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## 2026 Strategic Impact Grant Guidelines

Grant applications will be accepted between Thursday, May 28, 2026 – Thursday, June 11, 2026.

### About the Arts Council of Anne Arundel County

#### Our Mission

*Our mission is to provide leadership, funding, and support that promotes artistic excellence 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 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 Arts Council of Anne Arundel County (ACAAC) has allocated \$100,000 to provide funding for a Strategic Impact Grant (SIG). This funding opportunity is designed to fund capacity-building projects that result in substantive, organizational transformation, taking the organization's operations or performance to the next level.
- A limited number of grants will be awarded and will range from **\$5,000 - \$50,000**. No matching funds are required.
- This grant is focused on capacity-building. Examples of potentially fundable requests could include, but are not limited to, capital projects, collection acquisitions, software investment, or other capacity-building expenses.
- **Grant funds may not be used for** funding staff positions; lobbying activities; regranteeing; activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization's members; contributions to an organization's capital campaign or previously announced fundraising efforts; travel outside Anne Arundel County to present or produce arts; projects chiefly for classroom use or in school activities; scholarships awarded by the applicant organization for its own activities; 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.

- Organizations may partner and submit a joint application if both organizations are FY26 Community Art grantees.
- **What would help your organization make a bigger impact?** If you would like to discuss application ideas prior to applying for the grant, please reach out to ACAAC Grants Manager Ashley Matthews at [ashley.matthews@acaac.org](mailto:ashley.matthews@acaac.org).

## Eligibility

To be eligible, applicant organizations must meet the following criteria:

- Must be a FY26 ACAAC Community Arts Grant recipient.
- **To ensure a wide number of grantees benefit from the Strategic Impact grant, past recipients of the 2023, 2024, & 2025 Strategic Impact Grant awards are not eligible to apply. Exceptions will be considered under time-sensitive and compelling circumstances. To request a waiver or for further questions, contact Ashley Matthews, Grants Manager, at [ashley.matthews@acaac.org](mailto:ashley.matthews@acaac.org).**
- Must be an Anne Arundel County-based 501c3 nonprofit that produces the majority of their arts programming within the county.
- Be governed by a legally liable board of directors acting under a mission statement and budget specific to the organization.
- Be able to document current Good Standing Status with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation at the time of application.
- 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.
- 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 based on sex or age.
- Must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991.
- 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.

## Timeline & Reporting Requirements

- Grant application cycle opens **Thursday, May 28, 2026 and closes Thursday, June 11, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.** Applications must be completed online through the ACAAC's Submittable Page, available at <https://artscouncilofannearundelcountynew.submittable.com/submit>
- Arts Council award letters will be sent to recipients on or before June 29, 2026.
- The grant award payment will be made by ACH transfer on or before June 30, 2026.
- Interim reports are due by February 15, 2027.
- Final reports are due by August 15, 2027. Failure to submit reports may jeopardize current and/or future ACAAC grants and may result in repayment of grant funds.

### Application Questions:

- Provide an overview of the specific initiative, project, or operational need this funding will support. (500 character limit)
- Provide a detailed description of the specific initiative, project, or operational need this funding will support. (3,000 character limit)
- How did your organization determine this need? (2,000 character limit)
- Provide an implementation plan that outlines the project management and an operational timeline. (3,000 character limit)
- Explain how this grant will transform your operations or programming in the short term (in the next 1-2 years)? (2,500 character limit)
- What do you anticipate will be the long-term impact (in the next 3-5 years) of this grant on your organization? (2,500 character limit)
- How will the increased capacity of your organization impact the greater community? (2,500 character limit)
- How will this transformation support the mission of your organization? (2,250 character limit)
- If it is a collaborative grant: How will your organizations work together towards this shared goal? (2,250 character limit)
- Provide a detailed explanation of your evaluation methodology for assessing organizational transformation. As part of your response, explicitly list up to five key metrics along with the desired benchmarks you will use to measure the project's success. (3,000 character limit)
- How will your organization sustain and ensure the future success of this project beyond the grant period? (1,500 character limit)
- Describe your organization's financial need for this project. Please include the current balances of any cash reserves or endowments and explain whether (and to what extent) these funds are being allocated to this project. (1,500 character limit)
- Amount Requested
- How was the request amount determined? (1,000 character limit)
- Amount of FY26 or CY26 Budget

### Attachments/Uploads

- Project Budget
- FY26 or CY26 Operating Budget (current budget)
- List of Organizational Leadership and Board of Directors, including contact information and terms for board members
- Two letters of support for the project, including any partners outlined in the application narrative
- Applicants may include up to three additional uploads to further demonstrate the organizational need and/or the community impact of this project

### Review Criteria (23 possible points)

- The project implementation plan and timeline are well-structured and achievable. (2 points)
- The project demonstrates significant transformation potential for the organization. (5 points)
- The project demonstrates significant positive impact for the greater community. (5 points)
- The proposed project supports the mission and goals of the organization. (2 points)
- The evaluation plan demonstrates the ability to track the success of the project. (2 points)
- There is a strong sustainability plan that ensures the future success of the project. (5 points)
- Financial need has been clearly established to be able to execute the project. (2 points)

### **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 on 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.

### **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 a legitimate reason for an appeal, the following steps must be taken:

1. The applicant must discuss the problem with Ashley Matthews, Grant Manager.
2. To pursue an appeal, the applicant must write a letter to April Nyman, 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.