



Annual Meeting of the
Cuyahoga Arts & Culture Board of Trustees
Cleveland Public Library - Main Branch, Louis Stokes Wing, 2nd Floor
325 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114
Wednesday, April 15, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.

1. Call to order

- a. Call to order
- b. Call the roll
- c. **Action:** Swearing in of Trustees
- d. **Action:** Motion to approve February 11, 2026 minutes
- e. **Action:** Nomination and Election of Officers

2. Public Comment on Today's Agenda

3. Executive Director's Report

4. Connect with Culture

5. Action Items and Reports – Finance and General Business

- a. Finance Report
- b. **Action:** Appointment of Audit and Finance Advisory Committee members
- c. **Action:** Appointment of Public Records Manager Designees

6. Action Items and Reports – Grantmaking

- a. **Action:** Approval of 2027 Project Support guidelines

7. Public Comment on CAC General Business

8. Adjourn

Next Regular Board Meeting: September 16, 2026



Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Wednesday, February 11, 2026

A regular meeting of the Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC) Board of Trustees was called to order at 4:03 pm at the Cleveland Public Library - Main Branch, Louis Stokes Wing, 2nd Floor 325 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114.

The roll call showed that Trustees Blakemore, DiCosimo, Isenhart and Vernaci were present. It was determined that there was a quorum. Trustee Scott Taylor was absent.

Also in attendance were: Jill Paulsen, Executive Director, and CAC staff.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Action: Motion to approve minutes of the December 17, 2025 Board of Trustees meeting.

Motion by – Trustee Vernaci
Second by – Trustee DiCosimo

Discussion: None.

Vote to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2025 Board of Trustees meeting.

Vote: all ayes.

The motion carried.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT ON MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

There was no public comment.

3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ms. Paulsen thanked everyone for joining her and the Board. Ms. Paulsen’s remarks can be found in the meeting materials.

4. CONNECT WITH CULTURE

Ms. Maya Curtis, grant manager, introduced Christine Madden, COO of Center for Arts Inspired Learning (CAL). Ms. Madden provided the Board with an overview of CAL and two students performed a song they wrote as part of their participation in CAL’s ArtWorks program.

5. FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Meg Harris provided the financial update.

2025 Unaudited Financials

Revenue. Total tax revenue for 2025 was \$18,968,808. Tax revenue for the year was \$1,049,558 (5.86%) above budget. Interest revenue was \$533,794, 11% below budget. This is a result of declining interest rates.

Revenue Trends. Year-over-year unit sales of cigarettes at the wholesale level in 2025 decreased by 3.54% from FY2024. The three-year rolling average of unit sales decrease was 7.7%.

Expenditure. Final, unaudited expenditures for FY25 were \$12,251,625, ending the year \$166,059 under budget.

Annual Audit. The Local Government Services division of the Ohio Auditor of State began work on CAC's GAAP conversion for 2025 in early January and should finish the conversion in March.

2026 Financials YTD

Revenue. Tax revenue through January was \$1,481,869. This is \$195,631 (11.7%) below budget. The units taxed decreased 18.6% compared to January 2025. Interest revenue through January was \$61,632.

Expenditure. The majority of CAC's budget is comprised of grants which were approved by the Board in 2025. These grants are accrued at the beginning of the year and recognized on the balance sheet. Non-grant expenditure through January was \$97,857.

Discussion:

- CAC finished 2025 with tax receipts \$1M over forecast; these dollars have been factored into long-term planning based on the three-year look-back model CAC uses when forecasting future revenue both for 2026 and the ten-year levy period.
- The timeframe to incorporate potential higher-than-anticipated revenue for the levy period is likely two to three years from now. Staff advised that one year of tax receipts is not enough to understand the full long-term revenue impact of new tax levy.
- For the 2026-27 grant cycle, CAC staff recommended a funding level for grants with the aim of that level being sustainable for 10 years, through 2035. Maintaining this level, at least through the current two-year cycle, will allow CAC to monitor and adjust revenue expectations more accurately.
- CAC will continue to monitor revenue and review financials at future Board meetings.

6. CONTRACTS AND POLICY APPROVALS

Action: Motion to approve the Cybersecurity Policy in compliance with Ohio [R.C. §9.64](#) requirements with the provisions that it be reviewed by legal counsel and recommendations incorporated..

Motion by – Trustee Blakemore

Second by – Trustee Vernaci

Discussion:

- CAC’s annual IT service contract includes enhanced Cybersecurity. Staff receive monthly training which exceeds the State’s annual requirement.
- CAC is working with its IT contractor to ensure the policy is fully implemented by July, 1, 2026.

Vote to approve the Cybersecurity Policy in compliance with Ohio [R.C. §9.64](#) requirements with the provisions that it be reviewed by legal counsel and recommendations incorporated.

Vote: all ayes.

Action: Motion to approve a contract with Elizabeth Russell LLC for communications support in an amount up to \$20,000 for the period of March 1 – December 31, 2026.

Motion by – Trustee DiCosimo
Second by – Trustee Blakemore

Discussion: None.

Vote to approve a contract with Elizabeth Russell LLC for communications support in an amount up to \$20,000 for the period of March 1 – December 31, 2026.

Vote: all ayes.

7. GRANTMAKING UPDATES

Mr. Jake Sinatra, CAC director of grantmaking strategy and communications, and Ms. Maya Curtis, grant manager, presented an overview of plan for 2027 grantmaking. General Operating Support is in the first year of its two-year commitment (2026-27); the program is not open to new applicants this year.

For 2027 Project Support (PS), CAC **recommends no substantive changes to the program**, so that the staff and Board can continue to learn from recent updates. In 2027, the program will continue to include:

- Funding for nonprofits with or without a primary mission of arts and culture.
- Grant amounts of up to \$7,500 or \$5,000 based on the applicant’s budget and financial documents. All grant amounts are subject to available CAC funding.
- New grant applicants must apply for Project Support and are eligible for up to \$5,000.
- Continued use of CAC’s one-step application process and panel review process for Project Support. An online panel will take place in September.
- No SMU DataArts Cultural Data Profile requirement.
- 1:1 match required. 50% of matching funds can be in-kind income for all PS grantees.

Discussion:

- It was clarified that all PS27 applicants would go through panel.
- Feedback from grantees has been positive and they appreciate knowing the expectations heading into the grant year.
- CAC may conduct an anonymous grant survey again in 2026 to gather additional feedback which can be used for 2027 and future funding opportunities.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by – Trustee Blakemore
Second by – Trustee Vernaci

Ayes: all ayes.

The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 4:58 pm.

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, April 15, 2026 at the Cleveland Public Library's downtown branch.

Attest: _____

Leonard DiCosimo
Secretary, Board of Trustees

Executive Director's Report

April 15, 2026

Welcome to Cuyahoga Arts & Culture's 2026 Annual Meeting.

At the meeting the Board will swear in new and reappointed trustees and elect a 2026 slate of officers, as well as handle other regular administrative matters.

Additionally, our team is pleased to bring forward the 2027 Project Support guidelines for the Board's approval. See the Staff Report and the 2027 Grantmaking memo in this packet for further detail.

While not on the agenda for this meeting, other items of note:

- New Board portal coming soon. This spring we will open a one-stop portal for Board members to access meeting materials, historic documents, and key information to help you in your role as public officials. Search no more – you'll soon be able to access what you need through a secure site. Thanks to Jake and Laura for making this happen.
- Unified grant application and database. This month CAC will launch a new grant application system that streamlines operations, simplifies user experience and saves us money. Thanks to Dayvon for driving this project forward and to the full team for building the new platform and ensuring a smooth rollout for all.
- Applicant workshops continue through the spring and early summer. This is another opportunity for Board members to see the team in action and hear firsthand the questions and feedback we receive from nonprofits. See our website for details. <https://www.cacgrants.org/grants/events-deadlines/>

I appreciate your attention to matters before the Board today.

Respectfully,

Jill Paulsen
Executive Director

Updates from CAC Staff

April 15, 2026

Each year, CAC staff develops a [work plan](#) that is grounded in our [Mission, Vision & Values](#) to provide equitable grant distributions to arts and culture organizations of all sizes. In 2026, we are using Board-approved [grantmaking objectives](#) to focus our efforts and guide our work in service of our grant recipients, and the public. What follows is a brief update on progress since the last Board meeting in February.

1. GRANTMAKING

Core Grants: General Operating Support and Project Support

2026 **General Operating Support** and **Project Support** grants are underway. In February and March, staff closed out 2025 grant reporting and reviewed and approved more than 246 reports and goal forms, issuing final report and initial 2026 payments, totaling nearly \$6.5M.

In April, staff held the first of seven group report-out sessions for current **Project Support** grantees. These sessions offer an alternative to fully written final reports, making the reporting process easier for some while also creating opportunities for grantees to connect with one another.

Grantee Community Briefing

In March, CAC held a grantee community briefing to share updates and invite grant recipients to connect with CAC staff, and each other. More than 60 people attended the session at Rainey Institute's Clark-Fulton campus at the Pivot Center. Survey feedback indicated strong satisfaction with the gathering and a desire for future sessions, with an emphasis on CAC's grantmaking, collaboration, and networking.

2027 Grantmaking Preview

In 2027, CAC will continue its core grants: **General Operating Support** and **Project Support**. General Operating Support is in the first year of a two-year cycle and is not accepting applications this year. Project Support will continue to welcome applications from both new and returning applicants. From late February to early March, guidelines for the 2027 Project Support program were open for public comment. Through this process, CAC received positive feedback about the guidelines and application process. For 2027 Project Support, CAC **recommends no substantive changes to the program**. See the memo in this packet for details and recommendations.

Other Grants

Neighborhood Connections closed its first application cycle for Action Grants on Monday, February 9. NC anticipates announcing the first round of co-funded grants in May.

Assembly for the Arts launched its Boost Fund, which provides a \$1,500 "boost" of flexible funding to offset the costs of creative projects, materials, equipment, events, and a wide variety of artist-specific needs. They anticipate issuing 144 awards across three cycles in 2026. The Creative Impact Fund, which provides

unrestricted grants and professional development support to artists, is set to launch in May, with a July application deadline. The Creative Impact Fund will award grants of \$10,000 to 22 artists.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

CAC Messaging and Brand Refresh

Staff continue to implement a two-year communications plan, with a focus on messaging and branding elements that reinforce CAC's purpose and impact. Current projects include website updates and a refreshed logo and tagline, which will be revealed in the forthcoming Report to the Community.

Annual Report

Cuyahoga Arts & Culture's 2025-26 Report to the Community will be released in Q2 in a digital and print format. The report will spotlight the work of CAC grant recipients, reinforce our key messaging and grantmaking objectives, and feature other 2025 grantmaking data.

3. EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK AND OPERATIONS

New Online Application & Reporting System

In conjunction with the launch of the 2027 Project Support grant opportunity, CAC will transition applicants to a new online application and reporting system, AkoyaGO. By doing so, we bring the online application process in line with our long-term grants and financial management software, creating an integrated process for applicants, grantees, and staff alike. CAC is preparing tools to ensure a smooth transition for applicants and grantees. We anticipate the transition will be complete by year-end.

Connecting with Community and Building Our Capacity

CAC staff presented at or participated in the following:

- Accelerate Cleveland, Arts & Culture Judge, Jill Paulsen
- City of San Diego Grant Panel Review, Maya Curtis
- Cleveland Council on World Affairs Presentation, Jill Paulsen
- Creative Ohio Regional Directors, Jill Paulsen
- Engage, Mid-American Arts Alliance, Dayvon Nichols
- Philanthropy Ohio, Mentor Learning Exchange, Dayvon Nichols
- Philanthropy Ohio, Public Policy Roundtable and Equity Cohort, Jill Paulsen
- Lakewood Public Art Master Plan, Eric Hoffman
- Urban Arts Coalition Communication Cohort, Laura Mormino
- Urban Arts Coalition Grantmaking Cohort, Maya Curtis, Eric Hoffman, Dayvon Nichols
- Urban Arts Coalition National Directors, Jill Paulsen

FINANCIAL UPDATE

2026 Financials YTD

Revenue. Tax revenue through March was \$4,162,016. This is \$85,484 (2%) below budget. The units taxed decreased 2.44% compared to same period in 2025. Interest revenue through March was \$139,510.

Expenditure. The majority of CAC's budget is comprised of grants which were approved by the Board in 2025. These grants are accrued at the beginning of the year and recognized on the balance sheet. Non-grant expenditures through March were \$262,072.

Investments. As of March 31, CAC funds were invested as follows:

STAR Ohio: \$1,209,600 (yield 3.8%)

RedTree Investment Group: \$13,450,036 (yield 3.94%, weighted average maturity 2.69 years)

2025 Unaudited Financials

Annual Audit. The Ohio Auditor of State is finalizing the filing of CAC's GAAP conversion, and we are in the process of gathering materials requested for the annual audit.

Audit and Finance Advisory Committee

The CAC Audit and Finance Advisory Committee meets two to three times a year to review and provide feedback on CAC's Internal Controls Policies and Procedures and Investment Policy. There are currently three members of the advisory committee, plus one CAC board member. Members are appointed annually.

Meghann Marnecheck has agreed to continue her service on the advisory committee. Ken Surrat and Luis Cartegena (five years of service) have decided to roll off the advisory committee; we thank them for their service. The Board will be asked to consider the appointment of Maya Claytor and Robin Johnson to the open positions. Ms. Claytor, Chief Financial Officer of Starting Point NEO, brings experience in the public and nonprofit sectors, including at City of Cleveland, Cleveland State University and Case Western Reserve University. Ms. Johnson held financial/operations leadership roles at multiple arts organizations including ICA – Art Conservation, Beck Center for the Arts, and The Singing Angels, before becoming the Chief Financial Officer at a Journey Center for Safety and Healing.

At this meeting, the Board will be asked to affirm the appointment of:

Maya Claytor – Chief Financial Officer, Starting Point

Robin Johnson – Chief Financial Officer, Journey Center for Safety and Healing

Meghann Marnecheck – Chief of Staff, Partnership Schools

Gina Vernaci – Board member

The above individuals bring a range of accounting, investment, and financial experience, in the public, private and nonprofit sectors, to this committee.

Cuyahoga Arts & Culture				
Through 3/31/2026				
	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	\$ Over/Under Budget	% of Budget
Revenue				
Excise Tax	\$ 4,162,016	\$ 4,247,500	\$ (85,484)	97.99%
Interest	\$ 139,510	\$ 141,667	\$ (2,157)	98.48%
Other revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Total Revenue	\$ 4,301,526	\$ 4,389,167	\$ (87,641)	98.00%
Expenditures				
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 198,930	\$ 212,509	\$ (13,580)	93.6%
Grantmaking Expenses	\$ 28,705	\$ 36,650	\$ (7,945)	78.3%
Grants**	\$ 12,852,847	\$ 12,907,977	\$ (55,130)	99.6%
Facilities, Supplies	\$ 18,216	\$ 19,856	\$ (1,640)	91.7%
Professional Fees	\$ 16,221	\$ 34,145	\$ (17,924)	47.5%
Depreciation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Total Expenditures	\$ 13,114,919	\$ 13,211,138	\$ (96,219)	99.3%
Net Ordinary Revenue	\$ (8,813,393)	\$ (8,821,971)	\$ 8,578	

** Outstanding 2025 and 2026 grant obligations are on the balance sheet.

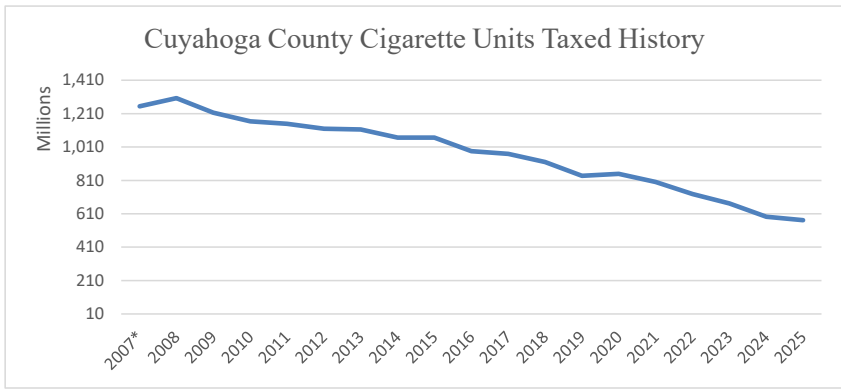
Non-grant cash disbursements YTD	\$ 262,072	\$ 303,161	\$ (41,089)
---	------------	------------	-------------

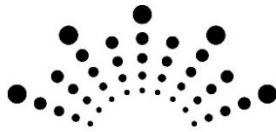
Balance Sheet
Cuyahoga Arts and Culture
As of March 31, 2026

	Total
Assets	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
KeyBank	43,960
RedTree (U.S.Bank)	13,450,036
Star Ohio	1,209,600
Total for Bank Accounts	14,703,597
Accounts Receivable	
11000 Accounts Receivable	1,238,469
Total for Accounts Receivable	1,238,469
Total for Current Assets	15,942,066
Fixed Assets	
15000 Furniture and Equipment	7,783
17000 Accumulated Depreciation	-3,050
Total for Fixed Assets	4,733
Total for Assets	15,946,799
Liabilities and Equity	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
Total for 24000 Payroll Liabilities	\$5,080
24200 GOS Grants	
Total for 24200 GOS Grants	\$5,719,208
24300 PS Grants	
Total for 24300 PS Grants	\$838,555
Total for 24400 SFA	\$475,000
24450 2026 Resident Led	\$50,000
Total for Other Current Liabilities	\$7,087,843
Total for Current Liabilities	\$7,087,843
Total for Liabilities	\$7,087,843
Equity	
32000 General Fund	\$17,672,349
Net Income	-\$8,813,393
Total for Equity	\$8,858,956
Total for Liabilities and Equity	\$15,946,799

CIGARETTE TAX RECEIPTS FY 25 VS FY 26 YTD					Per Unit Comparison		
Month	2025	2026	2026 \$VAR	25/26 % VAR \$	Units 2025	Units 2026	25/26 % VAR
JANUARY	\$ 779,850.00	\$ 1,481,869	\$ 702,019	90%	51,990,000	42,339,121	-18.6%
FEBRUARY	\$ 944,785.71	\$ 1,441,677	\$ 496,891	53%	26,993,877	41,190,773	52.6%
MARCH	\$ 1,501,604	\$ 1,238,469	\$ (263,135)	-18%	42,902,970	35,384,836	-17.5%
APRIL	\$ 2,090,165					-	
MAY	\$ 1,834,470					-	
JUNE	\$ 3,005,148					-	
JULY	\$ 580,403					-	
AUGUST	\$ 1,635,885					-	
SEPTEMBER	\$ 1,643,755					-	
OCTOBER	\$ 1,630,737					-	
NOVEMBER	\$ 1,538,858					-	
DECEMBER	\$ 1,783,146					-	
TOTALS	\$ 18,968,808	\$ 4,162,016	\$ 935,776	26.6%	121,886,847	118,914,730	-2.44%

Historical Unit Sales of Cigarettes for Cuyahoga County					
Year	Actual	Units	Annual Change	3 year average	5 year average
2007	\$ 18,815,996	1,254,399,737			
2008	\$ 19,540,480	1,302,698,647	3.85%		
2009	\$ 18,222,183	1,214,812,200	-6.75%		
2010	\$ 17,456,610	1,163,773,972	-4.20%		
2011	\$ 17,241,240	1,149,415,970	-1.23%	-4.06%	
2012	\$ 16,791,300	1,119,420,000	-2.61%	-2.68%	
2013	\$ 16,719,606	1,114,640,400	-0.43%	-1.42%	
2014	\$ 15,984,716	1,065,647,719	-4.40%	-2.48%	
2015	\$ 15,986,647	1,065,776,471	0.01%	-1.60%	
2016	\$ 14,767,137	984,475,779	-7.63%	-4.00%	
2017	\$ 14,533,031	968,868,731	-1.59%	-3.07%	
2018	\$ 13,799,929	919,995,234	-5.04%	-4.75%	
2019	\$ 12,552,790	836,852,635	-9.04%	-5.22%	
2020	\$ 12,732,464	848,830,953	1.43%	-4.22%	
2021	\$ 12,009,236	800,615,733	-5.68%	-4.43%	
2022	\$ 10,931,382	728,758,800	-8.98%	-4.41%	
2023	\$ 10,083,086	672,205,752	-7.76%	-7.47%	
2024	\$ 8,889,512	592,634,131	-11.84%	-9.52%	
2025	\$ 18,968,808	571,674,515	-3.54%	-7.71%	
2026YTD	\$ 4,162,016	118,914,730	-2.44%	-5.94%	





cuyahoga
arts & culture
strengthening community

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 15, 2026
To: CAC Board of Trustees
From: CAC Staff
Re: 2027 Project Support Grant Guidelines

Executive Summary: Staff recommends **2027 Project Support** grant guidelines for Board approval. The guidelines contain no substantive policy changes, only minor updates to further the Board-approved 2026 Grantmaking Objectives and to respond to feedback from grantees.

Board Action: Approve grant program guidelines for 2027 Project Support.

Background

In 2026, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture will accept applications to the **2027 Project Support** grant program. The Project Support grant program remains core to CAC's operations and mission and was updated significantly in the previous cycle to respond to feedback and in alignment with the 2026 Grantmaking Objectives, approved by the Board in February 2025.

Project Support promotes public access and supports the breadth of arts and culture programming in Cuyahoga County. Nonprofits based in Cuyahoga County with a demonstrated history of arts and culture programming that meet CAC's eligibility criteria may apply for 2027 Project Support funding, including both new and returning applicants. Grants may range from \$1,000 up to \$7,500.

Note: The General Operating Support program is in the first year of a two-year cycle and is not open for applications in 2026.

Grant Recipient & Community Feedback

Each year, CAC collects feedback from applicants and grant recipients in multiple formats. Feedback directly informs the grant guidelines and application materials. These feedback mechanisms include:

- **Technical assistance** sessions (approximately 5 per grant cycle) for applicants and grantees, which include feedback opportunities.
- **Public comment period** on CAC's draft grant guidelines, providing all grantees, applicants and the public an opportunity to review and provide feedback on CAC policy documents.
- **Ongoing relationships with CAC staff**, including regular communication between grant recipients and CAC staff, including potential new applicants.

CAC grant recipients and applicants indicated that CAC’s guidelines and application requirements were clear and easy to understand, and that they understand the program's objectives and CAC's funding priorities. Most respondents indicated that the guidelines are inclusive and resourceful.

Key 2026 Dates for 2027 Grant Programs

April 15, 2026	Board approval of 2027 Project Support grant guidelines
May 4, 2026	Open 2027 Project Support grant guidelines and application
May – June 2026	Provide technical assistance to prospective applicants
June 25, 2026	Application deadline
September 2026	Conduct panel review process
November (anticipated) 2026	Board reviews and approves 2027 allocations and grants

Recommendations

CAC staff recommend no policy updates to 2027 Project Support. However, we have incorporated the following updates to improve the program for applicants, panelists, and staff:

- Simplified the **application budget** by inviting applicants to complete a budget template or use their own desired format.
- Transition to a **new online application and reporting system**, a module of CAC’s current grant management system, to improve the process for applicants and staff.
- **Reduced and simplified** application responses and requirements, wherever possible.

The 2027 Project Support Program will continue to:

- Provide funding for nonprofits **with demonstrated history of arts and culture programming**, as determined by CAC.
- Maintain CAC’s **three core funding priorities**: public benefit, artistic and cultural vibrancy, and organizational capacity.
- Grant up to \$7,500 or \$5,000 based on the applicant’s project budget and financial documents. All grant amounts are subject to available CAC funding.
- Welcome **new grant applicants** with eligibility to apply for a grant of up to \$5,000.
- Use CAC’s application and **panel review process** to independently review and score applications.
- Require 1:1 funding match. 50% of matching funds can be in-kind income for all PS grantees.

Next Steps

Following Board approval, staff will finalize the application and officially launch CAC’s 2027 Project Support grant opportunity in early May.



cuyahoga
arts & culture
strengthening community

2027

PROJECT SUPPORT

Grant Program Guidelines & Resources

APPLICATION DUE:

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026 BY 4:30PM ET

Table of Contents

Greetings	3
Project Support Overview	4
Timeline & Application Overview	5
Eligibility	6
Grant Amounts & Process	7
Funding Criteria	8
Review Process & Scoring Framework	9
Application	10
Application Questions	11-16
501(c)(3) Verification	11
Organizational Overview.....	11
Eligibility Check	12-13
Project Basics & Narratives	13-14
Project Budget.....	14-15
Support Materials.....	15
Statement Of Assurances	16
Grant Recipient Requirements	17-18

Greetings!

Thank you for your interest in the 2027 Project Support grant program.



Canalway Partners, photo by Nathan Stroempel

Cuyahoga Arts & Culture’s [mission](#) is to inspire and strengthen the community by investing in arts and culture. CAC is excited to work with you to connect Cuyahoga County residents to arts and culture in our community.

ABOUT CUYAHOGA ARTS & CULTURE

CAC is Cuyahoga County’s largest source of consistent funding that is dedicated specifically to supporting a vibrant community of nonprofit arts and culture organizations. CAC supports the nonprofit arts and culture community as a whole by focusing on equitable grant distributions that give arts and culture organizations of all sizes access to predictable, recurring funding.

Cuyahoga County residents created CAC, an independent political subdivision of the State of Ohio, in 2006 when they approved a tax to support arts and culture.

Since 2007, CAC has invested more than \$270 million in more than 500 nonprofit organizations both large and small, making Cuyahoga County a more vibrant place to live, work and play. CAC funds nonprofit 501(c)(3) arts and culture organizations based in and serving Cuyahoga County residents.

OUR GRANT PROGRAMS

GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT	PROJECT SUPPORT
<p>Multi-year core support grants to qualifying arts and cultural nonprofit organizations in Cuyahoga County, Ohio.</p> <p><i>Who can apply?</i> Cuyahoga County-based nonprofit organizations with a core mission of arts and culture who have successfully completed at least two CAC grants, and current General Operating Support grant recipients.</p> <p>General Operating Support is in a two-year grant cycle and is not currently accepting applications.</p>	<p>Annual grants for nonprofits conducting projects that have a core arts and culture purpose in Cuyahoga County, Ohio.</p> <p><i>Who can apply?</i> New applicants, and organizations with or without a core mission of arts and culture.</p>

RESOURCES

To learn more about the differences between CAC’s grants, refer to the [2027 Grant Guide](#). Organizations may receive either a Project Support grant OR a General Operating Support grant – but not both – during each grant year. [First-time applicants must apply for Project Support.](#)

Our team is here to support you throughout the application process. For additional information and resources, please contact a [member of the Grantmaking Team](#). Visit [cacgrants.org](#) to learn more about workshop opportunities, and [sign up](#) to receive email updates.

For additional information about terms in the guidelines or application materials, please see [our glossary](#).

Project Support Overview

The purpose of the Project Support grant program is to promote public access and encourage the breadth of arts and cultural programming in our community by supporting projects with a core arts and culture purpose in Cuyahoga County.



Cedar Fairmount Special Improvement District, photo by Jack Valancy

Grant applications are reviewed by an expert panel. CAC will offer Project Support funding in 2027 for projects occurring in the January 1 – December 31, 2027 grant period.

CAC does not make grants or funding decisions on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, disability, or any characteristic protected by law. CAC strongly encourages applications from all eligible organizations, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)-led and serving nonprofit organizations, as well as others that have been historically excluded or marginalized.

PROJECT SUPPORT AT A GLANCE

- Open to 501(c)(3) organizations with or without a [core mission of arts and culture](#), as determined by CAC from documents provided during the application process.
- Grants may range from \$1,000 to \$7,500.
- For arts and culture projects only, as defined by CAC.
- Projects must begin and end between January 1 – December 31, 2027.
- 1:1 match required. 50% of matching funds can be in-kind income.

HOW WE DEFINE A PROJECT

Proposed projects must be arts or cultural activities and have a public programming component. A project is a specific, connected set of activities with a beginning and an end, explicit goals, and a predetermined cost that does not equal the organization's total annual budget. Projects may be one-time events, such as a festival or exhibit, or a defined series of events, such as classes or productions. Projects with multiple components must show that there is a cohesive theme that ties the project together. Public programming does not have to be free.

Note: Mural and public art projects must demonstrate meaningful community engagement and include an element of public programming to be eligible.

ARTS & CULTURE DEFINED

Arts and Culture is defined in the [Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3381](#), CAC's enabling law, as "including, but not limited to, literature, theater, music, dance, ballet, painting, sculpture, photography, motion pictures, architecture, archaeology, history, natural history, or the natural sciences."

Timeline & Application Overview

1. PRE-APPLICATION

MAY – JUNE 2026

- Get connected with CAC — sign up for [CAC's email list](#)
- Register with CAC's [online application and reporting system](#)
- Attend a [Grant Workshop and Q&A Session](#)
- Start your application — available in early May

2. APPLICATION

DUE THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026 BY 4:30 PM ET

Complete and Submit the Online Application by June 25, 2026 at 4:30PM ET

- Required documents include:
 - 990-N, 990-EZ, or 990 for the most recently completed fiscal year
 - Secretary of State Certificate of Good Standing
 - For New Applicants: Evidence of public arts or cultural programming that you produced within the previous two years prior to June 25, 2026
- Be prepared with the following information:
 - Organizational Overview
 - Project Basics & Narratives
 - Project Budget
 - Support Materials

3. POST-APPLICATION

SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2026

- Online Panel Review — September 2026
- CAC Board approves grants at public meeting — anticipated November 2026
- Grant agreements issued and signed — anticipated December 2026 – January 2027

Eligibility



Downtown Cleveland Inc.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY

To be eligible for a Project Support grant, applicant organizations must meet all the following criteria:

- Be a 501(c)(3) organization as verified through the IRS Publication 78 by the GoVerify service
- Have a permanent and viable base of operations in Cuyahoga County for at least one year prior to June 25, 2026. Applicant organization must have a business address in Cuyahoga County and conduct the majority of its local programs and services in Cuyahoga County for the residents of Cuyahoga County and visitors to Cuyahoga County
- Have created, produced or presented arts or culture programming open to the public in Cuyahoga County within the previous two years prior to June 25, 2026
- Provide the required financial documents: 990-N, 990-EZ, or 990 for the most recently completed fiscal year
- Be incorporated and authorized to do business in Ohio as verified by the Ohio Secretary of State

WHO IS INELIGIBLE TO APPLY

The following types of organizations are not eligible to apply for the Project Support grant (this list is not exhaustive):

- Organizations that are not in good standing with CAC and/or not in compliance with previous grants
- Organizations that serve as fiscal agents or fiscal sponsors for an organization or program
- Organizations where a CAC Trustee or employee serves or begins to serve as a board member of Grant Recipient or where a CAC Trustee or a family member of a CAC employee or Trustee serves in a senior management position of Grant Recipient at the time of application or at any time during the grant period, or where a grant to the organization will result in a violation by a CAC Trustee or employee of CAC's Ethics Policy
- Private foundations
- Units of government, including component units
- Pre-K and K-12 schools, including parent-teacher associations and similar groups
- Individuals
- Fundraising organizations, such as "Friends Of" groups that do not conduct their own programming

For a full list of CAC funding restrictions please see [page 17](#).

Organizations may receive either a Project Support OR a General Operating Support grant — but not both — during each grant year.

Grant Amounts & Process



Greater Cleveland Film Commission

GRANT AMOUNTS

Project Support grants may range from \$1,000 - \$7,500.

Maximum grant request amounts are determined by an organization’s CAC grant history and budget size, as follows:

UP TO \$5,000	UP TO \$7,500
<p>The maximum grant is up to \$5,000 for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new applicants, and; • returning applicants who filed IRS Form 990-N and/or have budgets of \$50,000 or less in the most recently completed fiscal year. 	<p>The maximum grant is up to \$7,500 for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • returning applicants who filed IRS Form 990 or Form 990-EZ and/or have budgets greater than \$50,000 in the most recently completed fiscal year.

GRANT APPROVAL PROCESS

Project Support applications are reviewed by an independent expert panel. Panel scores and grant amounts are subject to approval by CAC’s Board of Trustees at a public meeting; applicants are welcome to attend all CAC Board meetings, but not required.

The grant amount and total number of Project Support grants will be determined by the following factors: the amount of funding allocated by CAC’s Board to the Project Support grant program; the panel score for each application and the total amount requested by all eligible applicants.

Recommended grant amounts will be shared with applicants prior to CAC Board approval.

Funding Criteria



North Pointe Ballet, photo by Left of Center Photography

Successful grant applications will demonstrate Cuyahoga Arts & Culture’s three funding criteria:

PUBLIC BENEFIT

is an organization’s ability to meaningfully connect with its community through its project.

ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL VIBRANCY

is an organization’s ability to create a relevant and engaging project.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

is an organization’s ability to successfully plan for and manage its project.

CAC prioritizes public benefit because grants are made to benefit the residents of Cuyahoga County.

••• [View the GLOSSARY for examples of how applicants demonstrate CAC’s funding criteria.](#)

Review Process & Scoring Framework



Reaching Heights

REVIEW PROCESS

All eligible applications are evaluated by a panel of arts or cultural professionals from outside the region in a public panel review process.

Panelists are selected and vetted by CAC staff to represent a cross-section of professionals qualified to provide expert knowledge of specific arts or cultural disciplines, as well as for their management experience, professional knowledge of the sector and prior panel experience.

CAC strives to use panels that are diverse in all respects. All panelists receive an honorarium of up to \$200 for their service. The panel will evaluate all eligible applications based on CAC's funding criteria.

CAC reviews applications for completeness but does not score or provide opinions. Panel comments and scores will be shared with applicants and the public after grants are awarded.

PANEL SCORING FRAMEWORK

Panelists will submit a **score between 1-10 points** based on CAC's three funding criteria.

With an emphasis on Public Benefit, has the application demonstrated the funding criteria?

8-10 points: The applicant has provided strong evidence that the funding criteria are met.

5-7 points: The applicant has provided fair evidence that the funding criteria are met.

1-4 points: The applicant has provided weak evidence that the funding criteria are met.

The minimum score threshold for funding will be determined based on the amount of funds available and total amount requested by recommended applicants. Applicants who demonstrate weak evidence that the funding criteria are met will not be recommended for funding.

Application

Start early and submit early!



Harvard Community Services Center, photo by Lewis Burrell, III

The application must be submitted by 4:30PM ET on Thursday, June 25, 2026. The online system will not accept late or incomplete submissions.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Get Connected with CAC

News, updates, and events, including technical assistance workshops and webinars, will be posted on the CAC [website](#) and distributed via email. Sign up [here](#) and opt-in to receive Grant Opportunities to learn more. Add CAC's URL and staff email addresses to your email safe senders list to continue receiving important information. CAC will not extend any deadlines if our emails are sent to your spam or junk mail.

Attend a Grant Workshop

CAC will offer a variety of technical assistance opportunities in advance of the application deadline. Information regarding such trainings will be posted on the CAC website and all applicants will be notified by email. We strongly encourage and invite all prospective applicants to attend our [workshops and Q&A sessions](#).

Gather Support Materials

[Support materials](#) are images, audio files, video files, hyperlinks and/or other supporting documents that help bring your organization's mission and programs to life. CAC uses your support materials to help document eligibility, to evaluate reports and to share with residents how public funding for arts and culture impacts the community. Support materials also play a critical role in helping panelists evaluate your application.

ONLINE APPLICATION & REPORTING SYSTEM

Applications must be submitted online using CAC's [online application and reporting system](#). To be considered complete, an application must include responses to all required questions and required materials as outlined below.

[ONLINE APPLICATION AND REPORTING SYSTEM GUIDE](#)

Access for individuals with disabilities: Contact info@cacgrants.org or 216-515-8303 to request an accommodation or an alternate format of the guidelines at least four (4) weeks prior to the application deadline.

Application Instructions

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Please verify that the information in the organization profile is accurate before submitting your application.

Organization Name
Publicly Known As
Date Organization Formed
Date of 501(c)3 Incorporation
EIN Number (Tax ID)
Fiscal Year End Date
Address
Website
Phone

Application Questions

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Organization Mission Statement (Up to 1,500 characters)

Organization Overview and History

Who started the organization and why? Has it evolved since then? If so, how?
(Up to 2,000 characters)

Grant Contact — the Grant Contact is the primary contact between CAC and your organization for grant information, updates, and deadlines.

Grant Contact Name, Pronouns, Title, Email Address, Phone

Executive Director — the Executive Director will be contacted for major institutional communications and grant agreements.

Executive Director Name, Pronouns, Title, Email Address, Phone

Application Questions

ELIGIBILITY CHECK

1. Does your organization have a [core mission](#) to produce, present or create programs or activities in areas directly concerned with arts or cultural heritage (as defined by the Ohio Revised Code) for the general public? (yes/no)
2. Has your organization had a permanent and viable base of operations in Cuyahoga County for at least one year prior to June 25, 2026? (yes/no)

Applicant organizations must have a business address in Cuyahoga County and conduct the majority of its local programs and services in Cuyahoga County for the residents of Cuyahoga County and visitors to Cuyahoga County.

3. Is your organization incorporated and authorized to do business in Ohio as verified by the [Ohio Secretary of State](#)? (yes/no)
4. Using <https://businesssearch.ohiosos.gov>, please find your organization's Filings page, and paste the URL, which can be copied from the bottom of the Filings page. (The URL in your search-bar will not link to your organization's page).
 - Look up your organization on the SEARCH BY BUSINESS NAME page.
 - Find the Active account for your organization in the SEARCH RESULTS and click SHOW DETAILS.
 - Scroll to the bottom of BUSINESS DETAILS & FILINGS and click Copy URL.
 - Paste the URL into the box in the online system. It should look like: <https://businesssearch.ohiosos.gov?=businessDetails/#####>
5. Is your organization a current (2026) Project Support grant recipient? (yes/no)
(If no) Did your organization receive CAC funding of any kind between 2022-2026? (yes/no)

Organization Leadership and Population Served

To improve CAC's understanding of the organizations and communities served through its grants we ask that you consider the questions below. **These responses do not impact eligibility, will not be shared with the panel, and are not factored into any funding decisions. CAC does not make grants or funding decisions on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, disability, or any characteristic protected by law.**

6. Do the majority of your organization's senior leadership and board publicly self-identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)? (yes, no, not sure/prefer not to answer)
7. Do the majority of the individuals your organization serves identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC)? (yes, no, not sure/prefer not to answer)
8. **OPTIONAL** — Please share any additional context regarding your organization's senior leadership and board, and the population your organization serves. (Up to 1,500 characters)

Application Questions

9. According to your most recently completed IRS Form 990, is your budget above \$50,000? (yes/no)

10. Upload IRS Form 990-N, 990-EZ, or 990.

Upload the IRS Form 990 for your 2025 fiscal year. Only signed or e-signed 990s will be accepted. E-signed 990s must also include Form 8879-TE. If you filed an extension, upload your most recently completed 990 and your extension filing. Options for acceptable 990s include:

- 990-N for fiscal year ending in 2025
- 990/990-EZ for fiscal year ending in 2025
- 990/990-EZ for fiscal year ending in 2024 + Form 8868 Extension

11. Enter your organization's total budget (expenses) for the 2026 fiscal year.

12. Upload evidence of arts and culture programming.

If this is your first time applying for a CAC grant or if your last grant received was prior to 2022, please upload examples and materials demonstrating the public arts and culture programming presented or produced by your organization between June 25, 2024 – June 25, 2026, that show your organization's name, logo, and/or connection to the programming taking place.

13. OPTIONAL — Provide links (URLS) to online documentation of arts and culture programming.

Use this optional field to provide up to two links to websites for your support materials.

14. Arts and Culture Programming Upload Explanation (Up to 1,500 characters)

Please describe the programming taking place in the uploaded materials, including when and where the programming took place, who was invited to participate or how it was advertised to the public, and how your organization was involved in the program.

PROJECT BASICS

1. Project Title (Up to 100 characters) This should be the title, not a summary of the project.

2. Project Dates — All events must begin and end within the grant period (January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027). The start and end dates should not be the entire calendar year.

3. Public Event Location(s). Where in Cuyahoga County will your public arts and culture programming take place? (Up to 1,500 characters)

4. Total number of expected participants and/or audience members.

Application Questions

PROJECT NARRATIVES

Project Support grants support arts and culture activities with a public programming component in Cuyahoga County. We seek applications that demonstrate artistic and cultural vibrancy by creating relevant and engaging projects. Cuyahoga Arts & Culture is made possible by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a countywide tax. It is our priority that the dollars granted benefit Cuyahoga County residents. Please use the questions below to share how your project demonstrates CAC's public benefit funding criteria.

Public Benefit: An organization's ability to meaningfully connect with its community through its project. *Tip: Refer to CAC's [Funding Criteria definitions on Page 8](#).*

5. Project Summary – Briefly describe the project, planning process, and implementation.
(Up to 2,000 characters)

6. Define your community. (Up to 1,000 characters) *Tip: A community may be defined by geography (place), identity (attributes), affinity (what we like) or other connection.*

7. How will you connect with your community through your project? How will you be inclusive and foster belonging for all people? (Up to 1,000 characters)

As a steward of public dollars, Cuyahoga Arts and Culture values organizational capacity. Please use the sections below to demonstrate your organization's ability to successfully plan for and manage your project.

8. Describe your team. Include who will be involved in the project and how they are qualified.
(Up to 1,000 characters)

9. OPTIONAL: Is there any additional information about your project or organization that may be helpful to an outside panelist reviewing your application? (Up to 1,500 characters) *Tip: CAC recruits panelists from outside of the region. What might be important information to share with someone who is unfamiliar with Cuyahoga County or your work? i.e. demographic information, project location descriptions, historical context, etc.*

PROJECT BUDGET

MAXIMUM REQUEST AMOUNT: This section will populate based on your budget and if you are a new or returning applicant.

MAXIMUM REQUEST AMOUNTS

\$5,000: Applicant files a 990-N and/or has a budget up to \$50,000 and/or has not previously received a CAC grant

\$7,500: Applicant files a 990 or 990-EZ and/or has a budget over \$50,000 and has previously received a CAC grant

10. Total Budgeted Project Income

11. Total Budgeted Project Expenses

Application Questions

- 12. Amount Requested from CAC** — the requested amount cannot be more than 50% of the proposed project's total expenses. Please enter a whole number with no commas or dollar signs.
- 13. Project Budget:** Upload a project budget showing project income and expenses, in any format. Please detail sources and any in-kind income or expenses. A budget template is available [here](#).
- 14. Optional: Is there any additional information that will help CAC understand your project income and expenses?** (Up to 1,000 characters)

SUPPORT MATERIALS

15. Upload Arts and Cultural Support Materials

Support materials play a critical role in helping panelists evaluate your proposed project's alignment with CAC's funding criteria, specifically **artistic and cultural vibrancy, an organization's ability to create a relevant and engaging project**. For more information on selecting and uploading support materials to your online application, please refer to the [Support Materials Guide](#).

Include at least one (1) but no more than three (3) total uploads and/or web-based support materials:

- Upload items of your choice that demonstrate your Public Benefit, Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy and Organizational Capacity.
- Photos, videos, audio, and other documents do not necessarily need to be professionally produced to demonstrate vibrant programming.
- All audio and visual materials should be cued to immediately begin with relevant activity.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit quality support materials that are current (within the last 24 months) and relevant to the application.

Optional: Include web links as support materials, no more than three (3) total additional uploads.

Please note: CAC does not own, collect royalties on or hold copyrights to artistic products resulting from its grants, nor will it take any action on behalf of the grant recipient to protect the grant recipient's intellectual property rights. CAC does, however, have legal authority to reproduce and use submitted documentation (electronically and in print) of such artistic products for educational, promotional, official or non-commercial purposes. By providing documentation of artistic products to CAC, you consent to such use by CAC.

Application Questions

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES

The Statement of Assurances is the last step in the application process. An authorizing official will certify that they are authorized to submit the application on behalf of the organization and that the information submitted in the application is true and correct to the best of their knowledge.

The undersigned further certifies that:

- I am authorized to submit this Application on behalf of this organization.
- The information submitted on this Application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.
- No information known to me has been omitted that causes information presented in this Application or in the eligibility documentation to be misleading in any material respect.
- No CAC Trustee or employee serves as a board member of this organization and no CAC Trustee or a family member of a CAC employee or Trustee serves in a senior management position of this organization at the time of application.
- The organization is a going concern.

First and last name of person completing this form

Title

Email

When this form is finalized, please hit the submit button. You will receive a confirmation email, and we encourage you to download your application for your records.

Grant Recipient Requirements



Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Grant Period

All funded activities and grant expenditures must occur during the grant period, January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027.

Grant Agreement and Compliance

If your application is recommended and approved for funding, CAC will prepare a grant agreement. CAC will be available to meet with new and returning grant recipients to review the grant agreement requirements. To be considered an active grant recipient and receive funding, recipients must sign a grant agreement and meet the requirements therein.

Grant Payment Timeline

Project Support grants are paid upon completion of the project and approval of a final report. Grant recipients may optionally request up to 60% of the total grant award as early as 30 days before project activities begin through an advance payment request. All funded activities and expenditure of grant dollars must occur in 2027.

CAC Grant Funding Restrictions

Grant Recipients shall use the Project Support grant for project expenses directly concerned with arts or cultural heritage. Restricted uses of CAC funds include but are not limited to:

- costs of any programs or activities located outside of Cuyahoga County
- activities that are not open to the general public
- general operating support or operating expenses not directly related to your project
- fundraising events or benefits
- regranteeing
- scholarships, tuition assistance, awards or cash prizes
- credit-bearing academic programs (K-12 and college level)
- deficit reduction or elimination, trust endowments, cash reserves, penalty or litigation fees, loans, or interest on loans
- capital improvements, facilities or equipment
- ceremonies or events advancing or inhibiting a particular religious ideology
- cost of receptions, food and beverages
- agent's fees for programs contracted through commercial agencies
- travel outside of the United States
- advocacy of specific political causes or candidates

Grant Recipient Requirements (continued)

Matching Funds

Project Support grants are matching grants. Applicants are required to leverage CAC funds to secure additional income from other sources. This grant requires a 1:1 match. This means that CAC will only provide a grant equaling up to half of the project's total expenses. 50% of the match can be met through in-kind income. In-kind income can include donated goods, services, space, and volunteer hours. Sources of your matching funds can include, but are not limited to, foundation or government grants, private donations, ticket sales, and member dues.

Matching funds may not include other funds from CAC. This includes any CAC co-funded grants. Applicant organizations may only apply for one project to be funded. Multiple organizations may not request funds for the same project. Contact a grant manager with any questions.

Events Calendar and Credit Requirements

CAC asks that organizations receiving Project Support connect with CAC throughout the grant cycle by communicating with their grant manager at CAC, posting events and job opportunities on CAC's website, connecting with CAC on social media, and saying thank you to the residents of Cuyahoga County for their support. Grant Recipient shall submit Project events through CAC's online calendar (ClevelandArtsEvents.com) at least 30 days prior to the date the Project is presented to the public. The [Events Calendar and Credit Requirements](#) document outlines these requirements. Grant recipients that do not comply with these expectations may be subject to a reduced final grant amount.

Reporting Requirements

All grant recipients that receive a 2027 Project Support grant must submit a final report online within 30 days of completing the project. In addition to a final report, CAC may conduct site visits during the project period. Reporting guidelines and instructions will be posted online in advance of deadlines. Reports consist of a narrative, financial documentation, and support materials. Grant recipients that submit a late final report, or do not submit a final report, may receive a reduced or revoked final grant amount.

Maintaining Good Standing

To receive CAC funds, a grant recipient must maintain its good standing with CAC during the grant period. A grant recipient is in good standing if it:

- fully and completely meets all requirements as stated in the grant agreement for the duration of the grant period;
- accurately represents its organization and its activities in all documents submitted to CAC. This includes, but is not limited to, the eligibility check, application, final report and all other reports and forms; and
- continues to meet the eligibility criteria.

A grant recipient not in good standing with CAC will be officially informed of this status in writing.

 [STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION](#)



cuyahoga
arts & culture
strengthening community

DRAFT