



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

FY27 GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT GRANT RESOURCE GUIDE

Thank you for your interest in Metro Arts' grant process! This Resource Guide can be used as a companion piece to the Metro Arts [General Operating Support Grant Guidelines](#). It includes relevant information to help as you prepare and submit your application. Specifically, it includes the following:

- Grant Cycle Overview
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Application Questions and Rubric Overview

Additional resources are available on the [Metro Arts website](#), including details on the following:

- [Video Walkthrough of Grant Guidelines](#): Metro Arts staff provide an overview of eligibility criteria, processes, requirements, and more.
- Information Sessions: Attend an information session for an overview of the Guidelines and plenty of time for questions and discussion:
 - Monday, May 18, 2026, 10:00-11:00am: Virtual on Webex. [Please RSVP](#) to receive a link.
 - Thursday, May 21, 2026, from 4:00-5:00pm at the Metro Arts Office at Metro Southeast (1417 Murfreesboro Pike). No RSVP required.
- [Drop-in Office Hours and Co-Working](#): See a schedule of dates and locations of regularly occurring drop-in grant clinic office hours and co-working time staffed by Metro Arts. No appointments or RSVPs necessary, just drop by to ask questions and/or work on your application.
- [Sign up for 1:1 Virtual Meeting](#): Sign up for a 30-minute virtual session with Metro Arts staff using Microsoft Bookings at the link [here](#). Please prepare specific questions beforehand to ensure we can cover as much as possible in our time together.
- [Metro Arts Submittable](#): All applications must be submitted in Submittable.

Email us any time at arts.grants@nashville.gov throughout the application or grant period with questions, comments, and suggestions. This inbox is monitored and managed by multiple members of the grant support team.

Grant Cycle Overview

The application period is May 8-June 26, 2026. The grant period ends on June 30, 2027.

There are two application deadlines to note:

- Friday, June 5, 2026, 4:59pm: Optional Preliminary Review Deadline. Submit your application for an early eligibility check and receive feedback. Submitting by the preliminary deadline allows time for corrections and revisions before the final deadline.
- Friday, June 26, 2026, 4:59pm: Final deadline. All applications must be submitted by the deadline to be considered.

First time applicants and returning applicants that have not received funding are especially encouraged to apply by the preliminary review deadline.

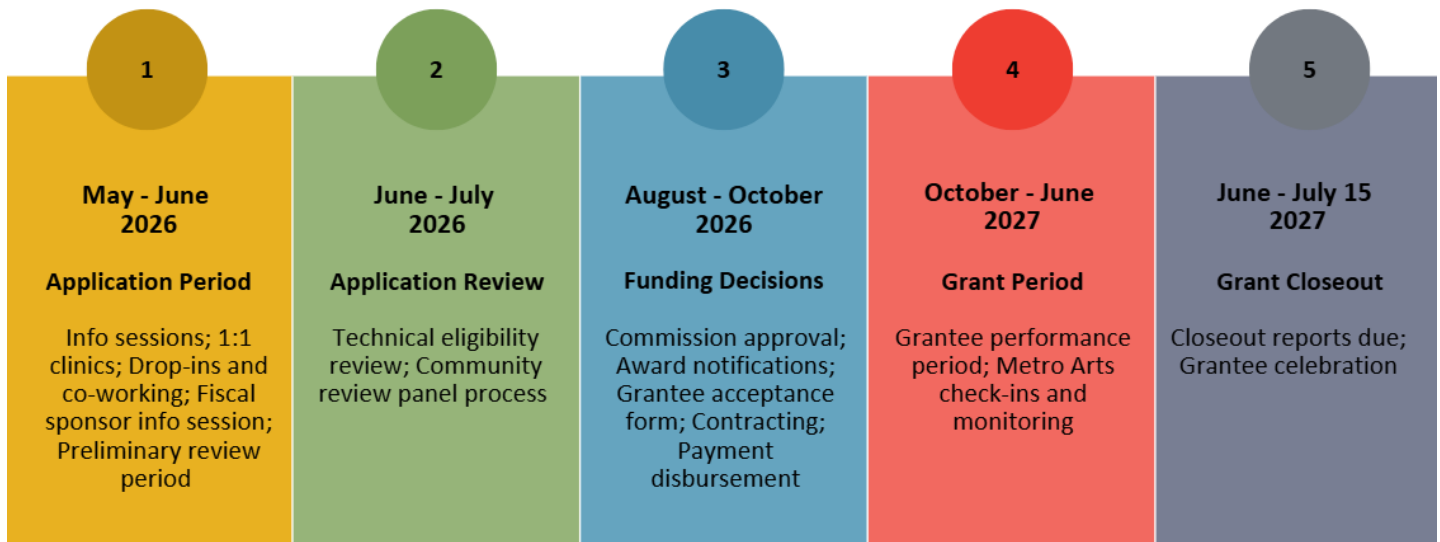


Image: Graphic that shows the general steps within each phase of the grant lifecycle, including the application period, application review, funding decisions, grant period, and grant closeout.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible to apply for operating support grants?

Operating Support grants provide funding for arts-focused nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status for at least one year and located in Davidson County. Your organization's primary mission AND the majority of programming must directly support the performance, exhibition, instruction, creation, or education in the arts. We have an inclusive definition of art, including but not limited to dance, film and media arts, craft, literary arts, music, performance art, multidisciplinary work, theater, or visual arts.

Organizations must have nonprofit 501(c)(3) status for at least one year and must be based in Davidson County and operating the majority of programming in the county. Please review the [FY27 Operating Support Guidelines](#) for additional details about eligibility.

How much grant funding can I apply for?

Applicants do not apply for a specific grant amount. Award sizes are based on organization size and the organization's most recent revenue. Applicants will be assigned a size category of micro, small, medium, mid-size, or large. If you qualify for funding based on your score, an award will be calculated based on your revenue. Awards vary within each category, but you can review the [grant amounts for the last cycle here](#).

How will my application be scored?

Applications go through two types of reviews. Applications are first reviewed by Metro Arts staff to ensure they meet eligibility requirements. Metro Arts staff do not evaluate the merits of the application or assign scores; they are strictly reviewing it to determine that the applicant is eligible and meets the required criteria.

After that, eligible applications will be assigned to a community review panel. Panelists independently review and score your application based on a rubric. Panelists discuss each application before finalizing their scores. Panelists' scores are combined and averaged to produce a final score.

What score do I need to receive funding?

All General Operating Support applicants that receive a score of 70% or above will receive funding. The score determines whether you qualify for a grant, but not the specific grant amount. The specific grant amounts are calculated by revenue size.

When is the grant period?

The FY27 grant cycle will begin on the day that your grant contract is signed by all parties and will end on June 30, 2027. All grant funded activities and expenses must take place within this period.

What is required in the application?

Applicants must fully complete an application on [Metro Arts Submittable](#). Applicants will complete contact and organizational information, revenue information, answer seven (7) narrative questions, and upload supporting documents. Explanations of the narrative questions are included in the last section of this Resource Guide.

You'll need the following supporting documents:

- IRS Letter of Determination (must have a day of May 1, 2025, or earlier)
- Mostly recently completed 990, 990EZ, or 990N postcard
- Background check attestation form, if your organization works directly with minors. You can download this form from the [Partner Tools](#) page of the Metro Arts website.
- Up to five (5) photos that represent your organizational work

What is the background check policy?

You must conduct background checks for all adults in your organization who work with youth. If your organization works directly with minors (defined as persons under age 18), you will be required to submit an attestation form that attests that all adults who participate in the programming or instruction of minors have satisfactory background checks within the last 5 years. This includes organizational staff, artists, and contract staff. The attestation form is required in lieu of submitting the background check clearance forms.

You can download and review the [attestation form](#) from the Metro Arts website.

When is the application deadline?

The Optional Preliminary Review deadline is Friday, June 5, 2026, at 4:59pm. The final deadline to apply is Friday, June 26, 2026, at 4:59pm. The application will automatically close at this time. If you have not submitted your application – even if you are working on it at that time – the system will lock you out. Applications will not be accepted after the deadline. Apply early to avoid technical difficulties. All applications must be submitted on Metro Arts Submittable: <https://mnac.submittable.com/submit>

If awarded, when will I receive the grant money?

We anticipate making grant decisions on August 19, 2026. Award notifications will be sent to all applicants within 48 business hours. Please expect the payment process to take up to 6 weeks following award decisions, as the contract and payment approvals require multiple signatures and steps across the Metro government.

Within those 6 weeks, selected grantees will submit a grant acceptance form, Metro Arts will prepare and route contracts (all contracts must be signed by two grantee representatives and five Metro representatives), and Metro Arts will submit a request for payment through Metro's centralized finance department.

The exact timeline may vary based on each grantee, but we expect that funding will be disbursed in October. Proposed grant activities should begin no earlier than October 1, 2026.

Operating Support Application Questions

All Operating applicants must answer the seven (7) required narrative questions. If you are a returning grantee, you may consider starting by reviewing your responses from last year's application (available within your Submittable account) and thinking about what information you can carry over for this year, making updates and additions as needed. Applications are assigned to new reviewers every year and evaluated based on the rubric. It is allowable to use some of what was previously submitted. Be sure to compare your responses to the details in the rubric.

Below are the application questions, explanations and considerations, and the scoring rubric that panelists will use to score the questions.

Question 1: What does your organization do?

Think of this question as your introduction to the review panel. Help the panel understand the story of your organization, your mission, and your core services and programming. Why does your organization exist, and how long have you operated? Describe your artistic programming and activities. You may think about qualities like originality or authenticity, technical skills, commitment to the art form, or artistic vision.

You are required to upload at least one (1), but up to five (5), images. Photos are to help the review panel understand your work and will not be publicized or reproduced in any other format.

Following the photos, you may choose to include one additional, optional item that illuminates your organization’s work beyond the written aspects of this application, such as:

- A video
 - Up to 2 minutes in length
- A document, image or graphic file
 - Up to 4 pages in PDF format
 - Examples might include work samples that demonstrate the strength of the organization’s programming, excerpts from annual reports, audience feedback and insights, an organization framework document, strategic plan, organizational rubric, visualization of your vision, etc.

Question 1 Rubric

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0 points	1-4 points	5-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points
No answer provided.	Organization mission is not described. Artistic programming is not central to the organization.	Artistic programming is identified but not clearly tied to organization mission. Detail about value of artistic programming is missing or hard to determine.	Artistic programming reflects organization mission. Describes value of artistic programming. Activities and programming are proportionally appropriate for the size of the organization.	Artistic programming reflects organization mission. Mission and programming are compelling, significant, and original. Describes value of artistic programming. Activities and programming are proportionally appropriate for the size of the organization.

Question 2: How do you define the community or communities that your organizational work supports? As part of your answer, please comment on how your work increases accessibility to the arts.

This question is for you to tell the review panel about the people you work with and how you work with them. You may consider things like who are the people creating, leading, collaborating and partnering, attending, watching, or speaking up for your work. Community might be based on a geographic area; cultural, social, racial, or socio-economic; and/or an artistic community. Tell us who your community is and your relationship to that community.

This question also asks you about accessibility. How does your work contribute to Metro Arts’ mission of ensuring every Nashvillian has access to a creative life? You may consider including information like:

- What strategies do you have to reduce barriers to participation and involvement in your work? Examples could address affordability, availability, accessibility, accommodation, and acceptability to diverse groups.
- How do you engage people who have historically been underrepresented and/or underresourced? Examples could include details about your organizational leadership, audience, collaborators, artists, and/or partners.

Question 2 Rubric

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0 points	1-4 points	5-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points
No answer provided.	Community or communities are not identified. Applicant does not provide evidence of a desire, plan, or example of engaging historically underresourced communities.	Community or communities are generally described. Applicant states a desire to engage historically underresourced communities but does not provide specific examples.	Community or communities are clearly defined and applicant demonstrates one strategy of engaging historically underresourced communities.	Community or communities are clearly defined and applicant demonstrates evidence of engaging historically underresourced communities through more than one strategy.

Question 3: How does your organization work with the community in making plans and/or decisions for programs?

This question asks about organizational planning and decision-making. You may consider including information such as the following, though not all may apply to your organization:

- What external stakeholders (both arts and non-arts), community members, artists and cultural workers, organizational partners, etc. contribute to your program planning and in what ways?
- How are decisions informed or driven by community needs? How do you collaborate with members of the community to gather and implement feedback?

Question 3 Rubric

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0 points	1-4 points	5-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points
No answer provided.	Process shows minimal or no community collaboration. No examples are provided of how community feedback is considered in decision making.	Process shows some community collaboration, where community feedback is considered in decision making.	Process shows authentic community collaboration, where multiple and diverse voices are represented in decision-making process. Provides example of how community feedback directly impacts decision making.	Process shows authentic community collaboration, where multiple and diverse voices are included and essential in decision-making process. Provides thorough example of how community feedback directly impacts decision-making.

Question 4: What is the impact of your organization’s work?

This question asks you to describe the impact of your organizational work on the individuals and artists involved and on the broader community or communities. There are many ways to describe impact. Impact may benefit a significant number of people or a small number in significant ways – both are valid.

The strongest responses will include information on how you measure progress and success, and how it relates to your organizational goals. What does success look like within the context of your work? How do you know if you are meeting your goals? What kind of information do you collect and how do you use it toward monitoring your progress and goals?

Consider sharing information about:

- How does your organizational work provide artists with benefits such as opportunity for artistic production or exhibition, compensation, promotion, professional development, training, opportunities, connectivity, etc.?
- How does your organizational work benefit community members who interact with or experience your work? How does your work help others?
- What other impacts and/or benefits does your organizational work bring to the Nashville community?

Question 4 Rubric

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0 points	1-4 points	5-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points
No answer provided.	Response does not consider how community/ participants benefit or how artists benefit from organizational work.	Response includes some consideration of community/participant benefits or artist benefits. Response lacks specific detail.	Response includes example of community/ participant benefits as well as artist benefits. Response includes description of goals and how progress is tracked.	Response includes compelling descriptions of community/ participant benefits as well as artist benefits. Response includes clear description of goals and how success, evaluation, and impact are measured and monitored.

Question 5: What is the vision for your work in the year ahead? How will your organization contribute to the quality and diversity of the creative and arts community within Nashville’s arts ecosystem?

For this question, you will describe your vision and where your work is going next. Think about how your organization and organizational work fits into the larger creative and artistic ecosystem in Nashville. What is distinct, authentic, and/or unique about your organization’s work? What would be absent or missing if your organization and programming were not available in the Nashville community? You may consider providing examples about programming, your community, an approach, how you partner and collaborate with other arts and non-arts groups, a distinct process, or something else.

Question 5 Rubric

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0 points	1-4 points	5-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points
No answer provided.	Response does not include forward-looking vision. Response does not provide examples of contributions to the Nashville arts and creative community.	Response demonstrates some commitment to moving the organization forward. Response vaguely describes how organizational work contributes to the Nashville arts and creative community.	Response demonstrates a vision and commitment to moving the organization forward. Response provides at least one concrete example of how organizational work uniquely contributes to the Nashville arts and creative community.	Response demonstrates a vision and commitment to moving the organization forward. The vision is compelling, intentional, and obtainable. Response provides more than one concrete example of how organizational work uniquely contributes to the Nashville arts and creative community.

Question 6: What specific challenges is your organization having now and/or anticipating? How has or will your organization adapt to and navigate those challenges?

This question asks you to discuss how your organization navigates change. Discuss ways you adapt and implement learning from challenges.

Question 6 Rubric

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0 points	1-4 points	5-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points
No answer provided.	Response provides example of one or more challenges but no evidence of adaptability or problem-solving.	Response provides an example of responding to a challenge and evidence of problem-solving.	Response shows a process of monitoring and proactively addressing challenges. Describes an example of a challenge and evidence of adaptability and problem-solving.	Response shows a process of regularly monitoring and proactively addressing challenges. Thoroughly describes an example of a challenge and evidence of adaptability, problem-solving, and implementation of lesson(s) learned.

Question 7: Explain the process for long-term or strategic planning. If your organization does not have a long-term or strategic plan, how do you design programs and activities for the future?

Consider how your organization prepares for the future in terms of your planning process, particularly in terms of what parts of your work inform your decisions and how they are aligned with your organization’s mission, values, and the community you work with. What practices and policies to you have in place to center community needs and plan around these? How do you assess your day to day work in relation to your longer term planning?

You may consider explaining your organization’s governance structure for decision making and planning. How does leadership make decisions? For example, do you have a board, advisory group, membership model, and/or other formal groups that participate or lead in decision making?

Question 7 Rubric

Did not answer	Does not meet criteria	Somewhat meets criteria	Meets criteria	Exceeds criteria
0 points	1-4 points	5-6 points	7-8 points	9-10 points
No answer provided.	Explanation shows no evidence of intentional planning process.	Explanation of planning shows some evidence of a process. Response includes some evidence of internal or external factors. Response does not describe how the community’s needs are represented in long-term plans.	Explanation of planning shows evidence of intentional process that considers internal and external factors. Response describes how the community’s needs are represented in long-term plans. Response includes information on how administrative staff, board members, and/or volunteers make plans, as appropriate for the size of the organization.	Explanation of planning shows evidence of intentional process that considers internal and external factors. Response describes how the community’s needs are determined and represented in long-term plans. Response provides example of how planning incorporates tools for monitoring and evaluating ongoing organizational work. Response includes information on how administrative staff, board members, and/or volunteers make plans, as appropriate for the size of the organization.