be introduced to. There was a lot of things the application did right in terms of uplifting a "non traditional" art form.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The organization's support materials truly paint a picture of a beloved community institution. The strength of that support brings greater clarity to why investing in projects like this matters: there appears to be meaningful community endorsement behind the work, rather than the project existing in isolation from the people it intends to serve. The 2025 Project Summary, letter of support from the library, and projected audience revenue all reinforce that relationship in different ways. I was particularly struck by the expectation that ~ 50% of earned income will come from the target audience, as this suggests an existing level of trust and investment from the community itself, coupled with the organization's commitment to identifying additional ways to reduce financial strain on participants. The materials collectively demonstrate organizational capacity, community demand and an intentional effort to keep participation attainable.

Applicant demonstrates organizational capacity through staff who qualified to carry out proposed project; clear program planning, evaluation, and evolution based on participant feedback.
Budget is balanced, in-kind support figures outlined do not match.

I think that the people putting on the project are well versed in the fiber arts but they're also expanding capacity by partnering with local resources like public libraries.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Shaker Arts Council

Project Title: Sidewalk Stories

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

A thoughtful, well-rounded application that offers clear evidence of the project's connection to its core community, including both artists and Shaker Heights.

Creating art exhibition opportunities in a place that is already frequently visited is great, with the hope that the design of the pieces is impactful enough to not be easily overlooked as people are coming in and out of the library. Knowing more about community response to previous projects or engagement that led to this project would help strengthen this response.

the free, public nature of the programming offers significant public benefit. More details on how people will be driven to the locations would be helpful and add even more to the possibility of public benefit.

The open call and public location make this a very accessible program for the audience and participants. As this is a brand-new program, I would like to hear more about how this came about. Was this a response to community needs and artist feedback?

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The artistic possibilities are wide-ranging, and the inclusion of multiple rounds ensures audiences will have ample opportunity for engagement.

It would be very helpful to see a sample of the display structures in order to understand this project. However, the team's experience indicates that they will be able to accomplish the project's mission.

I'd like to hear more about shared storytelling and how it is programmed to increase community connection. It would be great to see images of previous exhibits and the boxes in your attachments.

It's always great to see programs that bring art to the community. The placement seems great to have as many folks as possible engage with the installations.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

More photographs of past projects would be good to include.

The budget is modest and its great to see that the artists are prioritized!

Seems like a well-rounded team and a strong partnership with the library. I am curious on how they plan to get feedback and what the measure of success is.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: SHED Projects

Project Title: SHED School: Fellowship

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.4

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application provides strong evidence of the organization's sustained connection to and care for its community since its founding.

The organization's public benefit is clear. It would be helpful to have additional and specific details about what the Fellowship entails.

the programming seems like a benefit to community, but it is unclear how many fellows are available to ultimately participate. It seems like there will be a limited number of fellows, and by design, a limited amount of direct public benefit.

Accessible learning opportunities are so important for a growing artist community! There is a wide variety of not only participants but also mediums and ways to learn, this would appeal to most any creative.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

There is strong evidence that the program and fellowship are relevant and engaging. However, more information on their distribution strategy (marketing) would have strengthened the application.

An innovative and experimental program that serves a niche of artists/workes. However, I am unclear how "cohort of students—local and visiting artists, educators, curators, & community members" are recruited or invited to participate in the project. More specificity (such as examples from previous iterations) would help me understand the possible shapes this project could take for 2027.

The SHED sounds like an important and vibrant part of its community.

Since the participants can also act as teachers, this creates a unique opportunity for feedback to come from within. The invitation to creatives at any experience level or those pursuing experimentation provides a sense of belonging through avoiding a typical competitive classroom experience.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Very strong team with lots of experience. Budget seems balanced.

A sample of the 2026 program would help support this criteria.

It looks like this is for a single Fellowship, but that is not clear from the budget or proposal. It would be helpful to know more details about hours, duration of the commitment, and compensation. Your proposal gives me a good understanding of the SHED, but I'd like to know more about the Fellow's role and maybe even how you select them.

Goals for stability are clearly stated. This program has a strong foundation and can clearly continue to grow. I would like to see some additional supporting data and feedback.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Shore Cultural Centre

Project Title: Shore Cultural Centre 2026 STEAM Fest

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 8.25

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through a free, family-friendly STEAM festival designed specifically for Euclid residents and families. The applicant clearly defines Euclid as a racially and economically diverse inner-ring community and connects the project to Shore Cultural Centre's longstanding role as a downtown community arts and cultural gathering place. STEAM Fest removes financial barriers through free admission and provides hands-on science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics activities alongside live entertainment and participatory experiences for people of all ages. Local schools, daycares, libraries, businesses, community organizations, residents, students, and volunteers participate in delivering the event, and coordination with the City of Euclid's Art Walk expands community reach. Particularly strong is the applicant's plan to review participant, exhibitor, and sponsor feedback from the 2026 event and use an event report to inform 2027 planning. Outreach includes social media, print publications, a website, newsletter, Board networks, and community partners. The application could be strengthened by identifying specific disability and communication-access accommodations and by explaining how programming and outreach respond specifically to the racial and economic diversity identified in the community narrative. Overall, the project demonstrates substantial evidence of free access, community participation, partnership, feedback, outreach, and intergenerational engagement.

STEM is so much better with Art and STEAM powers movements. STEAM fest sounds fantastic and much needed. I am excited for the participants to see both science and art in a new light.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Shore Cultural Centre's proposed STEAM Fest is thoroughly describe and shows the breadth of relationships established with various local exhibitors and partners. This section could have been strengthened by providing a similar amount of detail to the local artists involved in STEAM Fest. What are their disciplines? How many artists are you hoping to engage in 2027, and how has that grown in past years?

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy through a multidisciplinary festival that incorporates local musicians, dancers, magicians, visual artists, balloon art, mural coloring, chalk art, face painting, and other creative experiences alongside science, technology, engineering, and mathematics activities. STEAM Fest provides both live performance and hands-on opportunities for families to participate creatively, and the support materials demonstrate prior participation by a tenant dance group, local student cellist, and paid balloon artist. A significant strength is the organization's increasing commitment to local artists: the applicant states that performers and exhibitors are offered both a stage and a stipend, and the 2027 budget allocates $7,000 to Arts and Cultural Professionals. The application could be strengthened by identifying the proposed 2027 artists and performers, explaining how artists and exhibitors are selected, articulating artistic or cultural learning outcomes, and demonstrating more intentionally how the arts component intersects with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics rather than operating alongside them. More information about opportunities for attendees to learn directly from artists or develop creative skills would also strengthen the case. Overall, the proposal demonstrates meaningful local artist support, varied artistic presentation, and participatory creative activity, with less complete evidence of curatorial intent, artistic learning, and interdisciplinary STEAM integration.

Glad to see artistic professionals were the largest line-item on the budget. This cultural center and program address a wide range of artistic disciplines and intentionally programs through community partnerships, expanding access to experiencing and presenting art.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through five prior STEAM Fests, an experienced multidisciplinary planning committee, municipal involvement, an established planning cycle, community partnerships, and an evaluation process that informs subsequent events. The committee includes expertise in event planning, fundraising, music, finance, graphic design, education, administration, marketing, and municipal planning. Planning for 2027 begins with review of 2026 participant, exhibitor, and sponsor feedback and preparation of a follow-up report, followed by sponsor and exhibitor outreach and monthly committee meetings. This recurring process and five years of direct implementation experience provide confidence in the organization's ability to deliver the event. Financial planning is less strong. The submitted budget reports $16,360 in income against $16,960 in expenses, leaving an unexplained $600 shortfall. The $6,360 in-kind contribution appears consistently on both sides of the budget but is not itemized, while $1,050 in Other Project Expenses is also unexplained and $5,000 in sponsorship income is not identified as confirmed or projected. A major financial strength is the $7,000 allocation to Arts and Cultural Professionals, which supports the applicant's stated commitment to increasing artist compensation. Overall, the organization demonstrates strong operational capacity, with budget reconciliation and greater financial detail representing the principal concerns.

Grateful for the explanation of this organization's history, which includes periods of challenge and current efforts to grow and adapt.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Smart Development

Project Title: Roots & Resistance: Arab and Palestinian Arts and Cultural Heritage Celebration

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 8.8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Roots & Resistance serves a wide range of communities, and its multi-day events and workshops give the public multiple opportunities to participate. They are focused on bringing Palestinian and Arab arts front and center, and they are committed to expanding free public programming for the greater Cleveland community to access. They have a plan for multilingual outreach beginning long before the proposed events held at accessible venues, and this could allow for both inter-community access and connection with the broader public.

The program benefits the cultural preservation of Arab and Middle Eastern culture in the immigrant community, while it also works to increase the knowledge and understanding of their heritage through a cultural exchange within the broader community.

Outreach efforts are clearly defined and thoughtful. Knowing that Greater Cleveland's Arab American community is so robust was helpful (something I did not realize).

I was especially drawn to the emphasis on welcoming both Arab and non-Arab audiences into the experience. The combination of intergenerational activities, bilingual programming, and participatory cultural experiences helps create opportunities for both cultural pride and cross-cultural understanding.

The applicant clearly understands, respects, and shares power with this community, clearly defining who they are, what their needs are, and why those needs translate into the project.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

While it's clear that this cultural program meets the Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy criteria, I'm not familiar with the traditions named in the proposal and would like to see some examples of these crafts and traditions so that they are brought to life.

The picture of all the individuals in front of the murals was beautiful. This demonstrated engagement, joy, and the centering of the arts, etc.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

I love the variety of artistic experiences included throughout the project, including Dabke dance, Tatreez embroidery, etc. The programming feels community-driven and connected to cultural traditions that are often underrepresented in public arts programming. I also appreciated that the project focuses not only on presenting cultural traditions, but on actively teaching and sharing them through workshops and hands-on experiences. This creates opportunities for participants to engage with the art forms rather than simply observing them.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The staff seems incredibly qualified - no concerns about capacity there. I do see community responsiveness, but no real evaluation plan. How is success measured? How is participant feedback gathered, and how does it inform future programs?

I can see that the project will be led by a team with a qualified leader. The qualifications of the team are not as well supported by the narrative.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Solon Community Band Inc

Project Title: "Many Voices, One Harmony: The Tapestry of Our Community"

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 6

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Many Voices, One Harmony: The Tapestry of Our Community brings together several ways to participate, including dance and instrument demonstrations, arts and crafts activities, and a photo gallery, which gives the community more than one way to engage with the event. The sensory-friendly performances are a thoughtful access feature that gives attention to people who are often left out of live events. It is not clear who the festival is meant to serve beyond Solon residents or more details on which cultures will be represented. They reference cultural authenticity and the universal language of music without mentioning who will lead or take part in presenting which tradition. More detail on cultural focus and how the residents of greater Cuyahoga county will be invited to participate would help show what the festival offers to the public.

Expanding their traditional concert performance into an immersive community festival shows the broadening of the community benefit. I would like to know more about the specific cultural diversity they are presenting. Maybe by including some examples.

In the project description, I'm wondering what cultural authenticity specifically means to this org. Knowing more about the cultural richness of Solon would help reviewers understand how the band brings forth music that draws in and honors the cultures of Solon.

The "immersive community festival" model is fascinating and fun. While the vision is compelling, I was hoping to learn more about which cultural organizations, artists, or community groups have committed to participating in the project, even if pending a grant award. Much of the narrative describes intended outreach and potential participants, and additional detail regarding confirmed partnerships would have strengthened the public benefit case for me.

I can see strong evidence of public benefits with a concert that is free and open to all, with a community band performance that is supposed to reflect the culture of the community. I especially appreciate that it will go beyond the just-listen form of a concert.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Solon Community Band is a valuable anchor for a festival, and the combination of various art forms points to a range of artistic activity. The application does not develop that range. It lists their offerings without specific descriptions of the content or what attendees will experience or learn. The cultural language is vague, and without named traditions, it's hard to see how this festival can be set apart from other community celebrations.

I appreciate that this community band tailors their music to the occasion so the music can be felt as well as heard.

I was hoping for specificity regarding the artistic programming itself. While the application references a culturally inclusive repertoire and community participation, I would have liked to learn more about the artists, musical selections, and experiences that attendees can expect. The idea seems incredible, but the details don't bring it to life just yet.

The program certainly is responsive to the need to be more inclusive with demographic changes. I see some evidence of how the community band is helping the community as a whole; however, I'm looking for evidence of how the project itself will help artists build capacity directly.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The scope of Solon's proposed festival aligns well with their resources. Since their project is a one-day celebration with a modest request, their plan appears realistic and within reach. They state that band members and local cultural representatives are directly involved in planning, which suggests that the community has a real voice in shaping the event. Their application is somewhat general about who makes up the team beyond the director and the board. I would like to hear more about who sits on the planning committee and what each person contributes so I can better understand the community's role.

I am not sure if the band is performing at an already established festival or if the band is also putting on the festival. And I'm unsure of what is happening at the festival.

Much of the project appears to remain in the planning stage. I'd like to see additional information regarding implementation timelines, evaluation methods, and how success will be measured in this "immersive" style program.

The applicant has cited a history of carrying out the project successfully, which is evidence that it has the organizational capacity to achieve its goals. I am looking for evidence of how the concert is planned and how the processes of producing this concert ensure a culture of belonging.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: SOS: Strengthening Our Students

Project Title: "The Art of Growing: Cultural Discovery and Creative Expression for Urban Youth"

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 7.2

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Strengthening Our Students has a wide range of ages that they serve, from kindergarten through twelfth grade. They have partnerships with a variety of organizations that allow them to reach across Cuyahoga county at multiple locations. The program runs as both a summer offering and a year-round after-school program. There seems to be a limited number of participants. I am not clear on exactly how the larger public will be involved in their project, but they are willing to provide their students with a meaningful connection to the arts through nature at large.

Website video featuring Antonio really shows the vibrancy of their program and the impact of the program.

What a positive experience for these young humans -- the inclusion of parents is a great way to strengthen whole families.

I appreciated the organization's long-standing commitment to serving young people and families. I was hoping to learn more about the specific communities this project seeks to serve and how those communities helped shape the program design. While the application references under-resourced and urban youth, specifics about community engagement strategies would strengthen the public benefit aspect, which was presented in a more general nature.

I can see that the applicant is really responding to a specific need for the community with an intention of being inclusive of those who have lacked resources historically. However, I am looking for evidence to help me reconcile that while the applicant's community is defined quite broadly, the project will only serve about 20 pairs of parents and children--while a small number is not a piece of evidence for lack of public benefit, I would like clarity on how the applicants are selected.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

I really enjoyed reading about how The Art of Growing connects nature and the arts. Its focus reaches beyond the visual arts to include writing and even the art of observation, which gives students several

ways to express what they see and experience. Their mission is a unique one, and it invites young people to treat local Cleveland parks and the environment as a source of creative inspiration.

Integrating local parks/nature with the arts is a wonderful way for kids to experience the beauty and healing ability of nature.

Sounds like the arts are being engaged in a lot of ways -- the environmental arts program likely sparks a lot of joy for the youth.

I would have liked to learn more about the artistic curriculum, the teaching artists, and the intended outcomes. While the application references a variety of creative activities, I was left with questions about what participants will create and what distinguishes these experiences from other similar programs.

While that's evidence of how relevant the project is to the community, I am in search of evidence of how teachers and artists will be engaged and developed by participating in the project

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

This is an established program that has demonstrated its capacity to sustain itself over decades. They have partnerships with a range of organizations and appear to have a healthy fundraising capacity. I believe that their staff and board are diverse and well positioned to carry out their mission. The program is thoughtful and well-designed for environmental exposure and awareness, but I did not see much showing a reciprocal relationship between the organization and its students beyond their participation in the activities offered to them. I would love to read more examples of co-creation or student input.

An excellent budget with detailed notes shows that they have the knowledge and capacity to run the program.

Appears the small income and expense difference -- there's a plan (+ it is a small gap).

Additional details regarding evaluation methods, outcomes, and how the success of the arts and cultural components will be measured are critical in program design. No concerns about program delivery, given the orgs long history and strong leadership.

With a qualified staff leading the project, I can definitely see evidence of organizational capacity. With the budget, I can also see a strong financial position.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Sparrows Fortune

Project Title: Xpressions Public Writing Workshops (Spring Semester)

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 8.75

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Public Benefit through a free, family-friendly STEAM festival designed specifically for Euclid residents and families. The applicant clearly defines Euclid as a racially and economically diverse inner-ring community and connects the project to Shore Cultural Centre's longstanding role as a downtown community arts and cultural gathering place. STEAM Fest removes financial barriers through free admission and provides hands-on science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics activities alongside live entertainment and participatory experiences for people of all ages. Local schools, daycares, libraries, businesses, community organizations, residents, students, and volunteers participate in delivering the event, and coordination with the City of Euclid's Art Walk expands community reach. Particularly strong is the applicant's plan to review participant, exhibitor, and sponsor feedback from the 2026 event and use an event report to inform 2027 planning. Outreach includes social media, print publications, a website, newsletter, Board networks, and community partners. The application could be strengthened by identifying specific disability and communication-access accommodations and by explaining how programming and outreach respond specifically to the racial and economic diversity identified in the community narrative. Overall, the project demonstrates substantial evidence of free access, community participation, partnership, feedback, outreach, and intergenerational engagement.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy through a multidisciplinary festival that incorporates local musicians, dancers, magicians, visual artists, balloon art, mural coloring, chalk art, face painting, and other creative experiences alongside science, technology, engineering, and mathematics activities. STEAM Fest provides both live performance and hands-on opportunities for families to participate creatively, and the support materials demonstrate prior participation by a tenant dance group, local student cellist, and paid balloon artist. A significant strength is the organization's increasing commitment to local artists: the applicant states that performers and exhibitors are offered both a stage and a stipend, and the 2027 budget allocates $7,000 to Arts and Cultural Professionals. The application could be strengthened by identifying the proposed 2027 artists and performers, explaining how artists and exhibitors are selected, articulating artistic or cultural

learning outcomes, and demonstrating more intentionally how the arts component intersects with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics rather than operating alongside them. More information about opportunities for attendees to learn directly from artists or develop creative skills would also strengthen the case. Overall, the proposal demonstrates meaningful local artist support, varied artistic presentation, and participatory creative activity, with less complete evidence of curatorial intent, artistic learning, and interdisciplinary STEAM integration.

Literary arts are often underrepresented in community programming, which this application affirms by claiming to offer the first retreat of its kind in Ohio. The SEL and multi-disciplinary elements of Sparrows Fortune suggest that Xpressions is especially engaging and impactful for participants.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Sparrow's Fortune has done incredible work with their programming. They've created an array of programming - public workshops, retreats, Project ROOT - that serves their community while specializing the content to specific groups. Combined with their experienced staff, this makes for an organization that has sustainable process that ensures belonging for all.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through five prior STEAM Fests, an experienced multidisciplinary planning committee, municipal involvement, an established planning cycle, community partnerships, and an evaluation process that informs subsequent events. The committee includes expertise in event planning, fundraising, music, finance, graphic design, education, administration, marketing, and municipal planning. Planning for 2027 begins with review of 2026 participant, exhibitor, and sponsor feedback and preparation of a follow-up report, followed by sponsor and exhibitor outreach and monthly committee meetings. This recurring process and five years of direct implementation experience provide confidence in the organization's ability to deliver the event. Financial planning is less strong. The submitted budget reports $16,360 in income against $16,960 in expenses, leaving an unexplained $600 shortfall. The $6,360 in-kind contribution appears consistently on both sides of the budget but is not itemized, while $1,050 in Other Project Expenses is also unexplained and $5,000 in sponsorship income is not identified as confirmed or projected. A major financial strength is the $7,000 allocation to Arts and Cultural Professionals, which supports the applicant's stated commitment to increasing artist compensation. Overall, the organization demonstrates strong operational capacity, with budget reconciliation and greater financial detail representing the principal concerns.

I commend this organization for utilizing survey metrics for measuring the impact of the workshops. This will give so much valuable information on what does and does not work. Just including this gives me so much information on the what is import to this organization! Yes for organizational capacity!!

Appreciate the detailed budget and future year projections, but the format is a bit difficult to follow and compare from year to year. It is unclear if the expected revenues for 2026 of ~$39k will be balanced with expected expenses, or if this is a surplus goal. This application would benefit from specific and measurable goals.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Stella Maris

Project Title: Caffeinate & Create

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $4,470

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I enjoyed reading about Stella Maris's mission and their ability to carry out strong public outreach. They seem very keen on including both people who are directly impacted by substance abuse and anyone at large who has been touched by the impacts of substance abuse disorder. They will be providing programming for a variety of observances and awareness months, and they seem to have a deep focus and interest in providing diverse events for all members of Cleveland who can attend.

The program is beneficial to the people they serve. Excellent goal – to bring the Recovery community together with the general public to reduce stigma. This program gives the community a sense of purpose and belonging, especially for those who tend to isolate.

This project demonstrates how the arts is a vehicle for stability, hope, and life wellness.

I appreciated that the program is offered free of charge and is open to individuals beyond the Stella Maris client community. The marketing plan is detailed and varied in nature, working towards stronger awareness in the community. Activating the alumni network is an excellent strategy to remain engaged with them, but also to lean on them to recommend others who would benefit - a true win-win.

I can see strong evidence that the applicant is responding to their community with this program, fulfilling a very specific need for the individual in recovery. Its intention to build the regularly offered program around meaningful themes also shows that intention to be inclusive. I also see that the project will be offered for free and open to the public. This also.shows how conscious the applicant is about accessibility.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Even though the events will be led by Sage Zagari, the clients, volunteers, alumni, and Cleveland community members will be artists themselves, and their talents will be fostered through the expertise of Stella Maris's staff and lead artist. The project is also well-suited for co-creation with its community.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The org works to improve the program through observation and feedback. I appreciate that assessment is an important aspect of the project,

Appreciated seeing the pictures.

The inclusion of a professional teaching artist and the intentional use of themed sessions to encourage conversation around topics is a lovely touch. However, beyond painting activities, the application provided limited detail about the artistic curriculum (and how this may evolve or be tailored to the themes presented).

I can see that the artist is particularly chosen for this project and that she has a history of working with the applicant as well as the project.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Caffeinate & Create has plans for support from other foundation contributions and in-kind donations. They have demonstrated a clear ability to evolve, having shared that they were able to expand beyond their last programming iteration. They also have clear structures in place to bridge the recovery community to the broader community through creative expression.

Good budget. Appreciate that they are reducing costs by utilizing some of the materials acquired through their 2026 CAC grant.

The project description demonstrates that planning has taken place -- details are present and very helpful in understanding the potential for success.
Appears to be a fiscally efficient project.

The project benefits from solid leadership, established community trust, and a teaching artist with prior experience facilitating the program. As the project continues to grow, I would be interested in learning more about how participant outcomes and program impact are evaluated beyond attendance.

Applicant demonstrates good organizational capacity with strong evidence of staff qualifications. I would like to see more evidence in terms of the planning and how the project's goals and progress will be measured.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Stellar Acrobatic Dance Academy

Project Title: Beijing Rhyme

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 6

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Stellar Acrobatic Dance Academy has a long record of preserving and teaching Chinese cultural dance, and its mission is clear and specific. Sustaining a cultural tradition is a meaningful contribution to Cuyahoga county and the world at large. The application notes that its students include people from non-Asian backgrounds, along with performances at multicultural festivals that bring their work to wider audiences. They describe their public benefit mainly in terms of serving their existing student community, however. It is less clear how people outside the school, particularly those without prior training, can take direct part in SADA's work. The references to diverse backgrounds across urban and suburban communities are not explained in depth, and the festival performances are characterized as appearances rather than programming the academy will create for the public. More details on introductory classes, open events, or other entry points for the general Cleveland public would better show how the project reaches beyond SADA's students.

Excellent public benefit and cross-cultural exchange for their students as well as the greater community.

This project highlights a rarer art form. However, I was hoping to learn more about how community members beyond the academy's students and families will engage with the project. While the application references performances at festivals and cultural events, how can these programs engage its audience (and community) on a deeper level? The application lacked important detail on how these audiences would be reached.

There is clear evidence that the project is answering a need from the community. They have stated that this is creating opportunities for Chinese American and Asian American students to explore and connect with Chinese culture.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

SADA offers highly specialized training and has students representing Cuyahoga county at regional, national, and international competitions, which points to real depth and standards of excellence. Performances at multicultural festivals add visibility to their years of dedicated cultural work. They seem

pretty focused on training and competitive achievement and say less about how their artistic work engages new audiences and artists. It leans more on what SADA has accomplished, and it's harder to see how new funding would develop the greater Cleveland community's artistic life.

Would have loved a video clip of a performance to better see the full Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy of the program.

Seems like a vibrant project, one that they are growing and evolving.

This was incredibly strong. The project demonstrates a clear artistic vision and provides students with the opportunity to study and perform a unique and visually distinctive dance form (as well as the cultural traditions of its origin).

There is some evidence that the project will engage professional choreographers and costume designers to realize the performance. While that demonstrates the seriousness and life of artistry involved in the project, I am wondering about the method of enga

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Its structure is sound, and the program is led by experienced teachers who have directly trained in the Chinese dance tradition. It is less clear how students, families, or the wider community have helped shape the program. They describe a deeply traditional art form, and it is understandable that the core practice itself would not change much, but there is not much strong evidence of the project being formed around an initiative to bring in new participants or of SADA's responsiveness to community needs.

Parent volunteers support outreach, event coordination, logistics, and community engagement. A $ 25,000 budget deficit is concerning.

The income is significantly less than expenses. I wonder if this is a mistake?

The org demonstrated experience managing prior projects and community performances of a similar nature. What was missing was how project success will be evaluated and how audience feedback is collected and incorporated into future programming.

I can see the qualifications of the team leading the project; namely, that three were Chinese acrobats. I am also interested in the backend, meaning the operational and financial planning of this project, and whether they have qualifications applicable to

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Tastemakers United

Project Title: Diaspora Day Experience

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

There is good evidence that the organization will meaningfully connect with its audience.

The stated community is very broad. Identifying the core audience and defining its' potential size would help target the intended outcomes of this event and inform how the event is marketed. I would like to know more about the organization's current audience, and to see that organization knows who its' audience is.

The project deepens community connection to heritage and engages individuals of all backgrounds to celebrate through all aspects of culture.

the public nature of the event, indicates significant public benefit, however it was difficult to understand the pricing structure for the programming. Being more clear would help to better assess overall public benefit.

There are a general wide variety of programming at this event but not a lot of details on who is participating and what community partners are involved. More information is also needed on how this event is celebrating the creativity, traditions, and cultural heritage of the African Diaspora.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Additional information on how attendees will actively participate through interactive activities would have strengthened the proposal. What specific activities will be included?

The website lists a few example of past events that show the organizer's experience. Showing or naming those events would have provided more evidence than the application narrative or the uploads included.

Artists are paid for their service and provide bridges and other connections for participants. That's important!

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

There is a long list of activities and programming this event is bringing to the community. Thought details are missing on what exactly this festival provides, there is also no supporting information on the process of reflection during the planning process or mention of feedback from the community.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

A strong team!

While I commend the vision and mission of this organization, the application does not provide enough specificity to understand the actual contours of the event. The venue has not been selected and non-profits and artistic collaborators are referenced in the application but not named outside of the lead organizer. While I am confident in the organizer's capacity to produce a successful event, I need more information about this specific event.

The project looks feasible artistically and economically. For future, check the budget so the expense and income totals are equal.

I would just like to see what the review process looks like and supporting data. Specific details would help give a better understanding of what goes into this event.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Tavern Coffee House Inc

Project Title: Strongest Community Series 2027

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 6

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Tavern Coffee house offers a welcoming, low-barrier setting where the Buckeye neighborhood can gather, and the open mic nights give local performers a place to share their work. Their emphasis on everyone being invited and feeling part of the community is a positive, and regular events like these can become a valued neighborhood fixture. They describe access mainly in terms of the space being open, and they do not give a clear explanation of how their arts events will strengthen the greater Cleveland community's connection and engagement beyond providing a venue.

The public benefit for the neighborhood is clear. The program brings people together through the arts in a fun and community-centered way.

A space for community members to gather ... that is conscious of their needs and is safe. Weaving in the arts seems like a positive endeavor.

I appreciated the organization's commitment to creating a welcoming gathering space in the Buckeye neighborhood and using arts and culture as a way to strengthen community connection. However, how do community members help shape the programming, and what specific needs or interests informed the development of the series? While a community-driven idea, this concept did not present the story of the community need and the void it would fill.

I can see strong evidence that the project has great public benefit. With regular input from the community and open mics, I can see this really being a community-based event and is very accessible.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Open mic nights and live musician events give amateur and local performers a platform, and the format invites participation that adds to the Buckeye neighborhood's creative life. This appears to be a general addition, and I did not read much about the artistic character of the programming. They do not specify what kind of music or other art forms are featured or developed, which leaves an open question about what more funding would add.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

It would be helpful to see a video to get a better feel for the kinds of programming the series is supporting.

The pictures were helpful. In the project description, it might have been helpful to have specific examples of what a monthly session would look like. After reading the application I'm wondering how you recruit your artists. Who are some that have been involved? What are their backgrounds?

This was presented generally and lacked detail. The application referenced open mics, musicians, and community gatherings, but provides limited information about the artists involved, the types of acts that will be featured, and how the programming will evolve throughout the year to ensure relevance and impact.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

TCH is in a comfortable financial position. Their request is smaller than what they earn from ticket sales and other streams of revenue. Although their organization is relatively new at three years old, the project will be led by someone with several years of experience in this space. Their team, board, and community partnerships point to well-established local relationships, and the event series appears to have been shaped within the community it serves. I have no significant concerns about the Tavern House's capacity to carry out their project.

This is a solid idea, but it still seemed to be in the planning stages. I was hopeful to see more information on project implementation, artist recruitment, evaluation, and how success will be measured beyond attendance. Additional detail in these areas would have strengthened my confidence in the project's long-term impact and sustainability.

I can see that the project is run by a qualified team. I can also gain insight into the planning process for each monthly iteration of the event, in terms of how audiences are engaged and curated.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Tender Hearts Crusades

Project Title: Gospel/Soul Music & History Workshop @ the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Tender Hearts Crusades is dedicated to their roots in sharing the historical influence of gospel music with the public. They have plans to serve families, local churches, veterans, and various artists across the Cleveland community. They have accessible public programming that includes an online master class and a short documentary, which allows them to disseminate their workshop to communities around the country.

The recommendation letter from Kathryn Clusman, Director of Education and Community Engagement, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, shows community support. I hope they are able to present some activities on the outdoor stage to expand public engagement.

The highlighting of partnerships with schools, churches, and community organizations throughout Greater Cleveland provided wide community investment. However, I was hoping to learn a bit more about how participants will engage beyond the one-day event and how the organization plans to evaluate the impact on attendees to ensure that public benefit can be demonstrated with data.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Tender Hearts has expressed that they will be consulting with local Cleveland partners, educators, and musicians, as well as experts from across the county. The workshop format is inherently educational and offers tools that will help people beyond artists and other professionals grow their skills. The workshop will be led by artists and institutions with strong backgrounds in many different forms of the arts.

The link to the Gospel of Soul brought life to their work. I look forward to watching the entire film at a later time.

This was exceptional! The application articulates both the high-quality artistic content and the cultural significance of the work.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

It does seem that this event is entirely reliant on the CAC's grant request and matches to carry out their programming, but for a one-day event, that may not be an issue. The larger organization has been running since 2009 and has international reach. I am curious about their capacity to measure progress, but I am impressed by the amount of support they are receiving from a diverse group of professionals, including the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Some of their goals are limited by the one-day format of the event. Still, they seem to have a very strong capacity to carry out a culturally rich program.

No identifying info on budget; it is not clear where the additional revenue is coming from.

Well-written application; this will be a phenomenal project. Thanks for what your organization does to make your communities better.

I appreciated that the applicant identifies specific project activities, community partners, and a solid plan for implementation. I was interested in learning more about prior outcomes from the sold-out 2025 workshop and how participant feedback, attendance, and/or evaluative findings informed the proposed 2027 program.

I see strong evidence that the planning process includes setting goals and measuring progress, and that it will engage qualified individuals in the process

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: The Foundry

Project Title: Cleveland Foundry's 5th Annual Juried Student Art Exhibition: The Power of Community

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 6.4

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Foundry demonstrates a strong commitment to accessibility and inclusion, with ADA compliance, fully accessible amenities, and adaptive equipment that open its recreational programs to the public of many backgrounds and abilities. They also describe an arts competition as part of their offerings, which could give community members a new way to take part. The access efforts are mainly tied to their maritime activities, and they do not explain the direct tie between public access and the arts. I did not see full descriptions of how youth artists will learn about the opportunity, how they plan to invite in varying members of the younger Cleveland community, or how the arts competition will help shape a relationship between the arts and the greater public.

The new online system for submitting and judging submissions creates more access for students. The exhibition team is not diverse. I encourage them to expand the diversity of the exhibition team and/or engage community members throughout the entire exhibition process to increase public benefit.

The exhibition provides recognition for participating students and creates an accessible way for families and community members to engage with youth-created artwork. However, what is the broader public benefit? I was hoping to learn more about how students, schools, and community members are engaged beyond the submission and exhibition process. The application lacked detail on outreach strategies (these were presented generally) and efforts to expand participation among new schools and student artists.

I can see strong evidence of public benefits with a free public program, especially since the program is designed to celebrate youth achievement.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The involvement of age-appropriate jurors from an arts institute lends credibility to the competition and suggests a level of care in how entries will be evaluated. They otherwise describe the competition with bare details and do not explain the greater artistic purpose of their event. They do not identify a cultural

theme, and overall, this application leaves an impression that the arts are an addition to an organization whose focus is on sailing and other maritime offerings. I am unsure on how this competition will contribute to Cuyahoga county's artistic life.

While the exhibition itself is well organized, I'm wondering how the project supports artistic development and engagement beyond the competition format.

I can see strong evidence of this when the program is designed to uplift student artists through a process of exhibition, selection, and awards. As it said in the narratives, this will be résumé-building participation. I like that the jurors receive a stipend.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Foundry has been running for almost a decade and is very financially strong. With substantial revenue, I have no concerns about their ability to carry out the student arts exhibition. Their team alone has a deep, long-running operational arm, and they are planning to bring in a director of arts education for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and three college students who will serve as jurors. This combination of professionals will likely be able to run their planned project. The arts-specific expertise rests largely on one partner, and they do not show how their arts education work would deepen beyond the competition itself. I also did not read many details about their role in co-creation with program participants or the greater community.

They appear to have the capacity to execute the project. This arts experience does have great value for the community -- it would be helpful to have more information about how this arts experience weaves into the mission. There is a brief mention, but how does this art show strengthen the organization ... how does it weave in those who might not otherwise have experience with your organization? Is there a theme, one that draws youth artists into the mission of the organization?

The application provides a solid implementation timeline and evidence of sustained participation over multiple years. I appreciated the inclusion of participation data from previous exhibitions. As the project continues to evolve, I would be interested in learning more about how participant experiences are evaluated and how feedback from students, educators, and families informs future iterations of the program.

The narrative shows a very clear timeline to help me understand how the applicant sets the course and measures progress for the project. I can also see the qualifications of the team leading the project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: The Gathering Place

Project Title: Building coping skills in those touched by cancer through TGP's Expressive Arts Programming

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.4

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

A bit more detail on the actual programming offered — for example, horticultural therapy — would have helped clarify how the project engages participants. Does it include horticultural tours? Hands-on gardening? Additional specifics here would strengthen the application.
The optional response was very helpful in providing context about the organization's community and how it connects with people beyond its immediate geographic area.

Application indicates strong and concrete steps that the organization has taken to research and serve diverse and underserved populations.

There is so much community benefit in your program. It would be helpful in question 7 to understand how these community touch points directly relate to the expressive arts program. Right now it is very focused on the overall programming of TGP.

the program is free of charge and directly benefits communities with less access and conflicting needs. This is another example of how the overall community benefits when population of the margin are significantly supported.

I am interested in what non-therapy arts expressions sessions are provided, and the selection process for session leaders. The positive effects are mentioned to be well-documented, but I am also interested in seeing more supporting data as evidence. The examples of growth and inviting family members and caregivers to join shows the impact and accessibility of the program.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

More specifics on the offerings (ex. art therapy) would help panelists understand how programs are relevant and engaging.

Appreciate this: "Expressive arts can help reduce stress by allowing participants to express emotions in a safe and
supportive environment, examine the changes that cancer has presented and learn new tools to manage the experience."
I question the amount on the budget that is allocated to artistic staff vs. programmatic staff vs. supplies. While the program is making strides in reaching diverse audiences, it is not clear that it is meeting the second or third criteria of this section. Would like to know more about how specific art programs/offerings are selected and how many are offered a year.

In question 5, this is another place where I would like to know more details about the program, not the marketing which can be covered elsewhere.

The new outreach mobile services van is a wonderful way to widen the reach, though I think I'm missing the larger arts and culture aspect. I would also like to see the process of reflection in the planning process.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I recommend listing the names/ roles and experience of folks involved, instead of redirecting panelists to the organization's website. Still, the general information provided was helpful.

TGP demonstrates a strong capacity to manage this program as integrated into it services and valued equally with other approaches.

There is clearly a large amount of care behind this program. Partnering with local artists, arts organizations, or art non-profits could help bolster the arts and culture aspect of this program.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: The Harvard Square Center

Project Title: 12th Annual Fun Day Festival

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 4.2

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Harvard Square Center's project is rooted in strong community purpose. They have a strong plan to reduce hunger and connect residents with essential resources through an event that reflects the culture and history of the Harvard neighborhood. Their long list of partner organizations suggests a real relationship and trust built within the community, which is a significant strength. The application itself is sparse in detail, and it is not very clear what residents will experience at the festival or how the arts will fit into their goals. I would love to see more information about what activities will take place and how both their partners and the greater community will take part in their project, as well as what exact artistic resources they will share with their participants.

The festival has a clear benefit to the community they serve.

The annual festival appears to be a valued neighborhood tradition that encourages community pride/connection. I was hoping to learn more about how residents shape the artistic programming and what community needs informed the festival's design. While the application references resident input and neighborhood culture, additional detail about community engagement and intended outcomes were needed to demonstrate deeper public benefit.

There is not enough evidence for me to understand the event in full. I am having trouble understanding the community other than general geographic terms (residence), which is why I can't assess whether the program, which is described in vague terms, demonstrates public benefit for the community

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

They have a compelling general idea to bring the arts to Harvard residents as a way to imagine growth and change, and a festival that reflects the neighborhood's history and culture could be a meaningful artistic event. I did not see much development of said idea. They do not clearly identify the artists, performances, or activities, nor do they describe how local culture and history will be represented. With so little information, the artistic contribution is difficult to assess, and the arts appear secondary to their resource-sharing mission.

In respect to the arts and crafts -- it would be helpful to know examples of what that looks like. Having more examples (attachments) that convey how the arts are woven into the day would be helpful. Pictures from past events would be helpful.

This unfortunately felt generic. I'd love to see details regarding the artistic programming itself. The application references singing, dancing, bands, DJs, and performers, but provides limited information about the artists involved, how acts are selected, or what makes the artistic experience unique and meaningful for participants. The lack of specificity here did not support the project's impact.

I don't have enough information to understand the artistic and cultural aspects of this event. I don't know for a fact how artists are gonna be engaged or hired. I have no information to assess whether or not this project will help build the capacity of cultural professionals or whether they're engaging a diverse team of professionals.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Fun Day Festival is organized by a collaborative of social service providers who serve a neighborhood in southeast Cleveland, and their robust support from community partners suggests a shared commitment to the event. The financial picture is less clear. Their budget lists expenses for the festival, but it does not show any anticipated revenue or identify where the funds beyond this request would come from, even though the total cost of their project is significantly higher than the amount requested. They state that their partners are financially supporting their program, but I am not clear on how much each one plans to contribute. A collaborative structure can work well, but naming a lead point of contact and showing the full set of funding sources would give me greater confidence in the execution of their festival.

It is difficult to determine whether they meet the org capacity criteria because the budget did not include how they were going to pay for the entire festival. They also listed organizational partners, but it's not clear who is planning, organizing, producing, or managing the event.

It does appear that there are strong and diverse planners involved.

The Harvard Square Center has a plethora of community relationships and a history of providing services and resources to residents. However, I needed more logistics regarding festival implementation, evaluation, marketing, and how success will be measured.

The narrative describes the qualification of the team in general terms that apply to the entire team instead of qualifying individuals. I also can't see how they will be involved in the project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: The Land

Project Title: The Land's Community Journalism Program

Panelists: Melissa Astin, Micah Deer, Aviance Obie, Penny Pun, Leigh Winter

Score: 8.6

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

I appreciate The Land's unique categorization of journalism as a creative practice. They are dedicated to protecting investigative and technical expression in their work. They have also used their model to provide access to a limited, underutilized resource, and they offer multiple formats for connecting with the public through online formats and locations across Cuyahoga county.

This project benefits the students and the public at large. The video of the class presentation was a great example of the scope and depth of their work. The students learn the skill of journalism writing, while the community benefits from reading their stories. This application includes quite a bit of information about the communities served, but I'd like to learn more about the students in the program, including how The Land recruits and selects students. I appreciate the continued alumni involvement.

I'm wondering about the number of students that make it through the full course. With this starting on Zoom, what has been the retention rate through the 12 weeks? Does starting on Zoom create enough investment and motivation for the retention rate to stay high?

I appreciated the emphasis on accessibility through Zoom instruction, mentorship, stipends, and partnerships throughout Cuyahoga County. The application provides evidence that the organization is intentionally reaching residents from a variety of backgrounds and neighborhoods, thus providing a broader public benefit.

I can see strong evidence of public benefits, with the project being a program that is like nothing. I've read about during this cycle so far, and I don't know of another program like it anywhere else; therefore, it is definitely filling a very specific need in this community. The fact that it is being held over Zoom also drastically increases its accessibility.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

They have professionals from a wide range of cultural and journalism backgrounds, and based on this proposal, I believe that these professionals will likely inform how they will maintain an inclusive

community and promote representation within it. They also have a clear avenue to build up their members and give them a platform after they complete their courses, with continued opportunities to express what they have learned and grow within their field. The Land seems to have a solid focus on drawing students from different areas of Cuyahoga county, so that they are bringing in people who reflect the full breadth of the county.

The Artistic Vibrancy of the project is evident through reading the stories that have been published in the Land. This program is extending the reach of important community voices.

Though you do have the attached resource to refer to, it would be helpful in the Project Summary to have an example/testimonial of a student's experience and outcome.

The mentorship model and publication opportunities create avenues for participants to develop relevant storytelling skills. I would have liked to learn more about the artistic or cultural outcomes of the program and how they connect to broader arts and culture experiences throughout the Cuyahoga community.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Community Journalism Program is entering its fifth year and has expanded to multiple cities. They have the structure to grow and to make an impact in other areas of the country. They appear to have strong foundation support outside of this grant request, along with contributions from individuals, the government, and in-kind donations. Their reported staff brings diverse experiences and perspectives, and they seem well-positioned to find multiple ways to keep supporting their mission.

I'd like a more detailed budget.

On the budget form, it would be helpful if your organization's name and project name were on it. Also, that you totaled up the income and expense tables.
You pay arts and cultural professionals -- it is evident this is important to your organization.

Strong curriculum, experienced staff, years of implementation history, and established partnerships - this organization's capacity for this project is exceptional.

There is strong evidence that the project will be led by a qualified team. The description also gave me a clear picture of how the project will be carried out.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: The Meeting Place Learning Center

Project Title: TMPLC Art Project 2027

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 6.8

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

There is evidence of public benefit and knowing their community.

Organization demonstrate that it understand its community.

TMPC has strong connection to its communities and this project will provide an opportunities to connect and build a project together.

the location and free public show are both indicators of public benefit. While the program is directed specifically towards participating youth and their family, the overall public benefit/Access, maybe less than more broad reaching programs.

This project clearly encourages meaningful participation from each child. The focus on accessibility in an area with a high poverty rate shows the understanding and commitment to support the community.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The organization demonstrates strong evidence of thoughtfully supporting its community and developing a project with the potential to be academically impactful and empowering for students.

Staff clearly have experience working with children, but there is no indication of previous arts teaching experience and the budget indicates no expenses for arts and culture professionals. Contracting with a teaching artist would benefit the proposed program's success. The application also does not define how the mural is displayed or whether is it permanent. Hiring arts professionals/muralist would be able to help with the successful display and installation of the artwork, and demonstrate that the project meets criteria 2 and 3 of this section.

It would be good to see that there is some artistic expertise on the team who could help imagine and execute the mural. Having an artists present would deepen the experience and learning for all participants.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The staff descriptions did not mention any arts background. While it's possible someone involved in the project has relevant artistic experience, including this information would have strengthened the application.

It is unclear what the goals of the mural are, or how staff will determine that is has been successful.

The educational infrastructure for this project is strong, but it could deeply benefit by the addition of artistic expertise.

I am curious on how success will be measured and how feedback is gathered. Additional supporting data would be helpful. There seems to be a lot of support in general for this project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: The Singers' Club of Cleveland

Project Title: Rubin Commission Premier

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 6.8

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

There is evidence of a long history of the organization connecting with its audience, including intergenerational singers, a scholarship program, and participants from varied backgrounds.

It would be beneficial to understand the audience of the choir outside of the 50+ members, including size and how that audience is reached. It is also unclear whether the choir takes any steps to be inclusive or to engage diverse populations; having open call auditions alone does not demonstrate outreach efforts.

This is a community building project which is truly centered in the arts.

The pay what you can model allows for greater public access, however the discipline specific programming can possibly constraint audience participation. This is not a bad thing, but can't limit overall public benefit.

It was interesting to read about the long history of the chorus. The rehearsals have a clear community engagement portion by inviting interested singers of any level to participate. I am curious how they are invited, selected, or how many participate. It is also not very clear that this application is to commission a piece.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

There is strong evidence that the organization engages, and has engaged, a group of singers, offering them opportunities to thrive.

The applicant's answer to question 7 was especially useful for understanding the artistic goals of this program. I appreciate this context: " An added community-building
happens through the act of commissioning a new work, as in this project. A challenge of choral music is that it is often a reproductive art. "

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The proposal provided a clear explanation of why these funds are needed.
I would love more information on how this project interacts with the community. There seems to be a wide reach of audience members but not many participating in the creative process.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

A very strong team!

The team is strong and complementary in skills. Along with a reasonable budget, this project is very feasible.

More supporting data and information would be helpful to understand the full scope of the application.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Thea Bowman Center

Project Title: Thea Bowman Center Youth Summer Program

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 8.4

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Clear overview of how the project and organization hope to engage thoughtfully with the community while addressing the needs of participants. Through a variety of arts programming, the camp utilizes a variety of themes to engage with students and their families. Not only do they focus on camper development, but also on supporting their families. The application is clear about the communities they serve, though more detail is always helpful.

The application does a great job of clearly defining the community they serve and describing the benefit to not only the youth participants, but also their families and their surrounding community during the public showcase.

This program has a strong public benefit by focusing on the youth summer program, and then wrapping it up with an intergenerational picnic to showcase to the community how these youth are vibrantly impacted by the arts.

Involving youth and seniors in an 8-week summer program that concludes with an end of the summer showcase benefits everyone.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Program curriculum, activities, as well as student engagement is concise but clear. Would be interested in diving deeper into more specifics, like the types of arts or activities.

The eight-week youth enrichment program appears relevant to the Mt. Pleasant community, and the supporting materials show youth actively learning, creating, and celebrating their work. However, the application would have been strengthened by more specific information about the planned arts and cultural activities, the roles of each program partner, what youth will create, and the intended learning outcomes.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The photographs in the attachments were helpful in illustrating the scope of performances at the showcase, as there is an instrumental music performance in one and a (dance? theater?) performance in the other. Descriptions of what cultural learning opportunities are happening during the 8-week program would help provide a greater understanding of its goals and accomplishments.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Staffing for the camp is clear. Their partnerships with local organizations, camp specific staff, as well as the internal team, highlight how they hope to manage this camp experience.

The application was strengthened by acknowledging that they've recently added more structure, consistency, and partnerships to their long-time program after bringing on new staff.

Revamping the program and hiring new directors speaks to ongoing capacity and the ability to be flexible and responsive to change. The program is supported through partnerships with other groups. This group provides extensive community services.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Tremont West Development Corporation

Project Title: Tremont Arts & Cultural Festival

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 10

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Community demographics, background, and needs are very clearly highlighted. They do a strong job of articulating how they hope to engage with these communities. In addition, the programs are free, with a variety of family-friendly events that directly support the needs of their community.

The demographic breakdown of 2025 attendees was especially helpful in showcasing this applicant's ability to recognize the community it serves. By noting that they invite input from others through advisory roles, they also clearly demonstrate a desire to continue to grow. Public benefit is also increased through their physically accessible and multilingual materials.

The applicant clearly defines their community using participant data and includes community voices throughout planning and participation. Their partnerships, free admission, and outreach demonstrate intentional inclusion.

Free to attend. Engaging local artists. Local outreach to churches, arts groups, and schools fosters better engagement. "The Festival functions as a community gathering place..."

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application does a good job of highlighting the communities that inspired their programming and how they hope to program arts that reflect the population they serve. They also directly summarize what type of arts programming will be at the event (arts education, music, cultural booths, etc.)

This festival has a great strength of incorporating multidisciplinary artist events that will lead to a vibrant exposure of the arts & culture to a community full of diverse people.

The project celebrates the community's cultural diversity through visual art, performances, and interactive activities. The artist selection process and opportunities for emerging and underrepresented artists strengthen the project.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Interesting note in their description that their community also includes "artists, performers, and community groups". Partnerships with different groups and outreach to different ethnicities are pluses. A celebration of culture for everyone.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Organizational structure and festival leadership are well articulated. They also talk through how they hope to jury and select participants, which is an intentional step in this process. Clear and communicative.

The applicant provides a clear planning and implementation process, an experienced team with defined responsibilities, and a detailed budget. The supporting materials further strengthen confidence in their ability to carry out the project.

The upcoming festival is 28 years old. The manager has been on the job since 2002. The infrastructure for planning is strong, especially through volunteer committees.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: University Circle Inc.

Project Title: WOW! Wade Oval Wednesdays

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 9.6

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The event is intentional about targeting as many communities as they can that attend their events. Set in the summer, they make sure to include celebratory events like Juneteenth and LGBTQ Pride month as part of their programming. Whether it's through food, music, or the guests they bring on, they are very intentional about how they hope to build and strengthen relationships with their community. They also make sure to market programs as broadly as possible.

The applicant does a great job describing the event location, showing that the area is accessible and walkable to a large number of diverse communities. The application is strengthened by listing the number of people who have attended previous concerts, as well as the inclusion of its special celebration evenings, which shows the events are engaging and celebrating diverse populations.

The scale of this project will engage the community for the long term, which will bring great benefit through its accessible locations, targeting a variety of communities, and ways to engage intergenerationally. One consideration for this application would be highlighting community demographics to ensure underrepresented communities are informed.

The applicant clearly describes the diverse community the event reaches and provides several ways to promote awareness and participation. Community feedback is included, but more detail about how it informs planning, and naming the community partners, would strengthen the application.

Community sharing and feedback over a 12-month period is instrumental to forward movement. Group speaks of connection and collaboration. Impressive location and consistent schedule. Different celebration evenings highlight different cultures.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The project clearly outlines how they hope to serve their diverse communities to host an accessible event. The arts and culture events they hope to feature are also inclusive of their wide range of diverse communities. They are intentional about the type of musical genres and themes they hope to feature.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

There is careful consideration about food vendors, activities for families, as well as community resources.

The project brings together varied musical genres, cultural celebrations, and interactive activities. The summary explains the event experience, though clearer intended outcomes beyond attendance would strengthen the project's purpose.

Diversity of cultural expressions: different genres and types of music are presented every week to keep the series "fresh." Given the number of people the event attracts, it appears to be very responsive to community needs. It reads like a vibrant event!

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The organizational background, team structures, and event plans are very clear. How they hope to measure the success of the event is well outlined, and the budget plans are thorough.

Professional administrators with one of the largest budgets among the applicants in this group. Successfully producing an event like this, given its scope and its timeline, takes strong organizational capacity.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: UpStage Players

Project Title: Broadway Theatre Production, title not yet confirmed

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 8.4

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The application is clear about who they hope to serve and how they hope to include them. They are committed to providing quality arts education no matter the situation. They hope to serve all students through the program and engage their communities and families through it. They ensure that everyone can find a part in the project. Specific community details are outlined in the additional information section.

The applicant clearly defines their community and demonstrates inclusion through open participation, school outreach, and support for families facing financial barriers. Their ongoing community relationships strengthen the project.

Children and theater = GOLD. 32-year old group. Inclusive, no-cut policy. Ages 7-15 perform in a Broadway musical. Fairness in assigning roles. Serious commitment: three times a week for three months. Children perform at nursing homes as a gift to the community.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The organization's 'how' and 'why' are beautifully depicted; that said, I would be interested to learn more about the specific artistic curriculum or practice they hope to engage with. Even though the show isn't selected, descriptions of themes, past history, or an educational outline would be helpful.

The applicant clearly explains how the production process connects theatre, current events, and youth development. More detail about the proposed production and its themes would strengthen the application.

Serves a community that is 63% African American; the venue is located in an area that is 84% African American. Accessibility to theater IS cutlrual vibrancy.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Staff support and leadership team is clear. The specific individuals who will be working on the program are highlighted, alongside their backgrounds in the artistic community of Cleveland. Concise and direct.

The applicant does a really great job of illustrating its increased capacity through the support of skilled volunteers and alumni, which also shows how meaningful the program is to its community. However, the applicant is asking for $5,000 in CAC funding, but the uploaded budget lists the CAC funding contribution as $4,750, which is confusing. The funding request is not more than 50% of the proposed project's total expenses, but I'd encourage the applicant to make sure future attached documents match the exact amount requested in the application.

This applicant has set strong implementation steps to ensure that each youth participant has the ability to try out without being turned away. With the leadership team, who are extremely qualified for their project, deciding to stay closer to communities who may not have the same accessibility as affluent ones shows a commitment to benefiting the public.

The applicant describes an experienced team, a clear preparation process, and detailed budget categories. Clarifying the difference between projected income and expenses would strengthen the financial information.

Fascinating start to the organization with Mrs. Walsh. Dedication to ensuring that the show must go on. Strong volunteer support. Thoughtful approach to developing each season. Please be careful with your budget---you show more in income than in expenses.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Ursuline College

Project Title: 6th Annual Juneteenth Celebration and Art Exhibit 2027

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $6,750

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Community is clearly defined. The intention and purpose of the Juneteenth celebration is intentional for their community. Outreach and marketing is deliberate.

The applicant shows that they're working to build community between their campus and residents through programming that encourages appreciation of diverse populations. Their partnership with the local library and Mayor's office also shows a goal of reaching more members of the broader public. The additional information on Ursuline's demographics was especially helpful in further defining their community.

The applicant identifies its community and provides specific outreach methods and opportunities for community involvement. More detail about how the activities will encourage inclusion and belonging would strengthen the application.

A variety of cultural activities comprise the festival. A celebration of culture and history is always something to support.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The works that are being featured are representative of their student body population. I would like to see more examples of what jurying the pieces looks like or what the selection process is like.

This project has a team that is experienced and involved with the arts directly (curating, BFA, MA). The team supports the direction, educational, and arts & culture aspects of each event (literary, performing, and fine arts). The strategic outreach plan ensures a vibrant and enriching experience for all attendees.

The project offers a meaningful combination of visual art, performances, and book discussions celebrating Juneteenth. More detail about the proposed artistic content, and supporting materials showing past work would strengthen this area.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The enthusiasm for the event carries through and signals the event's vibrancy. A history of themes since its inception emphasizes positive attitudes, which is appropriate for a celebration. More images from last year's event to delight us would have been a plus.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The individuals working on this project are clearly communicated, and their work in the art exhibit is well defined. Staff background and expertise are well highlighted.

While the written application is strong, in the budget, there's $4,650 in undefined income in the line item for "Other-please describe." Without that definition, it's unclear where that funding will be coming from.

The applicant identifies qualified leaders and outlines a planning timeline and committee structure. Confirming partner roles and clarifying the unidentified income and space rental expense would strengthen the project plan.

Partnerships and collaborations ground the festival. Impressive recognition of diversity and the multiple ways it can be expressed. Experienced leadership. Impressive history of the college.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: VIVA Bavaria

Project Title: A Bavarian Christkindlmarkt 2027

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 8.4

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The event is well planned out and is intentional about having an event for the German and German-speaking cultural community as well as broadly expanding this opportunity to all community members.

The application describing that while there are many other craft fairs around this time, this is the only traditional outdoor event of its kind, was a strong addition to the event's description.

The applicant clearly defines its community and includes schools, cultural organizations, artisans, and vendors in planning and participation. Its outreach and demonstrated attendance growth support strong community engagement.

A celebration of culture with an emphasis on the differences inherent in the different regions of Germany. The growth in the event's audience and schedule shows that it attracts the interest of the public. Charming passport activity for children. It would be nice to know if there are efforts during the event to educate the public about history and traditions to enhance the presentation of the event.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The application is thorough about the types of arts and culture activities they hope to have at the event, while sharing the vast cultural makeup of Bavarian heritage.

The applicant clearly explains the cultural traditions the project preserves and shares through music, crafts, food, and performances. The named cultural organizations and historical context strengthen the project's artistic and cultural value.

Christkindl markets, like the one in Chicago referenced in the narrative, are popular holiday celebrations that highlight different cultural approaches to the holiday.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application states they have no staff; however, they have individuals working and organizing the event. May be best to differentiate paid and un-paid staff instead of saying there is no staff.

The application shows clear evidence of sustainability and growth, expanding the event from 1 to 3 days and increasing attendance by more than 450% over 4 years. The breakdown of the team's skills and the detailed schedule for the sub-committees also really strengthened the application.

This rapidly growing event demonstrates that the community is benefiting from the experiences and want more; however, it is worth investigating if the organization has grown enough to support the event. The board has strong experience but could consider staffing as another source of support, in case of volunteer burnout, as the event continues to expand.

The applicant provides a detailed planning timeline, clear committee responsibilities, and a team with relevant experience. The application demonstrates a strong understanding of the coordination needed to carry out the event.

Attendance growth from 2021 to 2025 is remarkable, as is the number of days that the event is held. Outreach through collaborations is a strong point. Good planning timeline. Very healthy budget. It would be helpful to understand how more income is projec

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: West Park Kamm's Neighborhood Development

Project Title: Pop Ups in the Parks

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 9.2

2027 Grant Amount: $6,505

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The organization is very clear about who they serve and where their organization is located. The program acts as an important cultural center, while building cross-cultural understanding. The breadth of their outreach is very robust, and their planning to see this through is impressive.

By bringing pop-ups to different neighborhoods and providing examples of previously participating educational organizations and performers, the applicant shows an intentional commitment to engaging diverse populations. The additional information strengthened the application, showing that the organization recognized areas of improvement and reimagined the event to be more inclusive and equitable.

The applicant uses past event data to reflect on and expand their programming ability to serve communities who were previously not getting much exposure to arts and culture events (Lawn Chair Cinema). With new programming and intentionally identified communities, these events should bring great benefit. One note: Impett and Tuland park have the same address; this should be confirmed.

The applicant clearly defines its community using demographic information and demonstrates an understanding of residents' needs. Bringing events into different neighborhood parks, tailoring outreach, and connecting families with community resources support intentional inclusion and access.

Three different locations heighten access. Recognition of a growing Islamic community near a mosque is indicative of sensitivity to the neighborhoods.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The artistic curation and programs are very thorough and diverse. Many community partners, and the application does a great job of highlighting how participants of all ages can be a part of the event.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The project brings varied arts experiences directly into neighborhoods through local artists and named arts partners. Interactive activities and community art projects give residents opportunities to participate.

More photos in the attachments would be helpful in better understanding the event and its impact.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The planning team and staffing are very well organized and articulated. Though I would be interested to learn more about the individuals (such as their professional background), the application well covers the direct needs of the program.

The applicant provides a clear planning and implementation process and describes a team with relevant event experience.

50-year history is a plus. Planning for the summer event begins in January. Partner and artist outreach begins in advance. Collaborations strengthen impact.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: West Shore Chorale

Project Title: Joyful Voices, Jubilant Sounds 2027

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Accessibility, unity, and uplifting all voices are an important part of the organization. The community they serve is well supported by the organization (whether it's free parking, programmatic access, or the composers they select).

The applicant clearly shows they value creating an inclusive and engaging space for community members of all backgrounds to join. The application does a great job of showing how it's engaging youth participation through student collaboration and outreach, alongside waived membership dues for students, while still actively engaging senior members. The notes on offering ADA-compliant venues, large-print scores, and gender-neutral clothing were also strong additions to this program being accessible and inviting to its community and the broader public.

This applicant is able to provide resources for community members to ensure their participation is possible (free student admission, accessibility, use of multiple languages) in their musically enriching event.

The application clearly defines its community and describes practical steps to increase access, including free student admission, accessible venues, and student partnerships.

Collaborates with young people; provides them with free tickets and waives membership dues. Promotes mentorships and intergenerational learning (ages 16 - 93); fosters future participation. Community engagement is central to their mission.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The intentionality of the chorus, alongside the community focus of the group, shows great impact in providing quality choral education to the adults in their community. I would be interested to learn more about the repertoire and type of artistic focus for this specific program.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The project combines diverse choral repertoire, professional musicians, and student performers to support artistic development, cultural engagement, and learning across generations.

Commissioning new work. Showcases young artists. Diverse repertoire that recognizes historically excluded communities.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The staffing leadership and her background are clearly shared. That said, I would like to know more about volunteers and additional staff support.

The application identifies qualified team members, their responsibilities, and a clear planning and implementation timeline. Supporting materials strengthen the application. The budget needs clarification because the listed income does not match the stated total and exceeds project expenses.

56-year-old organization with a strong sense of outreach and collaboration. Experienced leadership. Welcoming and inclusive.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: West Side Catholic Center

Project Title: Expressive Arts Project

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 9.2

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The program is free and available to all to combat barriers to access. They directly serve their community by being intentional and aware of the range of needs they may have.

The application clearly defines the community served, including demographic information and barriers participants face. Free programming and participant input on art activities and cultural trips demonstrate accessibility and community involvement.

Using the arts to help heal and process trauma. Regular programs are provided weekly and monthly. Built around clients' needs. Participants can suggest ideas for projects. Free of charge. Created to be a safe, inclusive place.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Broad range of artistic programming and very thorough. Engaging and accessible for participants of all artistic backgrounds to engage with the arts.

The applicant clearly understands and listens to its community, creating a thoughtful program that brings together different artistic disciplines to respond to community needs. The volunteer team members are impressive, and the application is strengthened by noting that participants' ideas are heard and incorporated into the program. However, I found the written creative piece included in the optional section unnecessary for the grant application.

This application understands the community who it will provide expressive arts experiences through vibrant, multidisciplinary activities.

The project offers varied opportunities for creative expression through visual arts, writing, drumming, and cultural visits. The annual showcase allows participants to share their work and receive proceeds from their art sales. The included writing sample provides a concrete example of participant expression.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

A nice range of different hands-on opportunities for art-making, plus field trips to experience the work of arts professionals. Excellent poem provided as an example!

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Staffing and programmatic support are clear and concise.

31-year old project. Volunteering from art professionals. Artist teachers have excellent experience.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: West Side Community House

Project Title: Summer of Sisterhood: Creative Expression, Leadership & Empowerment

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 8.8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The program is directly influenced by the community they serve. They are intentional in wanting to serve the children in their area, with free programming and providing accessibility accommodations.

The applicant provides a clear description of understanding, listening to, and responding to the community it serves by building a program strengthened by feedback and creating an inclusive space for arts enrichment and learning. The additional context provided was especially informative.

The applicant supports a strong connection with their community and is involved with local networks to support young women.

Serving young girls from west side neighborhoods. Varied venues for programs, all accessible by public transport.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The arts programming and what participants will learn over the program is very diverse, expansive, and thorough. The intentionality of programming for their community is clear. From writing, music, movement, and more, the program does a great job of engaging their community.

Using the arts to benefit personal development. Youth contribute to program content. Girls and young women ages 10-18. The program engages a wider circle beyond them, including families and caregivers. More specifics about the arts programs being presented would make for a stronger application (the photographs used as attachments didn't seem to demonstrate art activities).

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Staffing for the program is clear, and roles are delineated well. Staff backgrounds and curriculum is thorough.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The application identifies program leaders and their responsibilities. More detail on the six-week implementation schedule, and clarification of the difference between budget income and expenses would strengthen the application.

Long-time social service agency that provides arts services.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Project Title: Tree Stewards Training Program

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT
Nature and supporting the environment are important parts of community culture. The application does a great job of depicting how the program would engage with participants, their communities, and the environment they live in. The data and demographics on physical land is very detailed, and I would also be interested in more information about the participants

The application does a good job of demonstrating an understanding of the community it serves, showing how the organization has listened and responded to community needs by identifying neighborhoods that would benefit most from this program. The program offers immediate benefits to participants through learning opportunities, while also benefiting local residents, particularly in high-need neighborhoods, through its focus on community engagement.

This application targets nine different communities, supported with evidence, that will be impacted positively through this project.

Benefits impact neighborhoods, the city as a whole, and the people involved. A marvelous program.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY
The project description, curriculum plan, and educational goals are extremely clear.

The environmental education and community benefits are clear. The application would be stronger with a more direct explanation of the project's arts and cultural connection, including how the training engages local cultural identity or traditions.

The plan for the program is well thought out and very professional.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY
The organizational and programmatic capacity is well written, and staffing is outlined well.

The Land Conservancy is one of the premier groups of its kind in the U.S.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Westlake Chinese School

Project Title: Westlake Chinese School Ethnic Folk Dance Project

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 5

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Westlake Chinese School offers language classes and dance classes to teach a breadth of Chinese art forms. It is unclear what specific community they serve or hope to have at the folk dance project. They share their methods for working with their community, but the who is not clear.

It is undeterminable which communities will benefit, as questions 6 (Define your community) and 7 (How will you connect with your community through your project) are duplicate answers.

The project aims to build cultural appreciation through Chinese ethnic folk dance. However, the community definition and inclusion responses repeat the same general statements without identifying who is served or how participation barriers will be addressed.

The aspiration to demonstrate the different ethnicities within Chinese culture to the general public is highly commendable and the strongest aspect of this application. We need to go on faith that the group accomplishes this, as we're given little to no evidence of this.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The folk dance project hopes to feature a variety of Chinese art forms, but does not overview who will participate (is it the students at the school?), who is teaching, or who is organizing it.

The application clearly shows that this project is an important way to celebrate, preserve, and promote Chinese cultural performances. Unfortunately, it doesn't define its community — the same answer has been written for both question no. 6 (Define your community) and no. 7 (How will you connect with your community through your project), but only answers question no. 7.

The Project Summary doesn't mention that programming will take place across multiple locations (two schools in Westlake, plus Cleveland Public Library and the Asian Festival in Cleveland). Connecting these sites back to the summary would help clarify how the project reaches distinct communities across the county, rather than leaving that link implicit.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Teaching and performing traditional dances support cultural preservation and exchange. More detail on the dance traditions, instruction, and planned performances would strengthen the project description. Photos of previous events provide supporting context.

There isn't enough detailed information in the narrative to speak to this. The outreach goals are laudable, but we aren't provided with enough information to understand how these goals are accomplished. Please carefully consider the choices of photos sele

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

They share that there is a Board of Directors and policies in place that allow them to develop a budget. That said, the grant does not dive into who will be involved or working on this specific project. The application also does not have clear goals or structure.

The application describes board oversight and a task group, but does not clearly identify project leaders, instructors, or their relevant experience. The project summary also needs a planning timeline and details on how instruction and performances will be carried out.

One of the questions in the application had an erroneously submitted response that was meant for another question.
This group appears to be able to produce its programs without appearing to have a strong sense of organizational capacity.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Windsong, Cleveland's Feminist Chorus

Project Title: The Windy Road to Carnegie Hall

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 9.6

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The communities they serve, as well as how they engage with audiences, align with their mission of being an inclusive space for LGBTQ communities and allies. Their initiative of making it donation-based makes sure to ensure an inclusive environment. Their programming and goals directly address the diversity of their community and audiences who come to performances.

The application was strengthened by noting its recent 50% growth in membership, offering free admission, and clearly defining its goal to become more inclusive and reach even more members of its community. Including the addition of a Windsong Care Advocate also did a great job of showing that the organization is open to listening to and responding to its community.

This response effectively demonstrates a multi-layered approach to belonging — spanning artistic partnerships (North Coast Men's Chorus), local civic ties (Community of St. Peter, Neighbor Up, Wicked Plant Company), and national network engagement (GALA Choruses). The internal equity commitments (DEI-focused hiring, donation-based admission) further reinforce the applicant's stated values. One area for added clarity: specifying how the artistic collaborations and community partnerships will directly engage or benefit audience members, not just internal organizational practices, would strengthen the connection between belonging and public impact.

The application identifies a diverse community of singers and describes concrete inclusion efforts, including donation-based admission, a Care Advocate, and partnerships with North Coast Men’s Chorus and Neighbor Up. More detail on the current local audience would strengthen the community definition, which shifts toward future expansion.

Inclusive and free. Partners with other groups. One of the few LGBTQ+ affiliated groups seeking to expand visibility and serve the historically excluded gay community. Sensitivity to ongoing DEIB challenges. Diverse membership. One donation-based concert.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The project timeline is extremely clear and outlines how they hope to accomplish their artistic goals. Would be curious to learn more about the repertoire selection process and how it connects with the artistic themes.

“The Winds of Change” has a clear artistic purpose, connecting choral music with intersectional feminist themes. Educational workshops support singers’ understanding of the repertoire. Work samples or documentation of previous performances would provide stronger supporting evidence than the mission statement image.

Would have appreciated seeing more evidence of artistic vitality. Is it too soon to know what pieces will be performed for the Pride concerts? Are these classical works, contemporary, or commissioned? The social impact of their work is well articulated.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Staff capacity for their organization, as well as how they hope to manage this specific project, is well outlined.

The application provides a detailed phased timeline covering rehearsals, outreach, performance, and audience surveys. Team qualifications and responsibilities are clearly described, including the Artistic Director’s doctorate in music education. The budget is balanced and supports the planned activities.

Nearly 50 years old from its inception. Strong administration led by women with professional experience, including a Care Advocate. Dramatic growth during the pandemic. Clear timetable for accomplishing goals. That it will perform at Carnegie Hall, while outside the scope of this grant, is an impressive feat.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Women in Film and TV Ohio

Project Title: SHE Creates Shorts Fest & Expo

Panelists: Wesley Gentle, Shantras Lakes, Alicia Olivio, Tasha Tavaras

Score: 8.5

2027 Grant Amount: $5,000

PUBLIC BENEFIT

This section could have been strengthened by providing insight into making sure that its community is receiving training and programming that they are seeking, rather potentially being prescribed to them.

Programming responds directly to these barriers through screenings, workshops, panels, mentorship, youth engagement, professional networking, and an interactive expo featuring women-owned creative businesses. Financial-access strategies include free and discounted admission, early-bird pricing, free youth access, and select free workshops offered through community partners. The applicant also demonstrates relevant experience through a prior paid filmmaking program with Cleveland Metropolitan School District youth that provided professional equipment, mentorship, and production experience. Inclusion and belonging are central to the project, and the application identifies ADA-compliant venues while the budget includes a dedicated accessibility expense. The application could be strengthened by explaining how participants and community partners influenced 2027 festival design, identifying specific accessibility services, and establishing clear methods for measuring outcomes such as skill development, mentorship connections, workforce opportunities, and participant satisfaction. Overall, the proposal provides strong evidence of meaningful access, inclusion, youth engagement, professional pathways, and community connection.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

This applicant has unique programming that clearly building the capacity of arts and cultural professionals, helping them thrive, by providing professional development opportunities to filmmakers, centering women and nonbinary people. I appreciate that this is a combination of workshops, conversations, mentorship, and more, so there's a little bit for everyone.

The application demonstrates strong evidence of Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy through a three-day festival centered on film and media arts, screenings, skill-based workshops, mentorship, industry panels, youth engagement, and creative entrepreneurship. SHE Creates provides visibility and professional-development opportunities for women, nonbinary filmmakers, BIPOC creatives, students, and emerging storytellers while connecting artistic participation to mentorship, production opportunities, professional

networks, and workforce pathways. WIFTOH provides credible evidence of its ability to deliver this model through prior activities. Its Fire Lily production provided paid, hands-on experience in directing, producing, cinematography, and set operations while generating résumé-building credits and professional references. A separate six-week youth filmmaking partnership resulted in student-created documentary and PSA projects using professional equipment and industry mentors. The proposed expo also supports women-owned creative businesses, connecting artistic practice with creative entrepreneurship. The principal weakness is specificity regarding the 2027 artistic program. The application does not identify proposed films, filmmakers, workshop topics or leaders, mentors, panelists, number of screenings, selection criteria, or curatorial process. The $2,000 allocation to Arts and Cultural Professionals demonstrates financial investment, but compensation details are not provided. Overall, the proposal demonstrates strong artistic relevance, hands-on learning, professional pathways, representation, and filmmaking experience, with greater detail about the actual 2027 artistic content needed to strengthen the evidence further.

A film festival focused on women and nonbinary filmmakers offers fresh new voices to film that may otherwise go unheard. I commend this organization for showcasing these voices and inspiring future generations to create!

This organization catalyzes film workforce development opportunities while elevating underrepresented filmmakers and professionals.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The application demonstrates fair-to-strong evidence of Organizational Capacity through experienced leadership, relevant filmmaking and production expertise, prior workforce-development programming, community partnerships, and a balanced $10,000 project budget. The festival is led by professionals with experience in filmmaking, producing, arts education, youth engagement, festival operations, and creative workforce development. WIFTOH provides credible examples of implementation capacity through Fire Lily, which offered paid production experience and professional credits to emerging filmmakers, and a six-week youth filmmaking partnership that produced two student-led media projects. The proposed budget balances at $10,000 and allocates resources to artists, administration, marketing, space, production, and accessibility. Several areas require greater clarity. The application provides limited detail about the festival planning timeline, film-selection process, technical implementation, staffing, or evaluation. The principal Saturday venue appears tentative, as the applicant states it is “looking at” Cuyahoga Community College. Financially, two $250 Other income sources and a $300 Other expense are unidentified, revenue sources are not labeled confirmed or projected, and artist/production expenses are not itemized. Additionally, the budget lists $250 in in-kind expense but $0 in in-kind income, despite template instructions requiring matching amounts. Overall, experienced leadership and prior program delivery support implementation capacity, while planning specificity, venue confirmation, and financial detail represent the principal opportunities for improvement.

Two items listed as "other" on budget expenses and revenues are not explained. This application would benefit from some measurable outcomes tied to SHE Creates Shorts Fest & Expo to support goals of accessibility and inclusion.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Women in History

Project Title: Women of Cleveland: Leadership, Legacy, and Community

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 7.8

2027 Grant Amount: $4,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The objectives are clear and easy to follow. There is strong evidence of public benefit across diverse locations and types of offerings. It would be valuable to know more about how the community was or is involved in selecting the women in history featured.

Inclusive and diverse leadership. I also appreciate that " Women in History will connect with the community by bringing this project to accessible public settings where Cuyahoga County residents already gather, including libraries, senior centers, schools, museums, civic organizations, and neighborhood-based community spaces." It would be helpful to have examples of past attendee numbers to see the scale of organization's audience.

Tis project lifts up the stories, histories, and identities of women who have made a strong impact in Cleveland. The diversity of participation ensures that diverse communities will resonate with these stories and will be able to hear them at accessible and local venues.

The in person and digital offerings expands the potential for public benefit and the multiple points of engagement encourage a broader set of potential participants.

This project seems to put itself in front of a large and diverse audience, but I would like to see supporting evidence on the impact it has had on the community. I do like that there is a specific plan to share the free digital learning tools.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The work demonstrates strong evidence of engagement and relevance. Including further detail on site partners—specifically their roles and involvement—would help clarify how the project builds capacity for other arts organizations and art professionals.

Proposed program seems to complement the organization's existing activities well with a local focus.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The historic research and vehicle for public history use an artistic approach to storytelling that is highly compelling and accessible.

The underlining message of telling women's stories is clear, but I would like to see examples of specific performances and feedback from participants and audiences.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

A strong team! More photos would have been good to include.

Considering the organization's history and years of activity, it is disappointing that one of the work samples uploaded is ChatGPT, which is not explained in the support materials upload section. The YouTube video of actresses explaining the work of an organization is a much better testament to the organization's capacity.

Details of performances, measure of success, and how feedback is evaluated would help give a better understanding of the impact this project has. I'm also confused about the photo attachment labeled 'ChatGPT', a description would be good to have to give context.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Woodland Cemetery Foundation of Cleveland

Project Title: Heritage of Service: First Responders

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 4.6

2027 Grant Amount: No Grant Awarded

PUBLIC BENEFIT

Their community and the people they hope to serve with this project are veterans, their families, and the people who live close to these communities. That said, it would be helpful to learn more about these specific communities, their demographics, and how they hope to engage with the project.

While the application describes Woodland Cemetery Foundation and some of the physical buildings and institutions in its immediate area, the application would have been strengthened by more clearly defining the community it serves and explaining how that community would benefit from this program. The optional comments noted that the stories of first responders need to be told, but did not sufficiently explain why or what impact sharing these stories would have. The letters of support were a strong addition, though the inconsistencies in the dates mentioned throughout them were somewhat confusing.

The application identifies the Central neighborhood and describes a free public event with outreach through local institutions. More detail on accessibility and how residents will contribute to planning would strengthen the inclusion response.

This is the strongest component of the application. This project is important work. Unfortunately, the other components are not as strong.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The significance and importance of this project is clearly stated, especially considering the communities they hope to serve. That said, the artistic or cultural elements of the project can use more detail, direction, and outlining.

Historical storytelling, reenactors, educational materials, and gravesite tours offer opportunities to engage with Cleveland's history. More detail on the content and delivery of these activities would strengthen the proposed cultural experience.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The budget includes $1,500 for art and culture professionals, but who they are and what they will do isn't explained in the narrative. There doesn't appear to be an artistic component to this project, with the exception of a reference to a coloring book, although the cultural value is quite high.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Staff and collaborators are clearly stated, and their role in the process is also direct. The organizational processes are not outlined. I would like to see more goal-setting, as well as information about procedures.

On the planning process and implementation: The proposal would benefit from more detail on the planning process and implementation. When describing the community, naming specific partner organizations, community centers, and churches would give reviewers a clearer sense of who these partnerships actually involve.
On the team description: The description of the team lacks clarity. The statement "we do need to keep the planning committee manageable, but inclusive enough to involve all parties" is vague; it would help to specify how the committee will be structured (e.g., size, selection criteria, or how "all parties" will be represented) rather than stating the goal in the abstract.

The narrative states that funding is requested for the dedication and ceremony, but the budget includes $25,000 for monument costs. Clarification of which expenses the CAC request would support, along with a clearer planning timeline and assigned responsibilities, would strengthen the application

A budget that indicates there's more revenue coming in than expenses raises questions about the need for this grant. Despite repeated assurances that this isn't a capital grant, the largest line item in the budget is $25,000 for a monument---if it's been paid for by donations, then it could be considered an accomplished feat and not necessary to include here.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: YMCA of Greater Cleveland

Project Title: 28th Annual Steps and Stages Production

Panelists: Charlie Bosco, Karla Centeno, Michael Greer, Tess Healy, Jeannie Howe

Score: 9

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The proposal provides good evidence of the organization building meaningful connections with its audience, demonstrating a consistent practice of listening, responsiveness, and inclusivity.

The partnerships and specific attention to marginalized populations leads to more robust public benefit.

I appreciate knowing the breakdown of the schedule and ways residents are participating. Their role as co-creators is a wonderful opportunity for creative leadership and storytelling that honestly represents the community.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

Adding the process of casting was very helpful. There is clear evidence of relevancy.

Meaningful and well-designed experience in public theatre. I appreciate that, " Writing the script is a collaborative and power sharing process between CPT staff and Y-Haven clients, led by the qualified artistic team at CPT. This begins with residents sharing stories about their journey and important messages they may want others to hear."

This is a compelling and artistic approach to healing, self awareness, and self value.

It's great to see that the performance is hosted at multiple venues and having the potential partners listed. Supporting data on how this impacts the participants or what feedback has been received would help better understand the process of reflection.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Appreciated adding last year's budget! A strong team to lead this year's performance.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Since the lion's share of the expenses go to CPT, it would be helpful to have a little more detail in the budget. I'd like to know, for example, how much is for space rental vs. the amount paying for artistic staff who will be so critical to the successful execution of the production.

I'm curious what the marketing plan is or ways the show is promoted. I would also like to know more information about the CPT team and their background, and how many staff are on the artistic team. It's great to see how much of a collaborative process it is.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

Organization: Youth Challenge

Project Title: Theater Program for Young People with Physical Disabilities

Panelists: Rem Cabrera, Lisa Cunningham, Danielle Pierre, Lola Reed, Ami Scherson

Score: 8

2027 Grant Amount: $7,500

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The community they hope to support and engage with is very clear and direct. The application does a great job of addressing how the artistic program will engage with students to create an inclusive program. The organization highlights how inclusivity includes all types of accessibility, which they highlight through free programming and a variety of engagement opportunities. That said, I would love more detail on specific artistic programming that is specific to this project.

The applicant shows a strong history of understanding its community and growing its organization to become more inclusive and accessible. The application does a great job of showing the program's benefits to both physically disabled youth and the teen volunteers they're paired with through this program.

The organization lists a variety of ways that this project will reach community members and be impactful by engaging artists, young people with disabilities, and peer volunteers through activities to support the final show.

The application clearly defines its community and describes effective outreach through schools, doctors, and therapists. Free programming, round-trip transportation, and trained volunteers working one-on-one with participants demonstrate practical inclusion.

Serving people with physical disabilities. No cost to them to participate. This is the strongest component of the project.

ARTISTIC & CULTURAL VIBRANCY

The artistic component is not very clear. Would be helpful to learn more about how they hope to create and design the theatrical performance, or what the programmatic process would look like.

PANEL SCORES & COMMENTS
2027 PROJECT SUPPORT

The Theatre Troupe gives young people with physical disabilities opportunities to create and design a performance. More detail on the production and participants' creative roles would strengthen the artistic description.

We aren't given information about what the Theater Troupe does specifically. The children create and design a theatrical performance. (A bit of clarity here, please---what constitutes the performance?).

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The history and background on the organization and program do a good job of highlighting the structure and process. Descriptions of the team leader are helpful, though it could be a great addition to share more information about core staff members, volunteer needs, and any additional staff or collaborators that would support this project.

The project summary perfectly described the project, but I am not sure what the planning process or implementation will be, which makes it hard to determine organizational capacity.

The application identifies relevant staff experience, but the project summary needs more detail on planning and implementation, including the rehearsal timeline, staff responsibilities, and preparation for the final performance.

Serves 140 and includes 300 volunteers. Providing services since 1976. Teens pair up with disabled performers. An Arts Manager has worked with them for 8 years and has a background in performing arts.