



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

Operating Support Grant Criteria & Guidelines

FY26 GRANT CYCLE | FOR ACTIVITIES TAKING PLACE Fall 2025 – June 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE August 15, 2025, 11:59 p.m.

Submit all applications online at <https://mnac.submittable.com/submit>

For application assistance or for first time applicants, please contact us at Arts.Grants@nashville.gov.

Metro Nashville Arts Commission

Mailing Address:

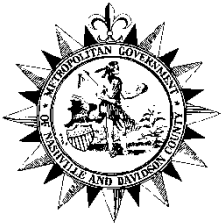
P.O. Box 196300

Nashville TN 37219-6300

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Funding for this program is provided by the Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County

PUBLIC NOTICE: Nondiscrimination Policies, ADA Compliance & Accessibility

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, or ability in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities. Discrimination against any person in recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, retention, discipline, or any other employment practices because of non-merit factors shall be prohibited.

Questions, concerns, complaints, requests for accommodation, or requests for additional information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act may be forwarded to Metro Arts' ADA Compliance Coordinator:

Vivian Foxx, Metro Nashville Arts Commission, P.O. Box 196300, Nashville, TN 37219-6300
Vivian.Foxx@nashville.gov (615) 862-6721, TTY Relay Service 800-848-0298

Individuals who have hearing impairment and require auxiliary aids and services for effective communication in the programs, services, or activities of the Metro Nashville Arts Commission are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance Coordinator. This notice can be made available in alternative formats through the office of the ADA Compliance Coordinator, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

INTERPRETATION SERVICES: Should an individual need language interpretation, Metro Arts will secure assistance using a Metro approved over-the-phone or in-person interpretation service.

Si necesita ayuda con el idioma, háganoslo saber. Obtendremos un intérprete que puede ayudarnos a comunicarnos entre nosotros.

بعضنا مع التواصل في مساعدتنا يمكنه مترجم على نحصل سوف. بذلك إخبارنا فالرجاء ، لغوية مساعدة إلى بحاجة كنت إذا البعض.

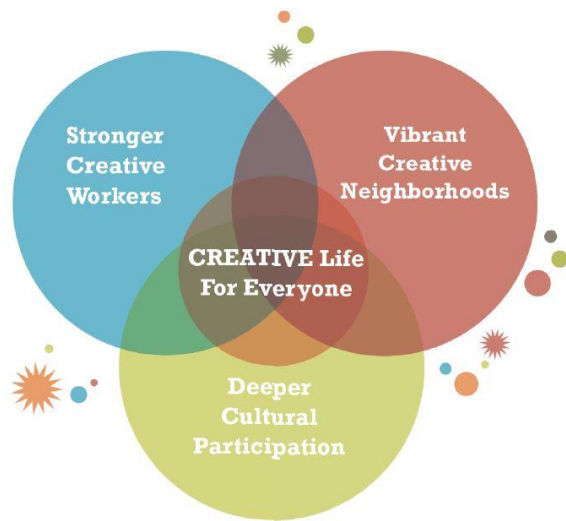
Ji kerema xwe em bizanin eger hûn bi alîkariya înglîzî re pêdivî ye. Em ê wergirtineke kurdî bibînin ku dikare alîkariya me bi hev re biaxivin.

Forward inquiries concerning nondiscrimination policies, other than ADA compliance, to:

Metro Human Relations Commission, 150 2nd Ave N., Suite 217, 37201 P.O. Box 196300, Nashville, TN 37219-6300

About Metro Arts Grants

A Creative Life For Everyone



Metro Arts’ grant programs fund nonprofit organizations of all sizes and disciplines and project-based grants through funding allocated by the Metro Council. Our grant programs support creative work that addresses one or more of the community outcomes we seek to achieve:

- + Stronger Creative Workforce
- + Vibrant, Creative Neighborhoods
- + Deeper Cultural Participation

Metro Arts is guided by a [cultural equity statement](#). Metro Arts programs seek to make opportunities and resources available to all Nashvillians in an equitable way.

All funding approvals and awards are contingent on the budget allocated to Metro Arts each year. Funding is not guaranteed, and overall funding may vary from year to year.

Our Mission

Metro Nashville Arts Commission or “Metro Arts” is the Office of Arts & Culture for the city of Nashville and Davidson County. Metro Arts is a branch of Metro Government that strives to ensure that all Nashvillians have access to a creative life through community investments, artist and organizational training, public art and creative placemaking coordination, and direct programs. We believe that arts drive a more vibrant and equitable community. Metro Nashville Arts Commission was established by Metro Ordinance in 1978.

Grant Eligibility Criteria

Operating Support grants provide funding for the general operations of arts-focused nonprofit organizations based in Davidson County. An arts-focused organization is one whose primary mission is to directly support the performance, exhibition, or instruction of art and whose majority of programming supports the performance, exhibition, instruction, creation, or education in the arts. Art refers to several artistic genres including, but not limited to dance, film and media arts, craft, literary arts, music, performance art, multidisciplinary work, theater, or visual arts. Please contact us if you have questions regarding the definition of an arts-focused organization.

To receive an Operating Support grant from Metro Arts, the applicant must:

- Produce, present or directly support artistic programs, projects or works
- Have a primary mission to directly support the performance, exhibition, or instruction of art
- The majority of programming must support the performance, exhibition, instruction, creation, or education in the arts
- Be chartered in the state of Tennessee and tax-exempt under the IRS Code Section 501(c)(3)
- Have an IRS Letter of Determination with an effective date of exemption of July 1, 2024, or earlier*
- Have a business address located in Davidson County and operate most of its programs in Nashville.
- Have background checks for all adults who work with youth. If the organization works directly with minors (defined as persons under age 18), the applicant will be required to submit an attestation form that attests that all adults who participate in the programming or instruction of minors at the organization have satisfactory background checks within the last 5 years. This includes organizational staff, artists, and contract staff.

Metro Arts only provides Operating Support grants to eligible nonprofit arts organizations. For project support, please see Thrive Grant Guidelines.

*Organizations with less than one year 501(c)(3) status may be considered eligible for an operating support grant with evidence of operating with nonprofit fiscal sponsorship and/or artistic programming for at least one year. Please contact Metro Arts staff with any questions regarding eligibility.

There are certain types of organizations that cannot receive operating grants from Metro Arts:

- Non-arts organizations
- Organizations who receive operational budget amendments ("line items") from Metro, except for those that are provided by the Metropolitan Charter
- "Friends of..." organizations whose primary purpose is to support government agencies or initiatives
- Colleges or universities
- Public broadcasting stations
- Arts organizations that operate as a legal subsidiary of a non-art nonprofit organization

Eligible Expenses

Metro Arts grant funding can only be used to pay for certain types of costs. Make sure your request includes expenses that can be covered by Metro Arts funds.

Grant funds CAN be used for...	Grant funds CANNOT be used for...
Salaries	Capital Improvements
Artist Fees	Reduction of Debts
Program/Project Supplies	Activities & Programs with Religious Practices or Intent
Performance Space/Facility Rental	Political Lobbying Activities
Marketing and Promotion	Purchase of Real Property
Consulting Fees	

Equipment Rental and/or Purchase	
Fundraising Activities	

Grant Cycle Time Frame

All FY26 grant activities must take place between the effective date of the contract, which is defined as the date the contract is signed by all required parties and filed with the Metro Clerk, and June 30, 2026. Final reports and closeout forms are due July 15, 2026.

Matching Funds

Metro Arts Operating Support grants do not require a cash match. Grantees are not required to show matching funds.

Grant Categories

Organizations' budget size and the most recently completed fiscal year's revenue are considered when determining the appropriate grant category for each applicant. The information below will help you understand which grant category your organization falls in.

Micro Organizations – Nonprofit arts organizations with a revenue of less than \$25,000 during the most recently completed fiscal year.

Small Organizations – Nonprofit arts organizations with a revenue between \$25,000 to \$99,999 during the most recently completed fiscal year.

Medium Organizations – Nonprofit arts organizations with a revenue between \$100,000 and \$499,999 during the most recently completed fiscal year.

Mid-Size Organizations – Nonprofit arts organizations with a revenue between \$500,000 and \$2,999,999 during the most recently completed fiscal year.

Large Organizations – Nonprofit arts organizations with a revenue of \$3,000,000 or more during the most recently completed fiscal year.

Award Amounts

Access to resources and funding is a privilege. By honoring budget size in the formula, there is acknowledgement that smaller organizations have less access to resources and funding and require greater support of their total operating budget.

Applicants do not apply for a specific award amount, rather, they are eligible for an award based on the grant category size. Award amounts are calculated based on the organization's operating revenue as shown in the organization's most recently completed fiscal year IRS Form 990. Award amounts will be determined by calculating the "base percentage," shown in the formulas below. The formulas show the maximum possible award sizes. The actual award amount will be scaled to the available budget for the allocation available for each grant category. Awards will range within the category they fall in.

Base percentage formulas:

1. Micro organization base percentage is calculated as 75% of most recent revenue, with a minimum \$3,000 and maximum \$18,750.
2. Small organization base percentage is calculated as 50% of most recent revenue, with a minimum of \$3,000 and a maximum of \$50,000.
3. Medium organization base percentage is calculated as 25% of most recent revenue, with a maximum of \$125,000.
4. Mid-Size organization base percentage is calculated as 17% of most recent revenue, with a maximum of \$120,000.
5. Large organization base percentage is calculated as 1.8% of most recent revenue, with a maximum of \$200,000.

The actual award amount will be scaled to the available budget. All awards, including minimum awards, are subject to be scaled to a smaller amount, based on the available budget. All funding approvals and grant amounts are contingent on the budget allocated to Metro Arts.

Size Category Transition

Organizations whose revenue exceeds the maximum threshold of any category up to 10% will have the award size calculated as the midpoint percentage between the two categories. For example, if an organization's revenue is \$105,000 (5% over the \$100,000 threshold between small and medium), then the organization will be categorized as a medium organization, but the award will be calculated as 37.5% of the revenue (the midpoint between the percentages for small [50%] and medium [25%]).

How to Submit an Application

Metro Arts utilizes an online application system called Submittable. All applications must be completed and submitted using this system. The Metro Arts grant application portal can be accessed at <https://mnac.submittable.com/submit>. Keep in mind that submitted applications are considered public record and can be reviewed by the public.

Submittable is a non-Metro based platform. Specific questions related to your Submittable account or troubleshooting Submittable issues must be done through the Submittable platform.

Application Deadlines

All applications must be submitted by August 15, 2025, at 11:59pm. Please submit early to avoid any last-minute technical difficulties. Metro Arts is not responsible for technical difficulties with the Submittable platform.

Application Checklist

- ☐ Read the FY26 Operating Support Grant Guidelines.
- ☐ If you have any questions, please contact arts.grants@nashville.gov before applying. First time applicants are encouraged to contact Metro Arts before applying.
- ☐ Fill out an application on Submittable, including answering all required questions.
- ☐ Upload all required documents, including copy of 990, 990N, or 990EZ Postcard, IRS Letter of Determination with an effective date of exemption of July 1, 2024, or earlier, and background check attestation form if your organization works directly with minors.

- ☐ Submit application.

Important Dates *(dates subject to change)*

Submit application	July 16 - August 15, 2025
Technical review	August 18 – August 22, 2025
Application scoring by review panelists	September 2 – September 12, 2025
Commission approval	September 25, 2025
Award notifications	September 26 – 29, 2025
Contracting and payment processing	October – November 2025
Grant period	Date of contract execution* - June 30, 2026
Final spend date	June 30, 2026
Final closeout report due	July 15, 2026

**The grant spending period begins upon the full execution of the contract. Grantees are encouraged to promptly sign and return contracts to avoid delays.*

Funding Determinations

All grant applications are reviewed for technical eligibility by Metro Arts staff. Applicants that fail technical review will have 3 business days to make corrections to their application, if the reason for disqualification is one that can be corrected. Correctable technical review errors include but are not limited to missing or deficient supporting documents or incorrect budgets. Please note that not all reasons for technical denial will be able to be corrected, such as a determination that the applicant is a non-arts organization or is located outside of Davison County. Applications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. An application may be disqualified at **any time** if an organization or proposal is deemed ineligible.

Applicants that advance beyond technical review will be evaluated and scored by grant review panelists.

Scoring + Funding Formula

Panelists will use a Panelist Scoring Guide to evaluate and score each application. Panelist scores will be combined and averaged to determine the final score.

Applicants whose applications score at the 70 to 100 percent level will be awarded funds in alignment with the base percentage for their funding category, scaled to the total available Operating Support budget and grant category. Award allocations are made based on Metro Arts funding availability and are not guaranteed year-to-year.

Eligibility and panel review notes are kept electronically by Metro Arts. After grant awards are announced, applicants may contact Metro Arts staff to obtain a copy of scores and comments for your records.

Funding Approval

The panelists' scores are reviewed by the Arts Commission Grants and Funding Committee and are used to determine which applications are recommended for funding. The Metro Arts Commission reviews all recommended grant awards and is the authorizing body to approve all awards.

All Commissioners and Panelists are asked to disclose any conflicts of interest prior to reviewing or approving grant allocations. Metro Arts makes every attempt to identify any conflicts. If a conflict of interest is identified among a Panelist, the Panelist will not score the application nor participate in discussion of the application. If a conflict is identified among a Commissioner, the Commissioner is required to abstain from allocating an organization's funding or engaging in deliberation of the applicant's grant award.

Award Notification

Grant award notifications will be issued through Submittable, including instructions for accepting the grant. Applicants awarded a grant will be required to submit a budget upon notification of an award. Grant awards will also be publicly announced via press release and posted on the Metro Arts website.

Grantees are responsible for notifying Metro Arts of any changes in contact information during the grant period.

Applicants denied funding will also be notified through Submittable. Applicants that are denied funding may contact Metro Arts for information regarding the denial and additional information.

Grant Payment Schedule

Awarded grant funds are distributed in one payment for the full grant amount after the execution of the grant contract. Please note that the contracting and payment process typically takes 4-6 weeks as contracts require multiple signatures across the Metro Government. Grantees should return their signed contract budget promptly for grant funds to be distributed.

Grant Check in

Metro Arts staff will check-in with grant recipients during the grant spending period as it allows both the recipient and Metro Arts to ensure the work is progressing well and confirms that funds are being used in alignment with the grant's objectives.

Final Closeout Report

Final closeout reports and all supporting materials must be submitted by July 15, 2026. The final closeout report may include program goals, outputs and outcomes, participant reach, jobs supported, and other metrics. A grant expenditure form and budget narrative are required as part of closeout.

Organizations should maintain financial records that show the use of all grant funds. At Metro Arts' request, grantees may be asked to provide documentation of expenditures including, but not limited to, contracts, purchase orders, invoices, and bills.

Metro Arts reserves the right to cancel any grant contract if the project is not administered as proposed in the application and may request the return of all or a portion of the grant funds awarded.

Logo Usage and Credit Policy

All recipients of Metro Arts funds are required to include the Metro Arts logo on all online or printed publicity materials. The credit policy and logo files are available on the [Partner Tools | Metro Arts Nashville](#) page of the Metro Arts website.

Maintaining Good Standing

Remaining in good standing with Metro Arts is very important. A grantee maintains good standing by:

- Meeting all requirements stated in the guidelines and grant contract (including spending grant funds as described in the grant contract).
- Following the [Metro Arts logo and credit policy](#).
- Submitting grant information (including contracts, final financial reports, closeout reports, and any other information that Metro Arts may request) on or before the stated deadline.

An organization's subsequent grant application may be denied eligibility if these requirements are not met.

If an organization loses its good standing status for any of the reasons above, the organization will be sent documentation in writing of what requirements have not been met and what steps need to be taken to return to good standing status. If an organization is not in good standing at the at the end of a grant cycle, future grant funds may be withheld until such time as the identified issues are resolved.

Monitoring

As a department of Metro government receiving federal funds, Metro Arts is required to review and monitor up to 10% of distributed funds annually. If an organization is selected for monitoring, a site visit with Metro Arts staff will be scheduled at which time the organization may be asked to provide:

- Year-to-date grant expenditures
- Payment records
- Payroll records
- Electronic and printed promotional materials showing Metro Arts logo usage according to the Metro Arts Credit Policy.

Metro Arts will provide a detailed list of items that will need to be collected and reviewed prior to the scheduled site visit. A written report of the monitoring visit will be provided to the organization after the review is complete. Metro Arts staff may report negative findings to the Arts Commission and Metro's Office of Financial Accountability. Unresolved or recurring negative findings may result in a change to the organization's good standing status.

Operating Support Grant Scoring Rubric

For Micro, Small, Medium, Mid-Sized, and Large Organizations (All Categories)

1. What does the organization do?

Not scored. Informational.

2. What is the impact of the organization's work?

Demonstrates significant impact in connection to community value or benefit.	Demonstrates impact in connection to community value or benefit.	Demonstrates some impact with consideration for community value or benefit.	Demonstrates minimal impact.
Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Fair

3. Where is the work going next, including artistic risk-taking?

Demonstrates a commitment to move the organization forward, with risk-taking being a central and consistent part of the process.	Demonstrates a commitment to move the organization forward, with risk-taking being a part of the process.	Demonstrates a commitment to move the organization forward, with risk-taking being a consideration of the process.	Demonstrates some commitment to move the organization forward.
Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Fair

4. What communities do you serve and how does the organization work to increase accessibility to the arts?

Demonstrates evidence of engaging historically underserved communities and communicates plans to sustain and/or expand accessibility to programming.	Demonstrates evidence of connecting with historically underserved communities and communicates plans to sustain and/or expand accessibility to programming.	Demonstrates some evidence of connecting with historically underserved communities and communicates some plans to sustain and/or expand accessibility to programming.	Demonstrates minimal evidence or plans connected to engagement and accessibility.
Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Fair

5. How is the community involved in decisions regarding artistic programming?

Process shows	Process shows	Process shows	Process shows minimal
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authentic community collaboration, where the community is essential in the artistic decision-making process.	authentic community collaboration, where the community is a part of the artistic decision-making process.	authentic community collaboration, where the community is a consideration in the artistic decision-making process.	community collaboration.
Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Fair

For Mid-Size and Large Organizations Only (Operating Budget \$500K+)

6. What are current challenges of the organization, including budgetary challenges, and how are they addressed?

Response shows a process of regularly monitoring and proactively addressing challenges.	Response shows a process of regularly monitoring and consistently addressing challenges.	Response shows a process of monitoring and occasionally addressing challenges.	Response shows a limited process of monitored challenges.
Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Fair

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? How does this process align with the organization's values?

Explanation of long-term/strategic planning process that directly connects with the organization's values and the community's needs and aspirations.	Explanation of long-term/strategic planning process that directly connects with the organization's values.	Explanation of long-term/strategic planning process or thoughtful plans for upcoming strategic planning.	Minimal engagement with purposeful planning.
Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Fair

For first time applicants or organizations that have never received a Metro Arts Operating Support grant:

8. As a first-time applicant or organization that has not received a Metro Arts Operating grant before, is there anything else you would like the grant reviewers to know about your work or organization?

Not scored. Informational.