STATE-LOCAL PARTNERS

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

STATE-LOCAL PARTNERS

DEADLINE: May 12, 2026 11:59 PM
Grant Request Amount: Up to $75,000
Grant Activity Period: October 1, 2026–September 30, 2028

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, 2028
Interim Report Deadline	November 1, 2027
Final Report Deadline	October 31, 2028

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.
   o 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 $75,000 per year.
- This program has a two-year Grant Activity Period.

Funding Restrictions

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

Matching Funds

- A one-to-one match is required for this grant for organizations with total revenues of $1,000,000 or more in their most recently completed fiscal year. See the Matching Requirements section of the 2026 Grants Manual for clarification on eligible match sources.

Program Overview

Background & Purpose

The **State-Local Partners** (SLP) program provides general operating support and technical assistance for county-designated local arts agencies. The purpose of the program is to foster cultural development on the local level through a partnership between the State and the counties of California. The nature of this partnership includes funding, information exchange, cooperative activities, and leadership. The partnership enables individuals, organizations, and communities to create, present, and preserve the arts of all cultures to enrich the quality of life for all Californians.

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. A local arts agency can be an agency of local government, a nonprofit organization, or a hybrid of the two.State-Local Partners serve as **Poetry Out Loud** partners and will receive financial support of $5,000 through this grant program (also included in the maximum request amount) to facilitate an annual Poetry Out Loud program throughout their county, either through direct programming or in partnership with another local organization/agency. Poetry Out Loud funds will not be based on panel ranking.

Program Administration

State-Local Partner grantees will be expected to:

- Maintain an accessible public office operated by, at minimum, one full-time equivalent (FTE) staff position. In unique situations, exceptions can be made, given that all programs and services are accessible to the public.
- Provide financial support, services, and/or other programming to a variety of arts organizations, individual artists, and the community.
- Prioritize engagement and support for arts organizations, individual artists, and community members representing historically under-resourced communities, especially those residing in the lower quartiles of the California Healthy Places Index.
- Administer a countywide Poetry Out Loud competition—engaging a minimum of two schools or community partner organizations—to determine a county champion and provide for the transportation of that champion and the champion's chaperone to the State Finals competition in Sacramento.
- Host meetings for the CAC as needed.
- Actively promote CAC grant opportunities, including providing in-person and/or online workshops and other technical assistance to applicants and grantees.
- Partner with CAC to gather data on communities served, constituent needs and values, and support the CAC's general evaluation efforts.

The CAC will:

- Elevate the work of State-Local Partners to elected officials, organizational partners, and community members.
- Engage regularly with the SLPs in cohort meetings to answer questions and give CAC updates.
- Provide trainings on how to identify and engage arts organizations, individual artists, and community members representing historically under-resourced communities, especially those residing in the lower quartiles of the California Healthy Places Index.
- Support the SLPs in managing their county Poetry Out Loud competitions, including providing resources, technical assistance, specific requirements, and timelines.
- Collaborate with and support SLPs in planning and implementing evaluation activities, including data collection, data analysis, and reporting.

Reporting Requirements

- Year 1 (October 2026 – October 2027): The CAC will work with SLPs individually and collectively to review existing data collection plans and evaluation strategies and determine reporting for Year 2.
- Year 1 Interim Report providing a high-level summary of grant-funded activities will be due November 1, 2027, or by other state-defined deadline.
- Year 2 Final Report based on Year 1 design and planning will be due October 31, 2028 or by other state-defined deadline. Report elements to be determined in collaboration with SLPs.
- 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: Arts Programming, Services, and Networking

Organization serves as a cultural resource for individual artists, arts organizations, social service organizations with ongoing arts programming, the general public, and the broader arts ecosystem of the county. Organization prioritizes engagement and support for arts organizations, individual artists, and community members representing historically under-resourced communities, especially those residing in the lower quartiles of the California Healthy Places Index. Organization contributes to community arts development and maintains an active relationship with the county government.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Which of the following programs and services are provided by your local arts agency? If your organization does not provide programming or services in one or more areas, what is the reasoning for that?
    a. Direct programming (including arts presenting facility management; arts learning programming; arts production or festivals, etc.)
    b. Grantmaking to arts organizations and/or individual artists
    c. Networking, mentoring, and advocacy
2. Provide a detailed description of the core programs and services your local arts agency provides for your county or counties.
3. How does your organization, through its programming and services, prioritize engagement and support for arts organizations, individual artists, and community members representing historically under-resourced communities, especially those residing in the lower quartiles of the California Healthy Places Index?
4. Describe your local arts agency's implementation plan for the Poetry Out Loud program. If designating another organization to implement the program, please describe the process for selecting that organization and their implementation plan.
5. 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.
6. County Government Resolution: Attach a current resolution from the county board of supervisors designating your organization as the official State-Local Partner. The resolution must include the Grant Activity Period.

Criterion #3: Community Engagement and Social Impact

Reach and depth of engagement across the entire county is demonstrated. Creation, presentation, and/or preservation of high-quality diverse arts and cultural practices represented in the county is evident in demographic and programmatic data provided. Programs and services respond to community needs, values, and priorities. Development, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services involve significant community participation, particularly from individuals and organizations representing historically under-resourced communities, especially those residing in the lower quartiles of the California Healthy Places Index.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. For the county or counties served by your local arts agency, briefly describe:
    - geographic characteristics
    - demographic characteristics
    - economic base
    - cultural diversity
    - creative community
    - any other cultural identifiers
2. Describe the arts and cultural priorities of your county, including how your local arts agency has collected input from local residents—particularly those from historically under-resourced communities, especially those residing in the lower quartiles of the California Healthy Places Index—to identify these priorities, and how your local arts agency is addressing these priorities.

3. Letters of Support: Provide up to two signed letters from key stakeholders, partners, or collaborators. Letters should substantiate the quality of the organization, its programs and services, and affirm the organization's impact on its constituents.
4. Grantmaking Report (if applicable): Provide a list of current grant programs, number of grants, and total program allocations, if applicable.

Criterion #4: Management and Leadership

Ability of applicant organization to fulfill programs and services is clearly identified in the proposal. Strategic plan includes actions to strengthen organizational capacity, diversify revenue sources, increase staff and board leadership representation of communities to be served, and ensure appropriate compensation for staff. Effective governance policies and organizational structure are evident and consistent with what is possible given the organization's budget. Overall fiscal and managerial health of applicant is evident.

Application Questions and Required Documents
1. Describe your local arts agency's public office, operating hours, and staffing structure.
2. Provide a brief biography for each key individual (artistic, technical, or administrative) involved in your organization. Include name, title, relevant experience, and role. (Demographic information and identity indicators are optional.)
3. Provide a current list of board of directors, commissioners, committee, or other appropriate members of your governing body. (Demographic information and identity indicators are optional.) For each individual, provide:
   - name
   - expertise
   - role on governing body
   - professional affiliations
   - city of residence
   - county of residence
4. Strategic Plan - Executive Summary: Provide the executive summary for your organization's current strategic plan. If a current strategic plan is not in place, describe any existing policies and/or procedures, and timeline for developing a strategic plan.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Provide the total amount of funds used for regranting in the field. This total should not be included in your organizational total revenue calculation.
8. 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.
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).

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

slpgrant@arts.ca.gov