



GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

2026 Grant Guidelines

Deadline: May 12, 2026

The mission of the California Arts Council, a state agency, is to strengthen arts, culture, and creative expression as the tools to cultivate a better California for all.

Learn more at www.arts.ca.gov

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GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

DEADLINE: May 12, 2026, 11:59 PM
Grant Request Amount: Up to \$30,000
Grant Activity Period: October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2027

Apply at: calartscouncil.smartsimple.com

Please refer to the [California Arts Council Grants Manual](#) for all policies, procedures, and resources for applicants and grantees.

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Program Timeline

Application Opens	March 17, 2026
Application Deadline	May 12, 2026
Panel Review	Approx. June - July 2026
Funding Decision	Approx. August 2026
Funding Notification	Approx. August 2026
Grant Activity Start	October 1, 2026
Estimated Arrival of Funds	Approx. January - March 2027
Grant Activity End	September 30, 2027
Final Report Deadline	November 1, 2027

Eligibility

Organizations eligible to apply include:

1. Nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) California organizations
2. Units of municipal, county, or tribal governments
3. Fiscally sponsored organizations

Non-eligible applicants include:

1. Organizations that are registered and primarily operate as for-profit corporations/entities, even if they have a fiscal sponsor.
 - a. This includes LLCs and any for-profit entities (including charitable arms or branches).
2. Non-arts organizations that do not offer ongoing arts activities and/or services
3. Individuals (including individuals with a fiscal sponsor)
4. State agencies
5. Federal agencies
6. Elementary and secondary schools (public, private, charter)
7. School districts
8. County offices of education
9. Parent-teacher associations (PTAs)
10. Booster clubs

Eligibility Requirements

Applicant organizations and fiscal sponsors must meet the requirements below:

1. Have a principal place of business in California and a California address.
2. Have a minimum two-year history of consistent arts programming and/or services prior to the application deadline.
3. Demonstrate proof of nonprofit status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or section 23701d of the California Revenue and Taxation Code.
 - Eligible applicant organizations without 501(c)(3) status, please see the *Fiscal Sponsorship* section of the [2026 Grants Manual](#).
4. Have “active” status with the California Secretary of State (SOS) showing evidence of “good standing” at the time of application.

Eligible Request Amounts

- Applicants can request up to \$30,000 for the one-year Grant Activity Period.

Funding Restrictions

- Organizations who apply for the 2026 State-Local Partners grant are not eligible to apply for the General Operating Support grant.
- General Operating Support grantees can receive up to two consecutive years of funding, followed by a one-year break, starting with the 2025-26 funding cycle. Grantees who receive General Operating Support funding in both 2025-26 and 2026-27 will be ineligible to apply in 2027.
- **Arts service/network organizations** can only apply if they have a total revenue of **\$5,000,000 or below** (see definition of TR below).
 - Arts service/network organization defined: An organization with the primary purpose of providing practical services for artists, creators, culture bearers, and/or arts and cultural organizations (ex: professional association, coalition, etc).
- **Arts producing or presenting organizations** can only apply if they have a total revenue of **\$1,500,000 or below** (see definition of total revenue below).
 - Arts producing or presenting organization defined: An organization with the primary purpose of creating or exhibiting artistic or cultural work and/or cultivating arts learning (ex: theatre, gallery, music studio, etc).
- Total revenue defined: Total cash inflow from your organization’s most recently completed fiscal year. Cash inflow/income includes all earned income (ex: ticket sales) and contributed income (ex: grants, donations/contributions, one-time organizational funding, operational grants). **Regranting, pass-through, and restricted capital improvement funding are excluded from the organization’s total revenue calculation.**

Matching Funds

- A one-to-one match is required for organizations with a **total revenue above \$250,000**. See the Matching Requirements section of the [2026 Grants Manual](#) for clarification on eligible match sources.

Funding Priorities

Every eligible application will be adjudicated by peer review panels and receive a final rank (see [2026 Grants Manual](#)). All applications that receive final ranks of 6 through panel adjudication will be funded regardless of whether they meet any of the funding priorities. Applications receiving ranks of 4 and above through the adjudication process will then receive added weighting for meeting the following priorities:

- Organizations serving historically and systemically under-resourced communities located in the lower two quartiles of the [Healthy Places Index \(HPI\)](#), including rural and inland areas as well as regions with a history of low investment from the CAC
 - Applicants whose business address falls in the lower two quartiles of the HPI will meet the HPI priority criteria.
 - Additional 0.5 point added to the rank.
- First-time grantees who have not previously received direct CAC funding (except for organizations whose only previous CAC funding was a Cultural Pathways grant)
 - Additional 0.5 point added to the rank.
- Small organizations with total revenues of \$250,000 or below
 - Additional 1 point added to the rank.

Applications with final ranks of 6 through panel adjudication will be funded first. Allocations for final ranks below 6 will be made in order of weighted ranks as funding availability permits.

Program Overview

Background & Purpose

The California Arts Council's Strategic Framework prioritizes racial equity and broad geographic reach into communities of all sizes and needs. Recent data and community input demonstrate the need for greater access to general operations funding in support of maintaining California arts and cultural organizations during times of uncertain economic growth.

The **General Operating Support** grant program provides direct funding to arts and cultural organizations in support of ongoing operations.

Arts organizations defined: An arts and cultural organization is defined as an entity with a primary purpose of providing arts, creative, or cultural programming/services. Assessed for eligibility by CAC staff, this purpose is determined by the organization's mission, purpose statement, and/or by its summary of core organizational programs and services as described within the organizational profile in the grant portal.

Program Goals

This grant supports California's cultural vitality by helping sustain a robust and diverse arts workforce and infrastructure. General Operating grants are intended to support the applicant organization in carrying out its mission. Funds may be used to support any eligible expenses associated with the general operations of an arts or cultural organization, including but not limited to rent, utilities, and staff salaries. Funding is not required to support a specific project.

Applying for this grant does not restrict an organization from applying for CAC project-based grants (i.e. Arts and Youth, Impact Projects).

Reporting Requirements

- Provide a final report summarizing grant-funded activities and accomplishments within 30 days of the end of the Grant Activity Period (or by the stated deadline). Reporting should include:
 - Details on use of grant funds
 - Impact on grantee organization capacity and ability to achieve mission
 - If applicable, details on specific programming activities, such as number of performances, attendance, location, etc.
 - Number of constituents served, artists benefited, etc.
 - Description of engagement with diverse and under-resourced communities and promotion of racial equity
 - Evaluation of grant-related activities
 - Documentation materials such as photographs, video, or other media
 - Geography of activities, if relevant
 - NEA-specific required reporting about type of organization, activity, and project locations
- Optional possible midpoint grantee webinar to share progress and areas of challenge.
- Participate in any CAC-initiated evaluation activities related to this program, CAC programming in general or California's arts and culture ecosystem.
- **Grantees that do not collaborate with the CAC on reporting or who do not submit reports will be ineligible to apply for future funding opportunities.**
- Reports are to be completed and submitted in the grant application portal, using the CAC provided format. The Application Owner will receive an email when reports are available in the Requires Attention section of the Application Owner's account.

Grant Application Questions & Review Criteria

The full application and detailed instructions are available at calartscouncil.smartsimple.com.

Application Summary

Provide a brief summary of your proposal indicating how CAC grant funds would be used. This description will be used to introduce your proposal to the review panel. If funded, this description may be used as the Scope of Work in your grant contract and will be binding. It may also be edited by the CAC and used to summarize your proposal in public documents. Please review the [What We Do Not Fund](#) resource document before completing this section.

Criterion #1: Centering Equity and Accessibility

The application must demonstrate your organization's experience, capacity, and ongoing commitment to engaging and uplifting [historically under-resourced, excluded, and erased artists, audiences, communities](#), and cultural practices. This dedication should be reflected throughout the proposal.

The application must also demonstrate that the programs, services, information, and facilities—including [online spaces](#)—will be [accessible to individuals with disabilities](#), such as those who are [deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind](#), or who [have physical, visual, developmental, learning, or cognitive disabilities](#), as well as [mental](#) or [chronic illnesses](#).

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Describe your organization's equity and accessibility goals.
2. What does your organization do to achieve these goals?
3. How does your organization determine progress in achieving these goals?
4. Describe your organization's approach to ensuring that people with disabilities can fully participate in all programs and services.

Criterion #2: Management and Leadership

The application must demonstrate effective management practices.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Complete a two-year budget snapshot table. Provide revenue and expense amounts. Using the notes field, address any significant changes in line items from one year to the next and explain anticipated surpluses or deficits.
2. Provide the total amount of pass-through funds your organization manages. This includes grant funds passed to fiscally sponsored organizations. This total should not be included in your organizational total revenue calculation.
3. Provide the total amount of funds used for regranteeing in the field. This total should not be included in your organizational total revenue calculation.
4. Provide the total amount of restricted capital improvement funding your organization received in the last fiscal year. This total should not be included in your organizational total revenue calculation.
5. Provide numbers of each of the following:
 - a. Number of full-time staff
 - b. Number of part-time staff
 - c. Number of volunteers (providing significant administrative/operational support)
6. Provide a list of each key individual involved in administrative, artistic, or programmatic leadership positions within your organization. Include name, title, relevant experience, and role.
7. Provide a current list of board of directors, commissioners, committee, or other appropriate members of your governing body.
8. Provide a summary of your organization's current strategic plan or existing priorities and goals to strengthen organizational capacity, ensure proper leadership and staff support, implement effective governance policies, and maintain a structure that supports your work as an arts and cultural organization.
9. Complete a matching funds table, if applicable. Indicate the source type, identify the source, enter the amount, and indicate the status of matching funds (committed, pending, or projected).

Criterion #3: Arts and Cultural Engagement

The application must demonstrate how your organization is responsive to the needs and priorities of the communities it serves through delivering high quality programming, services, and culturally relevant outreach strategies to engage systemically marginalized communities.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Describe the arts and cultural programs and services your organization offers and the communities it serves.
2. Describe your organization's culturally relevant and responsive outreach strategies.
3. How do you collect input from audiences/communities you serve to inform your organizational strategy and programming?
4. Provide at least one (1) but no more than five (5) support materials that best portray your organization and its work. These may include artistic work samples, letters of support, marketing materials, and/or partnership agreements. Samples must have been created within the past three years and should be relevant to this grant opportunity.

Staff Assistance

Before contacting staff, check [FAQs](#) and [Grant Resources](#) to see if application questions can be answered. If staff assistance is still required, email is the best way to contact Arts Program Specialists. **We recommend that you contact staff well in advance of the May 12 deadline to ensure you can be accommodated.** People who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or have difficulty speaking may dial 711 to reach the California Relay Service (CRS). Large print is available upon request. Translation services may also be available upon request.

Applicants seeking staff assistance should contact:

Arielle Rubin (she/her)

Arts Program Specialist

California Arts Council

genopsgrant@arts.ca.gov