



**FY25 Operating Support  
Grant Guidelines**  
for Medium and Large Organizations

Deadline: April 5, 2024

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## **Introduction**

As Fairfax County's designated local arts agency, ArtsFairfax creates and nurtures an environment in which the arts and artists flourish. Through partnerships with schools, individual artists, arts organizations, and other cultural and community groups, ArtsFairfax promotes and encourages excellence, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access in the arts by initiating and supporting programs, activities, and policies that inspire, nurture, and reflect the diverse populations, voices, and traditions of Fairfax County.

## **Purpose of the Operating Support Grant Program**

ArtsFairfax's Operating Support Grant Program advances the arts in Fairfax County by supporting the goals and objectives of the county's arts organizations, helping them maintain and develop their programs, services, and facilities. ArtsFairfax embraces the county's One Fairfax racial and social equity policy. Artists and arts organizations receiving ArtsFairfax grants must intentionally examine their operations, programs, and services to ensure that equity, diversity, access, and inclusion are taken into consideration with decision-making, development, and deployment of policies, programs, and services.

Operating Support Grants maintain organizational stability as a platform for becoming more resilient, adaptable, and nimble for sustainability, change, and growth. As ArtsFairfax's largest grant program, Operating Support funds generate recognition for a broad spectrum of the county's cultural organizations.

## **Goals of the Operating Support Grant Program**

Through the Operating Support Grant Program, ArtsFairfax seeks:

1. to provide support for established and emerging arts organizations;
2. to encourage wide participation in the arts by expanding exposure to and incorporating Fairfax County's diverse voices and traditions in cultural programming that is available to all residents of Fairfax County;
3. to promote opportunities for a diversity of cultural workers, leaders, individual artists, and arts organizations to create, present, and celebrate their artistic endeavors and traditions; and
4. to be a catalyst for increased resiliency, transformation, and expanded resources to support arts organizations through public funding.

## **Organizational Eligibility**

All applicants must meet the following criteria to apply to the Operating Support Grant Program for midsize-large organizations. Staff reviews all grant applications for eligibility prior to the review process.

An organization is eligible to apply to the Operating Support Grant Program for midsize-large organizations if:

1. It has as a core mission the creation, exhibition, presentation, production, or performance of and/or education in an arts discipline, and it operates as a stand-alone nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with current or pending status.
2. It has regular activity in a minimum of four different months in the year or 120 days of the year.
3. It presents at least 51% of public arts activities within the geographical boundaries of Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, or the City of Falls Church.
4. The organization must have an address of record within the geographical boundaries of Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, or the City of Falls Church and satisfy ONE of the following three criteria for at least one year:
  - a) Meet, rehearse, exhibit, and operate within the geographical boundary of Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, or the City of Falls Church.
  - b) Have 51% of board of directors' members work or reside in Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, or the City of Falls Church.
  - c) Verify that 51% of attendees at performances, exhibits, events, and activities reside in Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, or the City of Falls Church evidenced through acceptable statistical data including but not limited to ticket analysis, subscription data, box office surveys, and audience surveys.
5. Additional eligibility requirements:
  - a) An organization must be in compliance with all local, state, and federal laws.
  - b) An organization must either hold 501(c)(3) status in its own right or have a fiscal sponsor that holds 501(c)(3) status apply on its behalf. The fiscal sponsor must manage all grant funds and ensure compliance with the terms of the grant if an award is made.
  - c) An organization must have independently prepared financial statements such as an audit or a treasurer's report (audit required for organizations with expenses of \$750,000 and above).
  - d) The applicant must have submitted all required final reports for any grants received from ArtsFairfax during the previous fiscal year.
  - e) The applicant must maintain an Arts Directory profile and list activities on the Events Calendar on the ArtsFairfax website.
  - f) The applicant must have expenses from the most recently completed fiscal year that exceed \$100,000. (Organizations with budgets from \$5,000 to \$100,000 have unique guidelines and apply using a different form.)

**The following are not eligible organizations:**

- a) Arts divisions, and organizations with an arts program within a larger nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, are not eligible for Operating Support and can apply only for Project Support and Ticket Subsidy grants.
- b) Organizations that receive line-item funding from Fairfax County or the State of

Virginia.

- c) Departments of George Mason University, and nonprofit organizations and foundations that support county agencies are not eligible for ArtsFairfax grants.

## **Grant Restrictions**

### **All Operating Support Grant Program grants must:**

- a) Support activities, programs, or projects occurring within Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, or the City of Falls Church.
- b) Have qualified artistic or scholarly, administrative, and management leadership (either professional or volunteer) capable of completing any grant-supported activities, programs, or projects.
- c) Occur within the dates of July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

### **Operating Support Grant Program grants cannot be used for:**

- a) Fundraising activities, such as capital campaigns or endowment campaigns;
- b) Construction or renovation projects;
- c) Political advocacy costs;
- d) Activities that are not open to the general public;
- e) Debt retirement;
- f) Pre-grant Costs; or
- g) Proselytizing and faith-based activities.

## **Matching Requirement**

For FY25, there is no matching requirement for the Operating Support Grant Program due to the ongoing recovery from the COVID pandemic, but the funding can and should be used to leverage additional private support.

## **Budget Levels**

Organizations fall within one of five budget levels within the Operating Support Grant Program.\* Organizations with budgets over \$100,000 must apply through the guidelines and application for Medium and Large Organizations. Organizations may only submit one Operating Support Grant application per grant period. Applicants using a fiscal sponsor must contact ArtsFairfax grant staff for additional instructions and should use the applicant organization budget rather than the fiscal sponsor's budget to determine what form to use.

For the Operating Support Grant Program, your budget size is determined by the "Total Expenses" from your most recently completed fiscal year. Do not include in-kind expenses in the budget level calculation.

Level 3 \$100,000-\$250,000

Level 4 \$250,000-\$500,000

Level 5 over \$500,000

\* Level 1 \$5,000-\$50,000 and Level 2 \$50,000-100,000 organizations see guidelines and application for Small Organizations.

Pass through money – money that is collected by the organization and then immediately dispersed – should not appear in an organization’s budget as income. If the organization collects a portion or percentage of that money, then only that portion can show as income.

Examples of pass through money include:

- Funds collected by an organization that sells art on behalf of an artist and then distributes that money to the individual artist.
- Organizations that collect costume fees from individual participants, and then immediately purchases costumes for individual participants.
- Money that is collected from individuals for travel purposes, which is then spent on travel.
- Some monies spent for fundraising purposes are considered pass through money. If an organization sells an item for fundraising purposes (for example, wreaths or ornaments), the purchase cost and sales proceeds for those fundraising items cannot be included in the organization’s income and expenses. Only the profits from the fundraiser should be included in the income category.

## **Review Process**

Following the grant application deadline, ArtsFairfax staff determines whether an applicant is eligible and whether an application is complete. Staff may contact applicants for additional information needed to make an eligibility determination. If an applicant is determined to be ineligible, the application will be rejected without evaluation. Also, incomplete applications are subject to rejection without evaluation. If an application is rejected, the applicant will be notified by email.

All eligible and complete applications for the Operating Support Grant Program are evaluated by panel review. Panelists are arts professionals with knowledge of or expertise in the segments of the arts community that are eligible to apply to ArtsFairfax for funding. ArtsFairfax will notify applicants of the panel meetings schedule. Panel meetings will be livestreamed and open for observation by applicants; applicants are encouraged to observe. Staff will provide applicants with notes summarizing the panel discussion and comments on their application.

Review panels are generally comprised of approximately five individuals who have no conflicts of interest. They review and evaluate each eligible application on its own merit. ArtsFairfax selects panel members for their diverse backgrounds, expertise in a particular arts discipline, knowledge of grant practice and/or knowledge of the community.

The ArtsFairfax Board of Directors makes the final funding decisions based on the evaluations by the panels, available funds, and the overall goals of the Operating Support Grant Program and of ArtsFairfax.

## Evaluation Criteria

Panelists will evaluate each grant request based on their self-awareness and intentionality in addressing the following five evaluation criteria.

1. **Organization Profile** (*History, Mission, Values, Vision, Relevance*)
  - a) Does the applicant provide clear, specific, and thorough evidence of vision, mission, goals, and evolution over time?
  - b) Does the applicant use demographic data to describe their service area, leadership, audience/participants as well as how the community informs their identity, mission, and programs?
  
2. **Programs and Services** (*Ability to create quality, mission-driven work that engages and inspires its community, including aesthetic attributes of risk-taking, resourcefulness, sensory experiences, sustained resonance, impact, and value*)
  - a) Do the programs and services effectively fulfill the applicant's mission and goals?
  - b) Does the applicant offer public arts activities that reflect the diversity of the population of Fairfax County?
  - c) Are the applicant's efforts to understand Fairfax County's diversity and respond to the community it serves evident? Does explanation clearly and thoroughly illustrate the creative process, which includes creative roles, responsibilities, and authentic constituent collaboration, where constituents are essential in the artistic decision-making process?
  - d) Is the organizational success story clear and does it explain why it is considered successful in terms of aesthetic attributes, evaluation, and outcomes?
  - e) Do the programs demonstrate support for and stimulation of artistic growth and excellence?
  - f) Do the programs offer the public greater access to underrepresented artists and art forms?
  - g) Does the applicant demonstrate artistic excellence as shown by the qualifications, background, and experience of the artists?
  - h) Are there clear examples of positive critical response to the organization's performances, exhibits, and other artistic work?
  
3. **Community Engagement** (*an organization's ability to meaningfully engage with its community to achieve its mission*)
  - a) Is the applicant building support for the organization's mission and activities by connecting with stakeholders (arts collaborators, participants/audiences,

- funderson, and/or non-arts partners)?
- b) Is there evidence of effort to improve and evaluate program quality involving staff, board, artistic personnel, and diverse constituents?
  - c) Is access to the arts for all residents of Fairfax County, especially underserved populations (youth, the elderly, the disabled, minorities, ethnic communities, and those in underserved areas) evident in programs and outreach activities?
  - d) Is there evidence of effective marketing of the organization's programs?

**4. Organizational Effectiveness** (*ability to successfully manage resources*)

- a) Is the staffing structure (staff, artists, board, volunteers, partners) successful in carrying out the mission, and goals and/or strategic plan?
- b) Does the organization reflect the diversity of its service area and that of the county in its policies, programs, leadership, and personnel?
- c) Does the applicant have clear priorities and mechanisms to regularly identify, evaluate, and address staffing, training, planning, evaluation, and finances that are both sustainable and aligned with growth or change?

**5. Financials**

- a) Is the applicant financially stable?
- b) Does the applicant utilize sound financial controls and reporting procedures?
- c) Does the applicant maintain a diversity of funding sources, including earned and contributed income?
- d) Does the applicant employ fundraising strategies appropriate for the size of the organization and the community served to ensure sustainability?

NOTE: Each of the five evaluation criteria is equally weighted in the review process.

**Terms and Conditions of Grant**

**Grant Period**

Generally, activities supported by the Operating Support Grant Program grants may be carried out for one year, between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

**Organizational Eligibility**

Grant recipients must continue to meet all eligibility requirements during the grant period. Grant recipients are required to notify ArtsFairfax staff in writing of any major financial, leadership, or programmatic changes to their organization.

**Organization Profile**

Grant recipients must complete the Organization Profile for Grant Applicants Form and upload the form with the application.



## **Grant Amount**

Operating Support grant amounts range from \$1,000 to \$60,000. Organizations can request no more than 15 percent of their actual expenses as described in their Financials for the most recently completed fiscal year. Based on available funds and panel scores, ArtsFairfax may award an applicant with an amount that is less than requested.

## **Addendum**

If an applicant experiences substantive changes in the organization's programming, staffing, and funding after the application has been submitted but at least two weeks before the panel review, then the applicant must submit an addendum that explains these accomplishments and/or challenges and how they impact their application. All applicants will be sent a link to the online form through Submittable.

## **Matching Requirement**

There is no matching requirement for the FY25 Operating Support Grant Program due to the challenges of the COVID pandemic.

## **Use of Funds**

Operating Support grants may be used for a broad range of activities. Grant funds may not be used for fundraising activities, such as capital campaigns or endowment campaigns, construction or renovation projects, political advocacy costs, activities that are not open to the general public, debt retirement, pre-grant costs, or faith-based activities. All listed expenses must be incurred during the grant period.

## **Acknowledgement of ArtsFairfax Funding**

1. ArtsFairfax requires acknowledgement of ArtsFairfax's support for all public programs and services provided by an organization that receives an Operating Support grant. To raise the visibility of your organization as well as that of the arts and nonprofit cultural organizations in Fairfax County, ArtsFairfax requires the following:
  - a) Credit ArtsFairfax as a donor on your website and all printed materials through the use of the ArtsFairfax logo and the statement, "This program is funded in part by ArtsFairfax."
2. Grant recipients are required to follow the instructions in the Grant Communications Kit and send copies to ArtsFairfax of samples of materials that are distributed to the public.
3. Grant recipients are required to acknowledge ArtsFairfax funding on at least one social media platform—tag @artsfairfax on their social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and follow ArtsFairfax and use #ArtsFairfax.
4. Include an ArtsFairfax grant award announcement in your printed programs for the duration of the grant period in accordance with your sponsorship recognition policy. The three suggested sizes are commensurate with your award amount: over \$10,000 full page; \$5,000-\$9,999 half page; and under \$5,000 quarter page.

The announcements are available in both color and black and white.

### **Required Arts Directory Profile and Events Calendar Listings**

Create a directory profile on the ArtsFairfax website: ArtsFairfax.org. Grantees are required to list their programs and events on the ArtsFairfax website throughout the grant period.

### **Announcement of Award**

No information about the status of an application will be released until all applications have been reviewed and all award decision-making is concluded. For the current grant year (FY25), ArtsFairfax will notify applicants of final decisions in August 2024.

### **Payment and Reporting Procedures**

Grant recipients will receive 70 percent of the award amount at the time of the grant announcement. Grantees are required to submit a final report at the end of the grant period (due August 1, 2025). Upon approval of the final report, ArtsFairfax will disburse the remaining 30 percent of the award amount to the grant recipient. The final report is to be submitted online and must include copies of all materials distributed to the public, such as catalogues, programs, brochures, flyers, press releases, and other publicity materials. The materials may be scanned and attached to the final report or sent to ArtsFairfax before the end of the grant period.

### **Record Keeping**

Grantees shall maintain an accurate record of the grant received and all expenses incurred under this grant and retain such books and records for at least four years after completion of the use of this grant.

### **Cancellation**

ArtsFairfax reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to discontinue funding if it is not satisfied with the progress of the grantee or the content of any required written report. In the event of discontinuation, any unexpended funds shall immediately be returned to ArtsFairfax, except where ArtsFairfax has agreed in writing to an alternative use of the unused funds.

### **Required Participation in Research**

During the grant period, ArtsFairfax may request that grantees participate in local, regional, or national arts studies. The studies may be related to, but are not limited to: audience spending, organizational management, or facility usage and planning. Grantees are required to assist ArtsFairfax in evaluating the impact of funding by contributing to these studies, if requested.

### **Advocacy Requirements**

Grantees are required to send acknowledgement letters to both the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and the Supervisor for your organization's magisterial district (if applicable)

to thank them for appropriating the grant funds. The letters should provide information about how the grant funds will be used to support your organization and its community impact. Grantees should also invite their District Supervisor to funded programs.

### **Grant Preparation Assistance**

ArtsFairfax will conduct a free information session to instruct prospective applicants on how to complete an Operating Support Grant Program application on February 15, 2024 from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM ET via Zoom. To register, visit the ArtsFairfax website. ArtsFairfax strongly encourages attendance/viewing by all potential applicants. An applicant's attendance at the session will not affect the evaluation of the application.

The Operating Support Grant information session and Financials Webinar recordings, including presentation materials, will be posted on the ArtsFairfax website. **If you have questions, please contact Grants Manager Kelley Choi by email at [kchoi@artsfairfax.org](mailto:kchoi@artsfairfax.org) or by telephone at 571-395-4625.**

### **Grant Writing Tips**

- Write clearly and concisely.
- Do not use jargon.
- Spell out acronyms with first reference.
- Do not assume the people who are reading your application know your organization and programs. When a reader has finished reviewing your grant application, they should be able to understand your organization, mission, and programs.
- Check narrative and other text for grammar and spelling errors.
- Do not repeat information in different narrative sections.
- Keep in mind that ArtsFairfax staff does not participate in panel discussions. The application must stand on its own merits.
- Verify that all contact information in your application is correct, including email addresses and phone numbers.
- Financial information referred to in the narrative should match the numbers on the Financials Form.
- Use the resources on the ArtsFairfax website including Word version of the application, Excel versions of the tables, and highly rated responses from previous applications.

### **Uploads**

Submission of Required Documents, Work Samples, and Supplementary Materials is mandatory. Work Samples and Supplementary Materials should describe activities within the last two years. You may provide links to images, audio clips, and/or online video (1280x720 resolution) samples. You can submit up to three Work Samples and three Supplemental Materials. Uploads may consist of installation shots, programs, brochures, catalogs, study guides, posters, newsletters, other promotional materials, newspaper reviews, articles, testimonials, letters of support, and awards. Online media entry is limited to a maximum running time of five minutes. Acceptable file upload types are listed in the

application. You may include links to Work Samples and Supplementary Materials in the application.

### Required Documents

1. Organization Profile for Grant Applicants (PDF)
2. IRS Letter of Determination for your organization and/or your parent organization
3. Most recent IRS Form 990 submission (do not include schedules)
4. VA Form 102
5. List of current board members that includes profession, work address, and place of residence for each one; please highlight members who work or live in Fairfax County
6. Treasurer's Report or Audit for most recently completed fiscal year; an audit is required if the applicant's expenses exceed \$750,000
7. Brief biographies (one paragraph each) of board officers and key staff members
8. Work Samples and Supplemental Materials

Name the uploaded files with the abbreviated name of the document and the organization for example IRS990\_Organization Name\*

\*File naming Key for required documents:

TR = Treasurer's Report

A = Audit

IRS = IRS Letter of determination

990 = 990 Tax Form

### Work Samples:

Applicants are required to submit up to three samples of their work, such as performances, lectures, lesson plans, exhibition installation shots, and publications. The samples should reflect the best quality work of the organization and technical quality, i.e., good sound and video presentation. The panel's judgment of artistic merit will be based upon the quality of the work submitted.

For each work sample, please include the applicant's name, the work's name, a brief description of the work, and the dates of creation and performance/publication, if appropriate. Due to the number of applications received, the panel will review recorded materials totaling no more than five minutes. Please submit edited clips or note the start and end time for longer videos.

Submit **up to three** recent examples of original work with the following considerations:

- Samples may be excerpts or complete works.
- Work Samples must be from the **last two years**.
- Links to video Work Samples may be included in the provided answer box in lieu of a file upload. Enter each on a different line. Ensure links are live and samples can be viewed without an email, account, or subscription. Include the applicant's name, title

of work and date of completion, as well as a brief description of the piece and applicant's role in the development and execution of the work.

- Name the file (**Work-Sample\_Organization Name\_01**).
- Make sure submitted files of recorded Work Samples do not exceed an overall total of five minutes.

### **Supplemental Materials:**

Submit **up to three** Supplemental Materials that describe recent activities (within the last two years).

- Supplemental Materials may include programs, brochures, catalogs, posters, newsletters, other promotional materials, newspaper reviews, articles, testimonials, letters of support, or awards.
- Include a summary of your strategic plan if your organization has one.
- Supplemental videos such as news stories and promotions are limited to a total of five minutes.
- Name each file **SM\_Organization Name\_01**.
- Links to Supplemental Materials may be included in the provided answer box, each in a different line with a brief description.

### **Submitting Your Application**

All Operating Support Grant Program applications must be submitted via the online application system no later than **April 5, 2024 at 7:00 PM ET**. Late applications will not be accepted. Hard copies of Supplemental Materials or Work Samples will not be accepted.

### **Appeals Process**

Unless there are grounds for an appeal, all funding decisions of ArtsFairfax are final.

ArtsFairfax funding decisions may be appealed only upon the following grounds:

- The applicant's grant application was denied based on criteria other than those set forth in the applicable guidelines, where the application of such improper criteria was open and obvious and there was also no legitimate basis for denial under the applicable guidelines.
- The applicant's grant application was denied based on the grant panel's failure to apply the applicable guidelines, where such failure is open and obvious and not merely a subjective evaluation of the merits of the application.
- The applicant's grant application was denied based on the grant panel's failure to consider relevant evidence presented in support of the grant application, where such failure was both open and obvious and not merely the result of the applicant's failure to properly identify or present such evidence.
- The applicant's grant application was denied as the direct result of an undisclosed conflict of interest between the applicant and a member of the grant panel, where, but for such conflict, the applicant's grant application would not have been denied.

Other than the grounds listed above, there are no other grounds for an appeal, including,

but not limited to, general dissatisfaction with the process, dissatisfaction with the amount awarded, dissatisfaction with the qualifications of the members of the grant panel, disagreement with an opinion of a member of the grant panel, or the applicant's desire to submit additional evidence.

To file an appeal, an applicant must submit a written appeal request directly to ArtsFairfax. Such appeal must be received by ArtsFairfax within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the applicant's notification letter from ArtsFairfax describing the funding decision that is being appealed. An appeal must state the grounds for the appeal and provide clear and convincing evidence in support of such grounds. No evidence or supporting materials which could have been provided as part of the applicant's original grant application will be considered.