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# 2026 Community Arts Grant Guidelines (Tiers I, II, III)

**Grant applications will be accepted between April 1 - April 30, 2025.**

Be sure to sign up for Arts Council of Anne Arundel County emails at <https://www.acaac.org/> to stay abreast of any program changes.

## About the Arts Council of Anne Arundel County

### Our Mission

*Our mission is to provide leadership, funding, and support that promotes artistic expression and historic preservation and to advocate for resources and education that expand arts opportunities for all, helping to create an enriched and healthy community.*

### Our Vision

*We envision Anne Arundel County as a place where artists are inspired and creativity thrives, where arts and culture bring people of all backgrounds together to enrich, bind, and celebrate our community.*

### Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

*The Arts Council of Anne Arundel County is committed to advancing and modeling equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in all of our programs and services and those of our grantees. We are dedicated to embracing equity and non-discrimination regardless of race, religious creed, color, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, class, language, and/or ability.*

## About this Grant Opportunity

The Community Arts Grant (CAG) is our keystone funding program that provides general operating support to nonprofit arts organizations that provide programming to the residents of Anne Arundel County. In an effort to promote equity among organizations of different sizes, the CAG application is divided into three tiers:

- CAG Tier I: for organizations with an annual operating budget of up to \$100,000
- CAG Tier II: for organizations with an annual operating budget of between \$100,000 - \$750,000
- CAG Tier III: for organizations with an annual operating budget of more than \$750,000

The key objectives of the Community Arts Grant program are to:

- Foster excellence, diversity, and vitality in arts offerings for all Anne Arundel County residents, regardless of age, geographic location, race, ethnicity, country of origin, or other characteristic;
- Broaden opportunities for Anne Arundel County audiences, artists, and arts organizations;
- Increase the availability of arts activities and programs for all local residents; and
- Promote county wide awareness of arts resources and opportunities.

Through the application process ACAAC seeks information about each applicant organization's demographics, goals, and outreach. The answers to the questions are taken into consideration during the evaluation process. Funding for these grants is provided by the Maryland State Arts Council, from a portion of the tax receipts generated through the State and City of Annapolis hotel taxes, and through private donations. Funding limitations do not generally allow for full funding of all approved applications. For more information on this and other Arts Council opportunities, please contact ACAAC Grants Manager Ashley Matthews@acaac.org.

### Timeline

1. Grant application cycle opens April 1, 2025 for all tiers.
2. Grant application period closes April 30, 2025 at midnight. Applications must be completed online through the ACAAC's Submittable Page, available at <https://artscouncilofannearundelcountynew.submittable.com/submit>
3. Arts Council award letters will be sent to recipients on or before July 15, 2025.
4. Contracts will be sent to recipient organizations and signed through DocuSign.
5. The first grant payment of 50% will be made by ACH transfer on or before October 15, 2025.
6. Interim reports are due by February 28, 2026.
7. Contingent upon receipt and acceptance of the interim report, the payment of the balance of the award (50%) will be made by ACH transfer on or before March 15, 2026.
8. Final reports are due by August 31, 2026.

### Eligibility

In order to be eligible, all organizations must:

1. Produce or present the arts through public programming in Anne Arundel County.
2. Be incorporated in Anne Arundel County as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit or have significant physical presence in Anne Arundel County.
3. Have operated as an arts organization or arts program for one full fiscal year and be able to submit a financial statement for their most recently completed fiscal year.
4. Establish that the majority of the arts activities it produces and/or presents take place in Anne Arundel County and that most annual expenditures of the organization and its art programming are devoted to activities that occur within the county.
5. Be governed by a legally-liable board of directors acting under a mission statement and budget specific to the organization.
6. Be able to document current Good Standing Status with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation at the time of application and throughout the grant period.
7. Public, private, and charter K-12 schools, and pre-schools are not eligible to apply. Schools should refer to the Arts in Education Grants for funding opportunities.
8. If, at any time, it is determined that eligibility requirements are not being met, funding may be withheld or terminated.

Two types of grants are available through the Community Arts Grant program:

- Founding Grants are available to eligible organizations that have not previously received funding from the Arts Council, and are capped at \$2,500.
- General operating grant funding is available to organizations that received a previous ACAAC CAG grant, and demonstrated good fiscal stewardship of those monies.

### Preparing Your Application

Applications are now tiered based on organizational budget. Applicants must complete an Eligibility Form which will determine their organization's tier. The application is available on ACAAC's Submittable page, which is located online at <https://artscouncilofannearundelcountynew.submittable.com/submit>. The applications, and if funded, interim and final reports must be submitted through this grant management system. If you have not previously used Submittable, you will need to set up an account and password. When creating an organizational

account, we **highly recommend** that you tie it to an organizational email such as 'info@yourartsorganization.org' rather than a personal email address.

Be sure to read through the questions before starting, and allow yourself plenty of time to gather the data and supporting documentation you will need. The application is structured to provide a framework in which to tell your story, and give our reviewers a clear and cohesive picture of your organization's operations, programming, and governance.

Best practices for successfully completing your grant include:

- Assign an individual responsible for managing the grant as your primary contact for this application. This is not necessarily your Executive Director, but rather the individual ACAAC will be communicating with for the duration of your grant's performance period.
- Before you begin, review the rubric at the end of this document to ensure you have a clear understanding of how scoring priorities within will impact evaluation of your grant.
- If others from your organization will also be working on the application, utilize the Submittable "Invite Collaborators" function. The tab is located at the top of the application, below the banner heading. Up to three additional individuals can assist with the application.
- Be clear, specific, and thorough in your responses, and whenever possible, provide detailed evidence to support your request.
- Reach out to Ashley Matthews at [ashley.matthews@acaac.org](mailto:ashley.matthews@acaac.org) for assistance at any time during the application period.

**Grant funds may not be used for** regranting; activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization's members; travel outside Anne Arundel County to present or produce arts; arts programming that occurs outside of Anne Arundel County, projects chiefly for classroom use or in school activities; or scholarships awarded by the applicant organization for its own activities. Grant funds may not be used to make contributions to any persons who hold, or are candidates for, elected office; to any political party, organization, or action committee; or in connection with any political campaign or referendum. Grant funds may not be used for any lobbying activities.

### General Guidelines

All applicants:

1. Must comply with Title VI, Section 601, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that no persons, on the grounds of race color, or national origin, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination related to, the arts.
2. Must comply with Title IV, Section 1681, of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 Section 6101, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex or age.
3. Must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991.
4. Must prohibit discrimination on the basis of: (a) political or religious opinion or affiliation, material status, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, or national origin: of (b) gender expression, sex, or age, except when age or sex constitute a bona fide occupational qualification; or (c) the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability.
5. Must meet the Maryland State Arts Council's standards for accessibility. Those standards can be [here](#).
6. Must comply with MD Solicitations Act §6-402 (b)(7) | A charitable organization must file an audited financial statement prepared by an independent CPA if the gross income from charitable contributions is at least \$750,000. For organizations with gross annual contributions between \$300,000-\$750,000 financial statements must be reviewed or audited by an independent CPA.
7. Must give credit to Anne Arundel County and the Arts Council of Anne Arundel County whenever and wherever credit is given. More detailed information about funding attribution requirements is available on our website at <https://www.acaac.org/grants/logo-recognition/>.

8. Must notify Grants Manager Ashley Matthews in writing if there is a significant change made to the organization's economic circumstances during the grant period.

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

To ensure that all Arts Council of Anne Arundel County review panels are free from conflicts of interest and the appearance of such conflicts, panelists are required to disclose any current or prospective affiliations they or their immediate family members have with an actual or potential applicant. 'Affiliations' applies to employment, board memberships, independent contractual relationships, substantial contributor relationships, or other relationships. In addition, panelists are required to disclose any past or current adversarial relationships with actual or potential applicants. Panel members, as well as board members, are not permitted to participate in discussions or votes relating to any applicant with whom they have an affiliation.

### **Review Process and Notification**

1. Applicants will receive an email confirmation after their application has been received. If the application deadline has passed, applicants will not be notified if the application is incomplete or does not comply with the guidelines.
2. The grants review panel will review all qualified, complete applications prior to the date indicated in the timeline. Each proposal will be reviewed individually by all members of the review panel and will be evaluated on its overall impact to the organization as well as how the increased organizational capacity will benefit the community.
3. The grants review panel will present its recommendations for funding to the ACAAC Board of Directors for final approval. All applicants will be advised electronically of the status of their application. Successful grantees will also be informed of the anticipated date of receipt of grant funds that have been awarded. Each proposal will be reviewed individually by all members of the review panel and scored using the rubric which appears on the last page of this document.

### **Reporting Requirements**

If awarded a Community Arts Grant, the recipient must file an interim report by February 28, 2026 and a final report by August 31, 2026. All reporting will be online through Submittable. Failure to submit reports may jeopardize current and/or future ACAAC grants and may result in repayment of grant funds. All reporting must meet professional standards, reflect the goals and programming of the organization and be free of personal opinion and commentary.

### **Appeals Process**

ACAAC makes every effort to ensure fair and equitable distribution of grant monies based on stated criteria. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the denial of an award or with the amount of an award is not sufficient reason for an appeal. However, a grant request may be reconsidered if a procedural impropriety or error has affected its review.

Based on the above, if an applicant believes there is legitimate reason for an appeal, the following steps must be taken:

1. The applicant must discuss the problem with the Grant Manager who handled the application.
2. To pursue an appeal, the applicant must write a letter to the April Nyman, ACAAC President & CEO within 15 days following receipt of the grant award or denial letter requesting a reconsideration of the Arts Council's decision and stating the grounds for the request.
3. The applicant will receive written notification on the determination of the appeal within 30 days of the receipt of the written request for reconsideration.

## 2026 Community Arts Grant Scoring Rubric

**Each bullet is scored from 0-4 points:**

- 0=Does not satisfactorily meet criteria
- 2=Partially meets criteria, or some work has been done but does not yet fully meet criteria
- 4=Fully meets criteria

### **Criteria 1: Organization Information [20 pts]**

- Has adequate staff and volunteers to support programming
- Utilizes a strategic plan and/or establishes goals to guide operations and programming
- Has a succession plan in place and/or has goals regarding succession planning
- Has articulated key goals for the year
- Organization fills an identified need within Anne Arundel County

### **Criteria 2: Programming Information [20 pts]**

- Artistic merit of programming
- Demonstrates organizational capacity to deliver programming
- Demonstrates creativity, risk-taking, and innovation in programming
- Ensures accessibility of programming
- Measures programmatic impact and success

### **Criteria 3: Outreach and Community Impact [20 pts]**

- Conducts the majority of programming in Anne Arundel County
- Uses effective methods of marketing to reach and expand target audience
- Adequately measures annual audience
- Reaches a demographically diverse audience
- Demonstrates successful partnerships with other organizations

### **Criteria 4: Request/Financial Information (weighted at 50%) [20 pts]**

- Is a Founding Grant OR has successfully managed a previous ACAAC CAG grant award
- Amount of request is reasonable and will make a significant contribution toward operating budget
- Budget clearly demonstrates financial need for ACAAC grant
- Income is adequate to support programming
- Expenses are reasonable and appropriate
- Leverages resources from multiple sources, including in-kind donations
- Has Board of Directors and organizational leadership as well as effective policies in place to monitor and approve finances
- Spends reasonable percentage of budget on admin/fundraising, OR has plan in place to reduce overhead costs
- Tax return and other financials demonstrate good fiscal stewardship
- Is in Good Standing with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation