



2026

PROJECT SUPPORT

Grant Program Guidelines & Resources

APPLICATION DUE:

THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2025 BY 4:30PM ET

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Greetings!

Thank you for your interest in the 2026 Project Support (PS) grant program.



Cleveland Ballet, photo by New Image Photography

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 the region's largest funder for arts and culture, helping hundreds of nonprofit organizations in Cuyahoga County connect residents and visitors with millions of cultural experiences each year. 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 \$257 million in 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

Multi-year core support grants to qualifying arts and cultural nonprofit organizations in Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

Who can apply? Cuyahoga County-based nonprofit organizations with a [core mission of arts and culture](#) who have successfully completed at least two CAC grants, current General Operating Support grant recipients, and current Cultural Heritage grant recipients.

PROJECT SUPPORT

Annual grants for nonprofits conducting projects that have a core arts and culture purpose in Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

Who can apply? New applicants, and organizations with or without a core mission of arts and culture.

RESOURCES

To learn more about the differences between CAC's grants, refer to the [2026 Grant Guide](#). Organizations may only submit one application per cycle. 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 the Project Support (PS) 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.



Writers in Residence

Grant applications are reviewed through a public panel process. CAC will offer Project Support funding in 2026 for projects occurring in the January 1 – December 31, 2026 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, 2026.
- 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 - JULY 2025

- 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](#) to determine what grant is best for you
- Start your application — available in early May

2. APPLICATION

DUE THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2025 BY 4:30 PM ET

Complete and Submit Online Application by July 31, 2025 at 4:30PM ET

- Required documents include:
 - 990, 990-N or 990-EZ 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 July 31, 2025
- Be prepared with the following information:
 - Organizational Overview
 - Project Basics & Narratives
 - Project Budget
 - Support Materials

3. POST-APPLICATION

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2025

- Online Panel Review — September 2025
- CAC Board approves grants at public meeting — anticipated November 2025
- Grant agreements issued and signed — anticipated December 2025 - January 2026

Eligibility



Aradhana Committee, photo by Gopi Sundaram

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY

To be eligible for a Project Support grant, applicant organizations must meet all the following eligibility 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 July 31, 2025. 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 July 31, 2025.
- Provide the required financial documents. All organizations: 990, 990-N or 990-EZ 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 receiving a General Operating Support grant from CAC in the same cycle
- Organizations that serve as fiscal agents or fiscal sponsors for an organization or program
- 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

Grant Amounts & Process



CityMusic Cleveland, photo by Amanda Chambers

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 determined by an applicant's IRS 990 filing), as follows:

UP TO \$5,000

The maximum grant is up to \$5,000 for:

- new applicants, and;
- returning applicants who filed IRS Form 990-N in the most recently completed fiscal year.

UP TO \$7,500

The maximum grant is up to \$7,500 for:

- returning applicants who filed IRS Form 990 or Form 990-EZ in the most recently completed fiscal year.

GRANT APPROVAL PROCESS

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, as determined by a panel of outside experts; and the total request amounts of all applications eligible for funding.

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

Funding Criteria



BigHearted Blooms

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 with public funds.

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

Review Process & Scoring Framework



Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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 makes every effort to ensure that the panel is 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 request amounts. Applicants who demonstrate weak evidence that the funding criteria are met will not be recommended for funding.

Application

Start early and submit early!



Art of Me Productions

The eligibility check and application are now one step, and must be submitted by 4:30PM ET on Thursday, July 31, 2025. 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 all required application question responses and required materials as outlined below.

 [ONLINE APPLICATION AND REPORTING SYSTEM GUIDE](#)

Application Questions

501(C)(3) VERIFICATION

Submit 501c3 Verification — please verify the nonprofit status of your organization before proceeding to the application form.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

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

Mission Statement (max 100 words)

Organization Overview and History

Who started the organization and why? Has it evolved since then? If so, how?
(max 200 words)

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 July 31, 2025? (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 (2025) Project Support grant recipient? (yes/no)
(If no) Did your organization receive CAC funding of any kind between 2021–2025? (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, gender identity, sexual orientation, 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 below.** (100 words)

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.

Application Questions

9. What type of IRS Form 990 do you file? Select one.

- 990
- 990-N
- 990-EZ

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

Upload the IRS Form 990 for your 2024 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 2024
- 990/990-EZ for fiscal year ending in 2024
- 990/990-EZ for fiscal year ending in 2023 + Form 8868 Extension

11. Enter your organization's total budget (expenses) for the 2025 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 2023, please upload examples and materials demonstrating the public arts and culture programming presented or produced by your organization between July 31, 2023 – July 31, 2025, and 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 (100 words)

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 10 words)** 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, 2026 – December 31, 2026). 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 150 words)**
4. **Total number of expected participants and/or audience members.**
5. **Will the event/activity be free? (yes/no)**

Application Questions

PROJECT NARRATIVES

Project Support grants are in support of 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 dollars granted are to the benefit of 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](#).*

6. Project Summary — Briefly describe the project, planning process, and implementation.
(Up to 400 words)

7. Define your community. (Up to 200 words) *Tip: A community may be defined by geography (place), identity (attributes), affinity (what we like) or other connection.*

8. How will you connect with your community through your project? How will you be inclusive and foster belonging for all people? (Up to 200 words)

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.

9. Describe your team. Include who will be involved in the project and how they are qualified.
(Up to 200 words)

10. OPTIONAL: Is there any additional information about your project or organization that may be helpful to an outside panelist reviewing your application? (Up to 250 words) *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.*

Application Questions

PROJECT BUDGET

MAXIMUM REQUEST AMOUNT: This section will populate based on what 990 you file & if you are a new or returning applicant.

- 11. 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.

MAXIMUM REQUEST AMOUNTS

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

\$7,500: Applicant files a 990 or 990-EZ and has previously received a CAC grant

INCOME TABLE

Please list the amount with the corresponding income source in the table below.

- Use the first row for your CAC grant request.
- CAC requires a 1:1 match in funds.
- 50% of your match funds can come from in-kind donations.

Income Source (text)	Income Amount (\$)
CAC grant request	\$
Other grants	
Individual donations	
Ticket / admission revenue (earned)	
Other funding	
In-kind	
Total Project Income	\$

EXPENSE TABLE

Please list the amount with the corresponding expense source in the table below. CAC grant amounts cannot be more than half of the expenses. For example: if your CAC grant is \$4,000, you must show at least \$8,000 in expenses. In-kind donations listed above may be included here as well.

Expense Category (text)	Expense Amount (\$)
Arts and cultural professionals	
Venue or space rental	
Marketing	
Administrative	
Other project expenses	
In-kind	
Total Project Expenses	\$

Application Questions

SUPPORT MATERIALS

12. 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 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.

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 Eligibility Check on behalf of this organization.
- The information submitted on this Eligibility Check is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.
- No information known to me has been omitted that causes information presented in this Eligibility Check or in the eligibility documentation to be misleading in any material respect.
- The organization is a going concern.

First and last name of person completing this form

Title

Email

When this form is finalized, please mark as **Complete** below. When both tasks have been marked complete, you'll see the **Submit** button becomes available and you can submit your Eligibility Check.

Grant Recipient Requirements



Ursuline College, photo by Luanne Bole-Becker

Grant Period

All funded activities and grant expenditures must occur during the grant period, January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026.

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 reimbursement grants and 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 2026.

CAC Grant Funding Restrictions

Grant Recipients shall use the Project Support grant for project expenses directly concerned with arts or culture 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
- regrating
- 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 2026 Project Support grant must submit a final report online within 30 days of the completion of 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](#)



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arts & culture
strengthening community