



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

FY26 Operating & Thrive Grant FAQ

Application Deadline: Friday, August 15, 2025, 11:59pm

Guidelines: <https://www.metroartsnashville.gov/grants-and-thrive>

[Sign up for 1:1](#) support meeting with Metro Arts

FOR ALL APPLICANTS: OVERVIEW

What applications are available right now?

General Operating Support and Thrive Project grant applications are open right now. Applicants may only apply for one grant. The deadline to apply is August 15. Apply now!

When is the application deadline?

The deadline to apply for both Operating and Thrive is Friday, August 15, 2025, at 11:59pm. 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!

Applications must be submitted on Metro Arts Submittable:

<https://mnac.submittable.com/submit>

When is the grant period?

The FY26 grant cycle will begin on the day that your grant contract is signed by all parties and will end on June 30, 2026. Grant funded activities must take place within this period.

When will I receive my grant money?

We anticipate making grant approvals at a Commission meeting on Thursday, September 25, 2025. Metro Arts will then send award notifications to all awardees within 24-48 business hours after. Payments typically take 30-60 days after award notifications.

Contracts will go out for signatures in October and have to be signed by several parties. After the contracts are signed, Metro Arts will send a request for payment through the centralized finance system. We expect that funding will be disbursed in November.

There have been delays in disbursing grants in recent years. Will there be delays again this year?

We are on track to make grant decisions and announcements in late September, which will begin the process described above. There are things the grantee can do to make sure the payment process goes smoothly as well, by making sure their vendor profile is up to date and accurate. We'll send more information about that in September.

I would like some additional support regarding my application. Can someone help me?

Yes. Metro Arts staff is ready to answer any questions and provide support during the application period. You can email us at arts.grants@nashville.gov or [sign up at this link](#) for a virtual 1:1 session with one of our team members.

GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT APPLICANTS

Who is eligible to apply for operating support grants?

General Operating Support grants provide funding for arts-focused nonprofit organizations with 501c3 status 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 501c3 status for at least one year and must be based in Davidson County. Please review [the FY26 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, midsize, or large. If you qualify for funding based on your score, an award will be calculated based on the revenue of your most recently completed tax year. Awards vary within each category, but you can review the [grant amounts for the last cycle here](#). Specific grant amounts cannot be determined until after all applications are scored and the Commission determines the overall available budget for operating grants.

How will my application be scored?

Applications go through two types of reviews. Submitted applications will first go through an eligibility review by Metro Arts staff. During this phase, applications will be reviewed 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. Metro Arts engages community members to serve as panelists. Panelists independently review and score your application based on a standard 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 under this model. The score determines whether you qualify for a grant, but not the specific grant amount. The specific grant amounts are calculated by revenue size. In other words, the grant amount will be the same whether your application scores a 72% or a 92%.

What is required in the application?

Every applicant must complete an application on the [Metro Arts Submittable](#) platform. Applicants will answer 5 to 7 questions and upload a few supporting documents.

All applicants will answer the following questions:

- What does the organization do?
- What is the impact of the organization's work?
- Where is the work going next, including artist risk-taking?
- What communities do you serve and how does the organization work to increase accessibility to the arts?
- How is the community involved in decisions regarding artistic programming?

Organizations with budgets over \$500,000 will also answer the following questions:

- What are the current challenges of the organization, including budgetary challenges, and how are they addressed?
- 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? How does this process align with the organization's values?

Applicants must also upload supporting documents, including most recently completed 990, IRS letter of determination, and background check attestation form if the organization works directly with minors.

What year's 990 should I use?

Whatever is your most recently completed 990. We understand this may be 2023 or 2024. Reach out if you have questions about this.

THRIVE PROJECT GRANT APPLICANTS

Who is eligible to apply for the Thrive grant?

The Thrive grant is for artist-led, community art projects or programs. Applicants can be independent artists, artist collectives, or nonprofit organizations. The proposed project or program must take place in Davidson County. Please review [the FY26 Thrive Guidelines](#) for additional details about eligibility.

What is a fiscal sponsor and who needs one?

Metro Arts is only able to provide grants to nonprofit organizations. Thrive applicants who are not 501c3 nonprofits must secure a fiscal sponsor to receive and administer their grant award. The applicant (the artist) will submit the specific project proposal to Metro Arts and that will be reviewed by Metro Arts and the grant review panel, but the fiscal sponsor will be the entity that Metro Arts enters a contract with and disburses funding to. The fiscal sponsor will then disburse funding to the applicant to carry out the proposed and approved project.

How do the fiscal sponsor and Thrive applicant work together?

Each fiscal sponsorship partnership will probably look different. We encourage and recommend that fiscal sponsors and applicants have a thorough conversation before applying about the roles, communication, details and expectations of the partnership.

Some topics that fiscal sponsor and applicant may want to discuss include:

- Disbursement: Will the fiscal sponsor disburse the full grant amount upfront, or on an otherwise agreed schedule? What method of payment will the fiscal sponsor use to disburse payment to the applicant? Will the fiscal sponsor disburse the full amount to the applicant to manage, or will the fiscal sponsor administer some elements of the approved project expenses and payments?
- Support: Will the fiscal sponsor provide any additional support services to the artist? This is not required, but we know fiscal sponsors supported applicants in a variety of ways during the FY25 cycle. How hands on the fiscal sponsor will be is up to the fiscal sponsor and the applicant to decide and agree on.
- Reporting: Fiscal sponsors should confirm that all Metro Arts reporting is complete and timely submitted. How will communication about this occur?

Does the applicant anticipate or request additional support from the fiscal sponsor with regard to reporting?

Will I be assigned a fiscal sponsor?

You will not be assigned a fiscal sponsor. Metro Arts does not make assignments, but we can help you think about potential fiscal sponsors to reach out to.

Does my fiscal sponsor need to be an arts organization?

No, your fiscal sponsor can be any nonprofit organization registered in Tennessee.

Does my fiscal sponsor receive funds from my project budget?

Metro Arts will provide the fiscal sponsor \$750 for administrative support costs. This will not come from the applicant's budget. For example, if the approved project budget is \$15,000, then the total grant contract will be \$15,750. The fiscal sponsor maintains \$750 and disburses the \$15,000 in the agreed upon manner.

What are the tax implications?

Metro Arts cannot give tax advice, and we encourage both fiscal sponsors and applicants to understand the tax implications and speak with whatever representatives you use for tax purposes. Generally speaking, fiscal sponsors would consider grant funds as revenues/contributions, and disbursements to applicants as expenses. Fiscal sponsors are responsible for providing any required tax documentation to the applicant. Applicants are responsible for disbursements they receive.

What is the project period?

The grant period will begin the day that all parties have signed the contract. This is the start of when you can use the grant funds for allowable expenses. We anticipate this will occur in October. However, we do not anticipate grant funds will not be disbursed until sometime in November due to the processing period. All funds and activities supported by the funds must take place between the date of the signed contract and June 30, 2026. Reporting will be due July 15, 2026.

Can I continue a project that I started in the past?

Yes! There is no requirement that the project is something completely new. You are welcome to submit a proposal that builds on or expands work that was previously started. When your grant is being reviewed, the panelists will be looking to assess if it aligns with Metro Arts goals of impacting neighborhoods or communities, engaging community members, and promoting cultural equity in the design, process and content of the work.

What is the grant amount? Will the funded amount be different than what I request?

Applicants can request up to \$15,000. Applications that are selected for funding will be fully funded at the requested amount. There will be no partial funding.

How many projects will be funded?

We will not have an answer to that until September. All eligible applications will be reviewed and scored by the panelists. Applications will be rank ordered, and funding will be disbursed in order, starting from the highest scoring application, until funding is depleted.

Are murals allowed this year?

The Thrive “Public Art” category was removed from this year’s application. Thrive funds cannot be used for the direct creation, installation, or maintenance of public art. This includes murals. Applicants working on a mural project may use Thrive funds to support community engagement, capacity building, promotions, workshops, or other costs that are not directly for the materials or installation of the public artwork. Contact Metro Arts staff to discuss specific eligibility questions.

What is required in the application?

Applicants will answer four questions and upload various supporting documents. The application questions are:

1. What is the project or program that will be supported by this funding and how will the community and/or the artist be impacted?
2. What communities will be served by this project, and how will you involve community members in the project planning, decision-making, and/or artmaking?
3. What is the timeline for this proposal?
4. What is the budget and how will the Metro Arts funding be used? Include a list of all projected expenses.

Applicants must submit a number of supporting documents as well. A background check attestation form is required if the proposed project directly works with minors. If the applicant is a nonprofit, an IRS Letter of Determination must be uploaded. If the applicant is applying with a fiscal sponsor, the fiscal sponsor’s Letter of Determination is required, as well as a Letter of Fiscal Agency and a Letter of Agreement.

The Letter of Fiscal Agency is the formal declaration from the fiscal sponsor that confirms their willingness to serve in that role. The Letter of Agreement is a template that outlines the agreements made between the fiscal sponsor and applicant.

All required forms are available on the Metro Arts Partner Tools webpage:
<https://www.metroartsnashville.gov/partner-tools>