



FY27 Project Support Grant Guidelines

Deadline: July 15, 2026 at 7:00pm EDT

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Introduction

As Fairfax County's designated local arts agency, ArtsFairfax invests in and amplifies the arts for all in Fairfax County. Through partnerships with arts organizations, individual artists, and other cultural and community groups, we support programs and activities that inspire, nurture, and reflect the diverse populations, voices, and traditions of Fairfax County.

Purpose

ArtsFairfax's Project Support Grants encourage the development and advancement of the arts in Fairfax County while serving the artistic and cultural needs of Fairfax County residents. As ArtsFairfax embraces the county's One Fairfax racial and social equity policy, 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 implementation.

Goals of the Project Support Grant

Through this program, ArtsFairfax seeks to:

1. Provide financial and other means of support to both established and emerging arts organizations.
2. Promote opportunities for arts organizations of all disciplines to create, present, and celebrate their artistic endeavors.
3. Be a catalyst for increased private sector support for arts organizations through leveraged public funding.
4. Encourage wide participation in the arts through diverse cultural programming available to all residents of Fairfax County.
5. Support activities that would not normally be part of your organization's usual activities.

Organizational Eligibility

All applicants must meet the following criteria to apply for the Project Support Grant. Staff reviews all grant applications for eligibility prior to the panel review process.

An organization is eligible to apply if:

1. It has as a core mission the creation, exhibition, presentation, production, or performance of and/or education in an arts discipline and is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with current or pending status. A specifically defined arts division or arts program within a larger 501(c)3 organization is also eligible to apply.
2. It has regular activity in a minimum of four different months or 120 days in 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. It has an address of record within the geographical boundaries of Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, or the City of Falls Church and satisfies 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) 51% of its board members work or reside in Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, or the City of Falls Church.
 - c) 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) If an organization does not hold 501(c)(3) status in its own right, they may have a fiscal sponsor that holds 501(c)(3) status. 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 only required for organizations with two consecutive years of income of \$1,000,000 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 ArtsFairfax Directory profile and list activities on the Events Calendar on the ArtsFairfax website.

The following are not eligible organizations:

1. Organizations that receive line-item funding from the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. Departments of George Mason University, and nonprofit organizations and foundations that support county agencies.

Eligibility Exceptions

An organization that does not meet eligibility requirements due to unusual circumstances may submit a written request for an exception to the Grants Manager at

grants@artsfairfax.org. The organization must submit their request two weeks prior to the application deadline and provide an explanation for special consideration. Staff will review requests and the Grants Committee will make final decisions on eligibility exceptions.

Grant Restrictions

All Project 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, 2026 and June 30, 2027. If needed, an applicant may request a two-year grant period. If awarded, the Grantee must submit an interim report documenting progress on project activities and expenses at the end of the first year.

Project Support 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 not open to the general public*.
- e) Debt retirement.
- f) Pre-grant Costs.
- g) Proselytizing and faith-based activities.
- h) Re-granting

** Arts Education projects taking place in schools are considered **Open to the General Public**.*

Funding Categories

Project Support Grants are non-recurring grants used to support eligible nonprofit arts organizations, both established and emerging, in providing activities that engage new audiences in the arts and contribute to the vibrancy and quality of life in Fairfax County. These grants encourage wide participation in the arts through diverse cultural programming available to all residents of Fairfax County. Applicants may request \$1,000-\$25,000. These grants cannot fund operating expenses.

Project Support Grants support activities that are not part of your organization's regular activities. For example, if your organization provides after-school arts instruction, then this funding could support the design and implementation of a new class not previously offered. If your organization occasionally hosts a guest artist, then funding could support bringing an artist who might normally be financially out of reach. You do not have to create a brand-new program; however, for existing programs, your proposal should explain how the funding would enhance or expand the scope of your program offerings.

There are four subcategories within the Project Support Grant Program. An organization can submit one grant application in a single subcategory. The subcategories are:

I. Arts in Education:

Arts in Education projects provide high-impact art experiences. Projects may take place in schools, after-school programs, or nonprofit agencies such as art centers, social service agencies, and parks and recreation facilities that provide services to youth and/or adults. Project Support Grants can support artist's fees and travel, space rental, transportation, advertising, publicity, scripts, costumes, sets, props, music, art supplies, and equipment rental or purchase.

II. Opportunity:

Opportunity projects provide the resources for an organization to take advantage of an atypical or out-of-the-ordinary opportunity that otherwise would be out of reach. Opportunity projects should further the growth and development of the applicant organization or engage audiences in new arts experiences. Project Support Grants can support performances by guest artists, activities, or infrastructure enhancements, including programs, exhibitions, and performances for diverse populations (including, but not limited to age, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status, or neighborhood of residence) and/or in underserved areas of the Fairfax County.

III. Partnerships with Individual Artists, Artist Teams/Cooperatives, and/or non-501(c)(3) Arts Groups:

Partnerships enable a nonprofit arts organization to collaborate with an artist, artist teams/cooperatives, and/or non-501(c)(3) arts groups. The nonprofit arts organization must serve as the applicant. Project Support Grants can support the production of public art, performances, exhibitions, workshops, commissions, arts in education projects, and culturally unique projects that directly benefit artistic development and recognition.

IV. Arts Access:

Arts Access projects strengthen arts engagement by allocating resources to underserved and economically disadvantaged communities and districts. These projects provide arts programming and reduce the costs of or distance to high-quality arts experiences (theater productions, concerts, presentations, exhibitions, learning, workshops, etc.) in communities where limited arts access has been documented. Arts and cultural organizations located in these communities as well as organizations from throughout Fairfax County and the Cities of Fairfax and Falls Church may apply.

Review Process

Following the grant application deadline, ArtsFairfax staff determines whether an applicant is eligible and their application is complete. Staff may contact applicants for additional information needed to determine eligibility. If an applicant is determined to be ineligible, the application will be rejected without evaluation. 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 are evaluated by panel review. Review panels are comprised of approximately four to six professionals who have no conflicts of interest. They review and evaluate each eligible application on its own merits. ArtsFairfax selects panel members for their diverse backgrounds, expertise in a particular arts discipline, knowledge of grant practice, and/or knowledge of the community.

ArtsFairfax will notify applicants of the schedule for the panel meeting. Panel meetings will be livestreamed and open for observation by applicants. Staff will provide applicants with notes summarizing the panel discussion and comments on their application.

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 Project Support Grant Program and of ArtsFairfax.

Evaluation Criteria

Panelists will evaluate each grant request based on five core criteria (6 points each) and three priority elements (1 point each).

Core Criteria:

1. **Quality of Programs** *(An organization's ability to create quality, mission-driven work that engages and inspires its community, including aesthetic attributes of risk-taking and resourcefulness as well as adaptations to support access, inclusion, sustained resonance, impact, and value.)*
 - a) Does the applicant demonstrate artistic excellence as shown by the qualifications, background, experience, and supplemental materials of the artists?
 - b) Will the project include quality, mission-driven work that will engage the community?
 - c) Does the project offer the public greater opportunities to enjoy both culturally diverse and/or underrecognized artists or art forms?
 - d) Are there clear examples of positive critical response to the organization's performances, exhibitions, programs, and other artistic work?
2. **Feasibility of Project**
 - a) Is the project well-designed?
 - b) Does the project align with the applicant's mission?
 - c) Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to successfully plan and manage the project?
 - d) Has the applicant defined enough project details to ensure success in reaching the project goals?
 - e) Is the project feasible within the time frame and budget?
 - f) Does the applicant describe how they intend to evaluate the impact of project activities on the community?
3. **Community Engagement** *(An organization's ability to meaningfully engage with its community to achieve its mission)*
 - a) Does the project contribute to the quality of life and cultural vitality of Fairfax County?
 - b) Does the applicant use knowledge of the community, including data and demographics, to drive and inform their project?
 - c) Do the applicant's community relationships and partnerships strengthen the applicant's ability to carry out the project?
 - d) With respect to planning and programming, does the applicant demonstrate understanding and respect for all people represented by its community? Has the applicant outlined measures to create access for underserved populations?
 - e) Does the applicant involve community members, volunteers, and artists in planning and evaluation?

- f) Regarding promotion and engagement, does the applicant describe steps to increase participation by culturally diverse** communities and underserved† groups?

*** **Diversity** includes all the ways people differ including age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status, or neighborhood of residence and other characteristics.*

*† **Underserved** refers to populations who face barriers in accessing the arts, and includes populations underserved because of geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, underserved racial or ethnic populations, and populations underserved because of special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status, or age).*

4. Category Specific

- a) For the **Arts in Education** category, consider:
- Are the project's artistic and educational goals clear and appropriate for the grade level(s), community served, and/or state standards of learning?
- b) For the **Opportunity** category, consider:
- Does the project respond to an atypical or out of the ordinary opportunity that otherwise would be out of reach?
- c) For the **Partnerships with Individual Artists** category, consider:
- How does the partnership between the organization and artist/artist team support the project goals?
 - Does the project engage quality artistic resources?
 - Does the project prioritize Fairfax artists, artist cooperatives, non-501(c)(3) arts groups?
- d) For the **Arts Access** category, consider:
- Is the target community under-resourced or underserved by the arts?
 - If the applicant is outside the community served, is there at least one community-based partner?

5. Budget Feasibility

- Is the budget appropriate to complete the project activities?
- Is the budget reasonable, clear, and complete? Are the figures accurate?
- Is the budget appropriate for the scale of the project and the size and characteristics of the intended audience?
- Is there a diversity of funding sources?

Priority Elements:

6. **Diversity** (*Diversity includes all the ways people differ, including age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status or neighborhood of residence and other characteristics.*)
- Does the project support the diverse cultural arts of Fairfax's communities?
 - Has the applicant engaged a diverse team of arts professionals and artists to complete the project?

- c) Does the project promote awareness, appreciation, and connectedness to diverse and/or underserved or under-represented cultures in Fairfax?
- d) Does the applicant describe how its activities and programs authentically represent the arts and culture of one or more culturally specific populations?
- e) Do the project activities demonstrate artistic and/or cultural value for the underserved or under-represented community being served if the project is targeted to meeting a specific community's needs?

7. Creative Placemaking *(Integrate arts and culture to improve a public space, create a sense of place, and make it more of a destination and shared gathering place.)*

- a) Does the project build on the distinctiveness of a place using arts or cultural assets?
- b) Does the project demonstrate the potential to stimulate economic or community growth through the arts?
- c) Will the project deploy art or artists to address a community planning or development challenge or opportunity?

8. Innovation *(Utilize nontraditional or inventive approaches to art forms to engage audiences in unique ways.)*

- a) Does the project demonstrate innovation in addressing the needs of the community?
- b) Will the project inspire the community to think creatively or differently by demonstrating new ways of thinking about complex issues?

Terms and Conditions of the Grant

Grant recipients must agree to comply with the following terms and conditions of the Project Support Grant.

Grant Period

All grant activities shall take place within the grant period (July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027). If needed, an organization may request a two-year grant period in their application. The request should explain the reasons that necessitate a two-year grant period.

Organizational Eligibility

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

Grant recipients must keep their tax-exempt status as a recognized Section 501(c)(3) and Section 509(a) organization current throughout the grant period and must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations that govern the use of funds from private foundations to the Grantee organization. This includes but is not limited to the prohibition against activities described in Section 4945(d) of the IRS Code and limiting the use of the grant funds to the appropriate taxable purposes as described in IRS Code section 170(c)(2)(b).

Grant Amount

Project Support Grants range from \$1,000 to \$25,000. Based on available funds and panel scores, applicants may be granted an amount less than requested. ArtsFairfax will review and confirm budget implications if necessary.

Addendum

If an applicant experiences substantive changes in the organization's programming, staffing, and funding after the application has been submitted but at least one week 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.

Use of Funds

The Grantee will use the funds solely for the purposes approved by ArtsFairfax as described in the Project Support Grant Guidelines. Grant funds may not be used for fundraising activities, such as capital campaigns or endowment campaigns, construction or renovation projects, political advocacy costs, activities not open to the general public*, debt retirement, pre-grant costs, re-granting, faith-based activities, proselytizing, promoting any one faith over another, or events that would be inappropriate for a diverse, multicultural or multigenerational audience. All revenues generated with project funds during the grant period must be reported as program income and all listed expenses must be incurred during the grant period.

** Arts Education projects taking place in schools are considered **Open to the General Public**.*

Required Acknowledgement of ArtsFairfax Funding

ArtsFairfax Grantees are required to acknowledge funding throughout the grant period or term of the funded project. 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:

1. Credit ArtsFairfax as a donor on your website and all printed materials through the use of the ArtsFairfax logo and the statement, “[Organization Name] is funded in part by ArtsFairfax.”
2. Follow the [Funding Acknowledgment](#) instructions in the Grant Communications Kit and send samples of materials that are distributed to the public to ArtsFairfax.
3. Acknowledge ArtsFairfax funding on at least one social media platform—tag @artsfairfax on their social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram) and follow ArtsFairfax and use #ArtsFairfax. Refer to the [Funding Acknowledgement](#) for sample posts and usable artwork.

Required Arts Directory Profile and Event Calendar Listings

Grantees are required to create an Arts Directory profile on the [ArtsFairfax website](#). Grantees are required to list their programs and events on the Events Calendar throughout the grant period.

Announcement of Award

ArtsFairfax will not release information about the status of an application until all applications have been reviewed and all award decision-making has concluded. For the current grant year (FY27), ArtsFairfax will notify applicants of final decisions in October 2026.

Payment and Reporting Procedures

All grant recipients will receive 70 percent of the award amount at the time of the grant announcement.

New in FY27, all Project Support grantees will be required to complete a short interim report during the grant period. Upon award notification, ArtsFairfax staff will include a timeline and instructions for submission of the interim report.‡

All grantees are required to submit a final report at the end of the grant period. Upon approval of the final report, ArtsFairfax will disburse the remaining 30 percent of the award amount to the grant recipient. Grantees must submit their reports via Submittable and 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.

‡Grantees requesting a two-year project timeline will submit both an interim report as well as a report after the first year of the grant is complete.

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, organization 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 attend funded programs.

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; and/or
- 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 an appeal must be received by ArtsFairfax within 30 calendar days of the date of the applicant's notification letter from ArtsFairfax describing the funding decision 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.

All appeal requests will be reviewed by the Grants Committee of ArtsFairfax's Board of Directors. Appeals will be reviewed within 60 calendar days from the date the written appeal request was received by ArtsFairfax. If the Grants Committee determines that there exist grounds for an appeal, the Grant Committee will re-evaluate the application. All decisions of the Grant Committee with regard to any re-evaluation will be final. If the Grants Committee determines that there are no grounds for an appeal, then the original decision of the grant panel shall become final without further recourse or reconsideration. All decisions of the Grants Committee with regard to appeal requests are final without further recourse or reconsideration.

Submitting Your Application

All Project Support Grant applications must be submitted via the online application system no later than **Wednesday, July 15, 2026 at 7:00 PM ET**. Late applications will not be accepted. Hard copies of materials will not be accepted.

Uploads

Required Documents

1. Organization Profile for Grant Applicants (PDF)
2. IRS Letter of Determination for your organization and/or your parent organization
3. VA Form 102 (or VA Form 100)
4. List of current board members that includes profession, work address, and place of residence for each member. Please highlight members who work or live in Fairfax County
5. Treasurer's Report or Audit for the most recently completed fiscal year; an audit is required if the applicant's income exceeds \$1,000,000 for the two previous consecutive fiscal years.
6. Most recent IRS Form 990 submission (do not include schedules)
7. Brief biographies (one paragraph each) of key project staff including Board members, organization staff, and consultants involved with the project.
8. Work Samples and Supplemental Materials

Work Samples:

Applicants are required to submit 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.

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

- Samples may be excerpts or complete works.
- Work produced in the last two years is preferable.
- Samples may be uploaded to this application or hosted publicly online. **Please ensure links are live and samples can be viewed without an email, account, or subscription.**
- Panelists will view a combined maximum of 5 total minutes of recordings/videos per application. Specify start and end times for listening or viewing.

Supplemental Materials:

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

- Supplemental Materials may include but are not limited to programs, brochures, catalogs, posters, newsletters, other promotional materials, press reviews or articles,

testimonials, letters of support, or awards. Video/Audio recordings are acceptable but should not be additional work samples.

- Samples should support and illustrate how your programs and services engage diverse County residents, organizational effectiveness in terms of planning and evaluation, and critical response to performances/exhibitions/activities.
- Panelists will review a combined maximum of 5 total minutes of recordings/videos. Specify start and end times for listening or viewing.

Grant Preparation Assistance

ArtsFairfax will conduct a free information session to instruct prospective applicants on how to complete a Project Support Grant application on **May 28, 2026 at 12:00 PM** via Zoom. To register, visit the ArtsFairfax [Project Support Grants website](#). ArtsFairfax strongly encourages attendance/viewing by all potential applicants. An applicant's attendance at the session will not impact the evaluation of the application.

The Project Support Grant information session recordings, including presentation materials, will be posted on the ArtsFairfax website. **If you have questions, please contact Nicole Powlison, Grants Manager by email at npowlison@artsfairfax.org or by telephone at 571-395-4618.**

Grant Writing Tips

- Write clearly and concisely. Keep responses within the suggested word count limits.
- 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. Clarify goals by including specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound details.
- 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 in the Project Budget Table.
- Use the resources on the ArtsFairfax website, including the Word version of the application, Excel versions of the tables, and sample responses from previous applications.
- Save your application often. Log out of your Submittable account when you're not actively working on the application.