



FY2027 Community Arts Grant Guidelines

**Grant applications will be accepted between March 15 - April 15, 2026
for the project period of FY2027 (July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027).**

First time applicants are required to contact ACAAC Grants Manager before applying.

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INTRODUCTION

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. 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 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 Anne Arundel County and the 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 Ashley Matthews, ACAAC Grants Manager, at ashley.matthews@acaac.org.

TIMELINE

This grant support period runs from July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027, under the following timeline:

1. Grant application cycle opens March 15, 2026, for all tiers.
2. Grant application closes April 15, 2026 at **11:00 p.m.** Applications must be completed online through the ACAAC's Submittable Page: <https://artscouncilofannearundelcountynew.submittable.com/submit>
3. Arts Council award notifications will be emailed via Submittable to recipients on or before July 17, 2026.
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, 2026.
6. Interim reports are due by February 28, 2027.
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, 2027.
8. Final reports are due by August 31, 2027.

ELIGIBILITY

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 actively 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. Must offer arts programming as their exclusive or as a primary focus. The Community Arts Grant accepts a limited number of organizations that are not exclusively arts organizations. For organizations that are not exclusively arts organizations, arts programming must be a primary focus of the organization. Historic preservation nonprofits are eligible if their programming strongly focuses on art-related activities (such as on-site galleries and live performances). New applicants should consult with Ashley Matthews, Grants Manager, (ashley.matthews@acaac.org) prior to submission to confirm their organization's eligibility.
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. Must prohibit discrimination based on: (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.
8. 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.
9. 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.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF GRANT

Required Acknowledgement of ACAAC Funding

Grant recipients must display ACAAC's logo on the organization's website as a donor and 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/>.

Organizational Eligibility

Grant recipients must continue to meet all eligibility requirements during the grant period and are required to notify Grants Manager, Ashley Matthews, in writing of any major financial changes during the grant period. If, at any time, it is determined that eligibility requirements are not being met during the grant year, funding may be withheld or terminated.

Use of Funds

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.

Reporting Requirements

If awarded a Community Arts Grant, the recipient must file an interim report by February 28, 2027, and a final report by August 31, 2028. 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.

FUNDING ALLOCATIONS

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

- Founding Grants are available to eligible organizations that have not been past recipients of the Community Arts Grant program and are capped at \$2,500. **New applicants are required to consult with Ashley Matthews, Grants Manager, (ashley.matthews@acaac.org) prior to submission.**
- A general operating grant is available to organizations that have received a previous ACAAC Community Arts Grant and demonstrated sound fiscal stewardship of those monies. These applications are tiered based on the allowable income within an organization’s budget. The maximum request for each organization is guided by the following table:

FUNDING REQUEST CAPS BASED ON ALLOWABLE INCOME & EXPENSE	
TIERS	MAXIMUM REQUEST AMOUNT
TIER I (< \$100,000)	
> \$24,999	Maximum 30% request
\$25,000 - \$49,999	Maximum 20% request
\$50,000 - \$74,999	Maximum 17% request
\$75,000 - \$99,999	Maximum 15% request
TIER II (\$100,00 - \$749,999)	
\$100,000 - \$249,999	Maximum 8% request
\$250,000 - \$499,999	Maximum 7% request
\$500,000 - \$749,999	Maximum 5% request
TIER III (> \$750,000)	
\$750,000 - \$999,999	Maximum 3.5% request
\$1,000,000 - \$1,999,999	Maximum 3% request
Over \$2,000,000	Maximum 1% request

Preliminary awards are calculated by applying an organization’s rubric score by the maximum request amount. **Because our total budget and the number of applicants vary each year, final awards may be adjusted proportionally to fit available funding.**

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

To simplify your application, the financial information requested within the Community Arts Grant application is modeled after the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) FY 2027 GFO format. If you have already applied to MSAC, you will find this format very similar. Please note one key difference: our financial table should **only reflect income and expenses for programming within Anne Arundel County**. For any line items involving activities outside the county, pro-rate the income and expenses to reflect only the actual amounts for Anne Arundel County.

To help organizations prepare for the actual financial table in the grant application, this [financial template](#) is provided. However, the actual financial data will need to be entered in the Submittable grant portal.

When completing the financial table, please note:

- Virtual programs are eligible unless it was exclusively marketed to an audience outside of Anne Arundel County.
- Our financial section is requesting your organization's financials for your organization's last fully completed fiscal year (FY25/CY25).
- Allowable expenses and income include but are not limited to: artist fees, salaries, technical fees, marketing, exhibition materials, theater sets, musical scores, rentals on space and objects necessary to production and administration, educational fees, supplies for classes and productions and other costs to maintain an arts organizations or arts program. Revenues may include but are not limited to ticket sales, tuition, donations, foundation support, corporate support, public support, gift shop sales, fundraisers, income released from restriction, etc. Arts Programs should include direct costs of the arts program as well as indirect administrative expenses that are prorated, up to 15% of the arts program's total expenses. Any indirect costs beyond 15% would be considered non-allowable.
- Non-allowable Income or Expenses are those deemed by ACAAC to be non-permissible in figuring total operating expenses and operating income when calculating a grant amount. Non-allowable as operating expenses include but are not limited to: **programming income and expenses related to offerings outside of Anne Arundel County**, re-granting, accessions, acquisition of capital assets, allocations to cash reserves, capital improvements, depreciation, deficits, loan principal payments, contributions to endowments or scholarships awarded by the applicant organization for its own activities. Non-allowable as operating income include but are not limited to are loans, carryover, debt forgiveness, support from the parent organization (see note)*, transfer of funds earned in prior years, revenue raised for capital or endowment funds or funds intended for the purpose of re-granting, unrealized gains/losses; prorated salaries, rent, or utilities, temporarily restricted income; or other prorated expenses. Other items may be deemed non-allowable. These items may be included in your financial statement or budgets but will not be used to determine your "total allowable income" when filling out the financial table.
- *Note regarding parent support - Support from a parent organization to an Arts Organization or Arts Program means income derived from or given by an organization or entity that (1) legally owns and/or operates the Arts Organization or Arts Program, (2) manages, administers, or otherwise controls the Arts Organization or Arts Program, or (3) otherwise houses or contains the Arts Organization or Arts Program within its organization. This may include income from college/university sources to support an Arts Program, larger institutional support of a local branch or chapter organization, pass through of funds from one entity to another to support a shared mission, and other specific scenarios where income may be coming from other non-allowable sources to support an arts organization or arts program from another entity.

- Please note other special Non-Allowable Income scenarios:
 - Any income associated with MSAC's Arts Relief Funding - General Operating Support (Round 1 and 2) and Special Request program, or income provided through the Preservation of Cultural Arts (POCA) Fund, is considered non-allowable income and should be noted as such in financials for any GFO applications or reports.
 - State budget line items and appropriations that are accepted by an applicant organization and support general operations or arts programming - whether the line items are enacted through statute or budget language - are considered non-allowable income and should be noted as such.
 - All applicants are required to submit a current signed W-9 Form upon application submission. The address on the W-9 Form must match the address of the applicant information entered in Submittable. If awarded, grant funds will be made payable to the person/entity and address indicated on the W9.
 - If your organization is identified as having experienced over a 50% change in income from the previous fiscal year, the total allowable income will be adjusted to account for that change.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The application will be 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 Submittable, our 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.

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.

Grant Writing Tips

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 for assistance at any time during the application 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

- Applicants will receive an email confirmation after their application has been received. If the application deadline has passed, the Submittable application portal will close, and late applications will not be considered.
- The grants review panel will review all qualified, complete applications submitted prior to the deadline on April 15, 2026, at **11:00 p.m.** Each proposal will be reviewed individually by members of the review panel and will be evaluated based on the scoring rubric located in the next section.
- 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 on or before July 17, 2026.

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 Ashley Matthews, Grants Manager, who handles 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.

**2027 Community Arts Grant Rubric
for
Tier I organizations (Allowable Income under \$99,000)**

Recognizing that many Tier I organizations are volunteer-led or operate with limited staff, we have shortened the Community Arts Grant application for Tier I organizations to make it easier to apply.

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

Organizational Effectiveness [12 pts]

- Does the organization have a clearly defined mission statement?
- Does the organization have the capacity to successfully deliver programming?
- Does the organization have clear and realistic goals for the next fiscal year?

Programming Information [16 pts]

- Does the performance of the organization demonstrate a significant contribution to the arts in Anne Arundel County?
- Has the organization's programming been well-received by the community? If not, does the organization have plans to adjust its programming? (Note: We realize that all organizations have growing pains and that programs take time to get established.)
- Does the applicant ensure that programs, services, and facilities are accessible to the community?
- Does the organization measure its annual audience effectively?

Outreach and Community Impact [12 pts]

- Does the organization use effective methods of marketing to reach and expand the target audience?
- Does the organization demonstrate successful partnerships with other community organizations?
- Does the organization effectively measure programmatic impact and success?

Financial Information [16 pts]

- Has the organization successfully managed a previous ACAAC CAG grant award or is a Founding Grant?
- Do the financial documents demonstrate sound fiscal stewardship?
- Does the organization spend a reasonable percentage of its budget on administrative/fundraising activities OR has a plan in place to reduce overhead costs?
- Does the organization demonstrate the financial capacity necessary to sustain operations and effectively address financial challenges? Knowing it is a challenging climate for nonprofits, if applicable, does the organization have a plan for addressing any deficits or other financial challenges?

2027 Community Arts Grant Rubric
for
Tier II organizations (Allowable Income between \$100,000 - \$749,999) and
Tier III organizations (Allowable Income above \$750,000)

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

Organizational Effectiveness [20 pts]

- Does the organization have a clearly defined mission statement?
- Does the organization have the capacity to successfully deliver programming?
- Does the organization have clear and realistic goals for the next fiscal year?
- Does the organization demonstrate evidence of long-term planning or uses a strategic plan?
- Does the organization have a succession plan in place or is it developing protocol to facilitate leadership changes?

Programming Information [20 pts]

- Does the performance of the organization demonstrate a significant contribution to the arts in Anne Arundel County?
- Has the organization's programming been well-received by the community? If not, does the organization have plans to adjust its programming? (Note: We realize that all organizations have growing pains and that programs take time to get established.)
- Does the organization demonstrate growth in its creativity and approach to programming?
- Does the applicant ensure that programs, services, and facilities are accessible to the community?
- Does the organization measure its annual audience effectively?

Outreach and Community Impact [20 pts]

- Does the organization use effective methods of marketing to reach and expand the target audience?
- Does the organization demonstrate successful partnerships with other community organizations?
- Does the organization conduct outreach to expand community engagement and access to the arts, especially to underserved populations?
- Does the organization effectively measure programmatic impact and success?
- Does the organization utilize community feedback in its programmatic planning?

Financial Information [20 pts]

- Has the organization successfully managed a previous ACAAC CAG grant award or is a Founding Grant?
- Do the financial documents demonstrate sound fiscal stewardship?
- Does the organizational budget reflect a variety of funding sources?
- Does the organization spend a reasonable percentage of its budget on administrative/fundraising activities OR has a plan in place to reduce overhead costs?
- Does the organization demonstrate the financial capacity necessary to sustain operations and effectively address financial challenges? Knowing it is a challenging climate for nonprofits, if applicable, does the organization have a plan for addressing any deficits or other financial challenges?