



STATE-LOCAL PARTNER MENTORSHIP

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.

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STATE-LOCAL PARTNER MENTORSHIP

DEADLINE: May 12, 2026 11:59 PM

Grant Request Amount: Up to \$50,000

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 \$50,000 per year.
- This program has a two-year Grant Activity Period.

Funding Restrictions

- Organizations that apply for the 2026 State-Local Partner Mentorship grant are not eligible to apply for the General Operating Support grant.

Matching Funds

- Matching funds are not required for this grant.

Program Overview

Background & Purpose

The **State-Local Partner Mentorship** (SLP-M) program is intended to support the establishment of a county-designated local arts agency in each of the two counties in which no such agency has currently been identified (Glenn and Kings). Grant funds will go to two existing State-Local Partners (SLP) to foster the development of new SLPs in these counties.

A local arts agency is defined as the official county-designated organization that supports arts and cultural activity in service to individuals and communities throughout an entire county. Local arts agencies provide financial support, services, and/or other programming to a variety of arts organizations, individual artists, and the community as a whole. A local arts agency can be an agency of local government, a nonprofit organization, or a hybrid of the two.

The CAC expects that an active SLP will be established in the identified county within two to three years, either as a unit of county government or an independent 501(c)(3), and that the SLP-M will mentor them through their first two years of arts programming and services, after which the mentee organization could qualify for an SLP grant independently. SLP-M grantees may reapply for second- and third-year funding through this program in order to fully implement this work.

Program Goals

Grantees will be required to accomplish the following within the Grant Activity Period:

- Convene a standing committee of community members and stakeholders to support development of new SLP structure and strategic framework.
- Model equity practices and principles in the development of new SLP mission, vision, programming, and services.
- Identify and retain a dedicated staff member to lead new SLP and provide mentorship to that individual.
- Identify and maintain an accessible public office space for the new SLP.
- Create and implement a realistic operating budget for new SLP, with appropriate portion of grant funds going directly to support new SLP.
- Supply anticipated outcomes for a one-year grant and outline any next steps anticipated to occur beyond the grant activity period to fulfill the goals of the grant program.
- All activities to be funded by the CAC must occur within the one-year Grant Activity Period (see Timeline).
- Consult/convene with CAC and other SLP-M grantees around best practices, if applicable.

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, including final project budget expenses
 - Narrative description of project activities, including description of standing committee, mentorship activities, and timeline, and extent to which activities accomplished other program goals as outlined above
 - Description of participants and partners (how many, age range, community/institution representative, from where, etc.)
 - Summary of project evaluation, including impact on new SLP staff, committee, partners and community
 - Description of engagement with diverse and under-resourced communities and promotion of racial equity
 - Documentation materials such as photographs, video, or other media
 - Geography of activities
 - 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: Organizational Capacity and Readiness

Key project personnel must demonstrate a history of experience working at their current SLP or another local arts agency in the areas of strategic planning, organizational development, and/or organizational leadership. Applicant organization must demonstrate ability to consistently achieve goals of the SLP program, including providing robust local arts programming, services, and networking; making significant impact in the community; demonstrating strong management and leadership; and demonstrating commitment to equity and accessibility both internally in organizational policy and culture, and externally via programming and community engagement.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Provide a brief biography for each key individual (artistic, technical, or administrative) involved in your organization. Include name, title, and relevant experience. (Demographic information and identity indicators are optional.)

2. Please provide a brief history of your organization and its success in consistently achieving the goals of the SLP program.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Provide the total amount of funds used for regranting in the field. This total should not be included in your organizational total revenue calculation.
6. 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.
7. 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.

Criterion #3: Program Design and Implementation

Applicant organization must propose a clear plan to support the development of a new SLP in a partnering county, including commitment of key personnel to the project, relationships with stakeholders in that county, a plan for community engagement and organizational development within the Grant Activity Period, and a budget that realistically supports the proposed plan of action.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Describe your plans for developing and mentoring a new SLP in a partnering county, including the roles of key personnel and relationships with stakeholders in that county. Indicate how your organization plans to achieve each of the following requirements within the Grant Activity Period:
 - a. Convene a standing committee of community members and stakeholders to support development of new SLP structure and strategic framework.
 - b. Model equity practices and principles in the development of new SLP mission, vision, programming, and services.
 - c. Identify and retain a dedicated staff member to lead new SLP and provide mentorship to that individual.
 - d. Identify and maintain an accessible public office space for the new SLP.
 - e. Create and implement a realistic operating budget for the new SLP, with appropriate portion of grant funds going directly to support new SLP.
 - f. By the end of the Grant Activity Period, establish an active SLP in the identified county, either as a unit of county government or an independent 501(c)(3), and mentor them through their first two years of arts programming and services.
 - g. Obtain resolution from the county board of supervisors naming the new SLP as the official partner of the CAC in that county.
2. Letter of Support (Optional): Provide a signed letter from the county administrator or board of supervisors in the county in which the new SLP will be established indicating support for the establishment of an SLP and the commitment of the county to partner in that work.
3. Complete a detailed project budget, including all expenses relevant to the stated project activities, and include rates of pay that appropriately compensate the labor of all

individuals working on the project. Provide details for each line item to be funded by this grant, including an appropriate portion of grant funds going directly to support the new SLP.

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:

Charlie O'Malley (he/him) & Natalie Peeples (she/her)

Arts Program Specialists

California Arts Council

slpmentorgrant@arts.ca.gov