

CORE Operating Support Grant Guidelines

Small Budget Organizations
FY26 Grant Cycle 2025-2026

Arts Fort Worth's Grants Services

The mission of Arts Fort Worth is to promote, nurture, and support the arts in Fort Worth. Arts Fort Worth's competitive grants programs fulfill this mission by supporting local arts organizations and the artistic programming they provide within our city. Arts Fort Worth grants are designed to:

- foster a culture of creativity and innovation;
- celebrate community diversity through inclusive artistic expression;
- increase accessibility and encourage broad-based participation in arts activities;
- strengthen the service capacity and business practices of arts providers; and
- promote tourism and economic growth in the City of Fort Worth.

CORE Operating Support Grant Intent

CORE Operating Support Grants provide fundamental mission support through unrestricted funding to established nonprofit arts organizations for general operations, administration, and programming costs.

Timeline

NEW THIS YEAR (A month earlier than last year)

Grant Applications Open	May 5, 2025
Mandatory Applicant Orientation	May 14, 2025 (live); May 20 (online)
Application Deadline	July 11, 2025
Panel Review	August 25 – 29, 2025
Period of Performance Begins	October 1, 2025
Award Notification	November 2025
Period of Performance Ends	September 30, 2026

Mandatory Applicant Orientation

A representative from applicant organizations planning to apply for a 2025/2026 CORE Operating Support grant (ideally the grant writer or someone who can communicate well to the grant writer) **must** participate in either the in-person Mandatory Applicant Orientation on May 14, 2025 from 10:00 am to 12 noon, Mira Vista Country Club **OR** via video conferencing on May 20, 2025 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. No exceptions will be made. Participants will walk through the grant guidelines with Arts Fort Worth grants program staff, paying special attention to updates and changes. RSVP to grants@artsfortworth.org to reserve your spot. If you have any questions on whether your representative qualifies, email staff at grants@artsfortworth.org. More information on location or the online meeting will be given when you RSVP.

Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible to receive funding from Arts Fort Worth CORE Operating Grants Program, an applicant organization must:

- have a last fiscal year annual organizational operating budget of at least \$100,000;
- be a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit in good standing with IRS and up to date with Form 990 filings;
- be a nonprofit arts organization whose primary mission is the presentation or production of artistic programming;
- demonstrate active operations and a history of at least 2 consecutive years of related program offerings within the City of Fort Worth;
- have a physical headquarters located within the City of Fort Worth and conduct a majority (more than 50%) of its work/outreach/programming within the Fort Worth community OR have a Fort Worth based P.O. Box or residential address and conduct a minimum of 65% of its work/outreach/programming within Fort Worth;
- have a salaried full-time or part-time (15-20 hours per week) administrator that is responsible for and authorized to address the contractual obligations of the Arts Fort Worth Grant Agreement and the business management of the organization. (Artist fees and honorariums do not satisfy paid staffing requirements);
- compensate salaried staff at a rate no less than the federal minimum wage at the time of grant submission;
- have an active board of directors; and
- meet all compliance measures and be in good standing with the Arts Fort Worth Grants Program.

Ineligible applicants include:

- academic institutions;
- fiscal sponsors;
- governmental agencies;
- places of worship; or
- former Arts Fort Worth grant recipients with overdue, unacceptable, or falsified reports.

Eligible Requests

Eligible uses for CORE Operating Support funding include:

- administrative staff salaries;
- artistic salaries/fees;
- office supplies;
- production costs;
- facility rentals;
- marketing, printing, and other administrative costs; and outreach & education.

Ineligible uses of funding include:

- scholarships, purchase awards, or cash prizes;
- capital improvements, endowments, construction, or real property;
- debt reduction, interest on loans, fines, penalties, or costs of litigation;
- benefits or special events planned primarily for fundraising;
- sub-granting programs;
- activities for which college or university students receive academic credit;
- financing of political activities; or

- programming that is made inaccessible to any audience member based on gender, gender identity or expression, race, color, natural hair or hairstyles, traditional ethnic or religious attire, ethnicity, nationality, religion, creed, sexual orientation, disability, age, or any other characteristic protected by law, except in projects involving schools or school systems (K-12) or other special populations.

Application Process

Grant requests are accepted once a year. Grant cycle announcements and deadlines are posted on the Arts Fort Worth website www.artsfortworth.org/core-grants. All applicants must apply for funding online through the Arts Fort Worth [grants portal](#). New applicants must register for the site to begin an application.

Guidelines and online applications are also available in Spanish. To see the online application in Spanish, go to the [grants portal](#) and in the upper left corner, click on “Select Language”.

In addition to completing the narrative portion of the application form, grant applicants are also required to submit the following attachments:

- list of current board of directors;
- IRS determination letter; (new applicants only)
- a copy of your organization's most recent end year 2022,2023 or 2024 IRS Form 990, 990-EZ or 990-N; and
- audiovisual presentation.

Due to Arts Fort Worth’s location transition, all attachments must be submitted online by the application deadline. If special arrangements need to be made, please contact grants@artsfortworth.org. Attachments received after the application deadline will not be considered and related applications will be marked incomplete and ineligible for review.

Once applications are received, each application is reviewed for eligibility and completeness by Arts Fort Worth grants program staff. Once this process is complete, the applications are assigned to panelist evaluators for in-depth analysis

Audiovisual Presentations

Requests for CORE Operating Support require submission of an audiovisual presentation. Submit work samples that best show your fulfillment of your mission and your service to the community. Select the strongest, best-documented audiovisual presentation that complements your application.

Presentation Requirements and Tips

- Label your media with organization name, CORE Operating Support FY26.
NEW THIS YEAR: include, if applicable, venue name, location, date and programming.
- Presentations are limited to no more than **4 minutes**.
- Presentations should begin on Track 1 or at the natural beginning of the media.
- Applicants are encouraged to create a new presentation every grant cycle.
- If stock footage is used, please mention in your description.
- Test materials multiple times on different systems before submission.
- Submit materials on programs and operations that have taken place within the past 2 years only.
- A/V requirements for this grant match minimum requirements for the Texas Commission on the Arts “Arts Create” grant, and applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same materials for both to save staff time and resources.
- Create and edit videos for free using the Adobe Express online video maker. Instantly edit and publish videos to share for any digital destination. <https://www.adobe.com/express/create/video>.

- Canva.com provides its Pro Tier subscription free to nonprofits who provide proof of 501(c)3 status. They have video editing as well as graphic design tools.

Email Submission Instructions

- Digital audiovisual presentations may be submitted to Arts Fort Worth via email or Dropbox at grants@artsfortworth.org.
- If files are too large for email or drop box, set up a free account with https://wetransfer.com.
- **NEW THIS YEAR:** maximum file size is 600 MB.
- **NEW THIS YEAR :** Digital submission format is.mp4 only. We will accept still photographs in a video format, YouTube, or a video of a PowerPoint presentation.

Note: We will make every effort to confirm receipt of A/V material submissions via email. We strongly urge you to submit prior to the deadline, if possible.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications are evaluated and scored by panelists on the merits listed below. Awards are not based on need.

Community Impact	50 points
Capability	30 points
Artistic Mission	20 points
<u>Total</u>	<u>100 points</u>

Community Impact:

- Extent to which programming serves the organization’s community or constituency.
- Potential to reach underserved populations whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited.
- Diverse representation of gender, race, and disability, analogous with city demographics amongst board, leadership, staff, artists served, and participants in programs and audiences.
- Efforts to reach new audiences and offer programs that attract both visitors and residents.
- Quality, true relationships with community, partners, artists or others involved. Are the right partners engaged?
- Evidence of support from the community.
- Potential impact on artists (including evidence of direct payment) and the artistic field.

Capability:

- Realistic organizational goals. Is the intended outcome viable?
- Ability to carry out the project based on such factors as the feasibility of the budget, the quality and clarity of the programming goals and design, the resources involved, and the qualifications of the project’s personnel.
- Key current metrics and evaluation plans to track success against stated goals.

Artistic Mission:

- Alignment of programming to the organization’s mission, audience, community, and/or constituency.
- Demonstrated progress towards stated mission and goals.
- Demonstrated need for this organization’s mission. Is approach informed by the community?
- Demonstrate innovation and creativity in mission-driven programming.

Awards

Grant awards are determined by the following factors:

- amount of funding available;
- number of eligible applications;
- review panel scores; and
- award compliance (including timely submission of required reports from previous grant years).

If recommended for funding, the Small Budget CORE Operating award is \$5,000.

Award notifications are sent to each applicant organization via email through the Foundant grant management system. As such, all applicants should add the email address administrator@grantinterface.com to their contact list to ensure timely notification delivery. Application scores and panelist comments for all applicant organizations are then uploaded to the grants portal. For grant recipients, award details and grant agreements stipulating the terms of the award are also made available through the grants portal. Grantees must return the fully executed grant agreement by the stated due date. Grant agreements not received by the deadline will be voided and funding will be reallocated. Grant recipients will also be asked to share quality photos for promotional use. All awards are made public via the Arts Fort Worth website and through various agency publications.

Matching Requirement

CORE Operating Support Grant recipients are required to procure and provide evidence of a 1:1 match of the funds awarded through any combination of earned or unearned income. **NEW THIS YEAR:** For small budget organizations, the match may be 100% in-kind and grantee will be asked to document in-kind contributions in their application. The grant recipient's failure to meet the match will result in a proportionally reduced grant award and may require reimbursement to Arts Fort Worth.

Payments

NEW THIS YEAR: The first payment of 50% of the grant will be made at the beginning of the grant cycle after successful execution of the grant agreement. The second payment of the final 50% will be available upon submission of the final report in September 2026. **Organizations that complete the funded program before the end of the project period may submit final reporting before the deadline and may qualify for early final payment.** All payments are contingent upon the satisfactory completion of Arts Fort Worth grant requirements. All payments are subject to the availability of funds from City contracts and are made via check.

Advice & Assistance

Arts Fort Worth staff are available year-round to assist with the application process and provide feedback on draft proposals, in advance of the application deadline. Draft applications are accepted for review and feedback up to 2 weeks before the application deadline. Due to the volume of requests, application assistance will not be available the final week before the deadline, however technical support related to the grants portal will be provided.

If you have questions or have access needs that make this application process inaccessible to you, please email grants@artsfortworth.org or call (817) 298-3037. The staff's role is to assist the applicant in making the best presentation for funding. Staff will not write the applications or prepare attachments for applicants.

Panel Review Process

Panelists are charged with reviewing each application within their designated grant pool online prior to the grant review sessions. Panelists will rotate serving as discussion leaders during the panel review sessions. Grant panels convene in late August to review submitted applications. Prior to the review discussions, panelists complete Conflict of Interest disclosures and are reminded of the goals and objectives of their role as volunteer reviewers. All efforts are made to seat panelists who do not have any conflict of interest within the panels. In the case that a conflict of interest is revealed on the day of the review, the panelist in question is required to remove themselves from the discussion during review of that application and not be allowed to score that application.

NEW THIS YEAR

Due to the volume of requests, CORE Operating Support applications from large, medium and small budget organizations are reviewed by separate panels.

Panelists are required to review applications prior to the panel meeting. At the meeting, panelists are allowed 7 minutes per applicant to discuss the organization and application's strengths and weaknesses. Panelists are instructed to present criticisms in a constructive manner and maintain a professional demeanor during the entirety of the review. Draft scores brought to the meeting may be changed after the discussion.

Arts Fort Worth staff keeps time and directs the panel discussion to ensure that all discussions are active and consistent with the evaluation criteria. Arts Fort Worth staff do not contribute to the evaluation discussion or score applications. Staff can, however, provide factual clarifications, application updates (such as major staffing changes) and current or past grant program compliance information. Panel comments are recorded by Arts Fort Worth staff. Immediately following each discussion, Arts Fort Worth staff provide an oral overview of key panel comments for reinforcement and necessary correction. After each review is completed, panelists record their final scores for the relevant application on the ballots provided. Panelists do not make recommendations on dollar allocations or funding decisions.

Panelist Selection

Grant evaluation panels provide Arts Fort Worth with expert guidance so that award decisions can be made objectively. The purpose of each panel is to provide qualitative and professional evaluations of applications based on the application review criteria.

Arts Fort Worth grant review panels are composed based on diversity in artistic discipline and may be current or past artists or arts administrators of various roles. The number of reviewers within each panel varies according to the number of applications received for each grant type. Arts Fort Worth Board Members are not allowed to serve as panelists during their term on the Board of Directors.

Additional considerations include:

- professional qualifications;
- broad-based knowledge of the nonprofit arts industry;
- experience with nonprofits of varying sizes;
- diverse representation of gender, race, and disability, analogous with city demographics;
- geographic location (residential and professional); and
- potential conflicts of interest.

Panelist nominations/applications are accepted year-round and may be made by any individual or organization. Self-nominations are permitted. Nominations and application forms may be obtained on the Arts Fort Worth website at

www.artsfortworth.org/volunteer or by contacting Arts Fort Worth staff. Submitted panelist applications are reviewed by Arts Fort Worth grants program staff for eligibility and appropriate fit within panel composition. Submission of a nomination or application to serve on an Arts Fort Worth grant panel does not guarantee selection. Selected panelists are formally notified via email of their acceptance on the panels.

All panelists serve single year terms. Panelists may be asked by Arts Fort Worth staff to serve consecutive terms to take advantage of their expertise and experience on the panels. In the event of unexpected vacancies, Arts Fort Worth staff may appoint substitute panelists from a group of previously approved panelists.

Prior to the review sessions, panel members participate in a mandatory evaluation training session. During the training session, panelists are familiarized with grants program policies and procedures, as well as guidelines for objective evaluation of applications. Panelists are welcome to consult with Arts Fort Worth staff about the grant process or funding policies any time throughout the grant year.

Acknowledgement

Grant recipients must acknowledge Arts Fort Worth and the City of Fort Worth in the following ways:

- a credit line and/or Arts Fort Worth logo must appear in all published materials and announcements regarding grant-supported activities with language similar to: “[Organization or project] is supported in part by a grant from Arts Fort Worth”;
- a page in each program dedicated to Arts Fort Worth (Arts Fort Worth will provide the content); and
- the City of Fort Worth should be recognized whenever Arts Fort Worth funding is acknowledged.
- Advocacy: Arts Fort Worth advocates for the arts by partnering with community members, stakeholders, and other advocacy organizations to ensure that our city is a thriving place for the arts. How can you get involved? Supporting candidates that prioritize the arts, casting your vote, and contacting your representatives on issues are all ways that can ensure the arts are continually funded. For more ideas, go to artsfortworth.org/advocacy.

Program page templates and logos are available for download at www.artsfortworth.org/grantee-resources

Reporting

NEW THIS YEAR: Small budget grantees are required to submit a midway service report, sharing presentation numbers, attendance figures (broken down by age group), and percentage of free admission. Grant recipients will also submit a comprehensive final report to Arts Fort Worth detailing the use of funds, additional income sources, activities assessment, and statistical outcomes, at the end of the grant period.

All reports are to be obtained and completed via the online grants portal. Failure to complete reporting requirements as specified below is considered a breach of contract with Arts Fort Worth:

- each delinquent report will result in a 5-point demerit per day from the organization’s next application score (there will be a 2-point demerit if the report is submitted on the due date but past the 5:00 PM deadline);
- organizations with outstanding reports are ineligible to sign any new contracts for funding;
- organizations with outstanding reports are deemed ineligible for funding;
- organizations with 3 or more late reports in the current grant cycle are deemed ineligible for funding for the next grant cycle; and
- failure to submit a final report within thirty (30) days after the contract end date will result in forfeiture of all remaining award payments to Arts Fort Worth and result in an automatic void of any new/pending award contracts executed between Arts Fort Worth and the grantee.

Equity

Through this program we continue an ongoing commitment to support arts for all. Creativity transcends all barriers, real and perceived. We commit to challenging systemic and historic barriers by building a platform where all have an opportunity to express and see themselves in the arts. Arts Fort Worth recognizes historical and structural disparities and a need for alleviation of these wrongs and is taking steps to create a culture of equity.

Appeals

Applicants who are deemed ineligible for funding may appeal the decision if they determine that the grantmaking process as described in these guidelines was not properly followed. Written appeals must be submitted to the Chair of the Board via grants@artsfortworth.org within two weeks of the initial ineligibility notification. Appeals are considered by a review process committee, appointed by the Arts Fort Worth Board Chair. The review process committee will report its findings and recommendations to the Arts Fort Worth Board of Directors for further action. Appeal responses are sent via email. All decisions of Arts Fort Worth and its Board of Directors are final.

Compliance

Arts Fort Worth grant recipients are expected to complete funded activities as proposed in the grant application. Award recipients are responsible for informing Arts Fort Worth, in writing, of any substantial or fundamental changes to funded activities. A written request for approval of changes, including related justification, should be sent to Arts Fort Worth prior to the expenditure of grant funds. Approval is not guaranteed.

If the organization's capacity or proposed programming changes significantly, the grant award may be revised or withdrawn. In some instances, awarded funds may be subject to repayment to Arts Fort Worth by the recipient organization.

The compliance measures listed herein are non-negotiable. Any pending or future grants are contingent upon satisfactory compliance with all measures listed above.

Marketing Support

NEW THIS YEAR:

All Arts Fort Worth grantees will be required to create a free organization account on Fort Worth Culturalyst <https://fortworth.culturalyst.com/explore>, which will help your organization and Arts Fort Worth promote grantee offerings to residents, visitors and potential collaborators. In addition to helping audiences discover cultural resources, Culturalyst is a hyperlocal tool for your organization to discover grant opportunities, distribute audition or artist submission calls, find volunteer support and much more. Applicants are strongly encouraged to create a profile as well, but a Culturalyst profile will not be a consideration in the grantmaking decision process.

Arts Fort Worth will share general grantee announcements via its social media channels. To request a post, contact Elena Greer, Director of Communications, at egreer@artsfortworth.org and she will happily accommodate your request as her schedule allows. When requesting a post, provide 2-3 images with credit information, and a short caption (which Arts Fort Worth reserves the right to edit as needed). Please note that Arts Fort Worth will not advertise ticketed events or promote fundraisers. Arts Fort Worth does provide links to grantee organizations on its website.