

## Arts Fort Worth Community Impact Funds Guidelines

Grant Cycle 2026-2027

### Arts Fort Worth's Grantmaking 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 community impact** by
  - celebrating community diversity through inclusive artistic expression;
  - increasing accessibility and encourage broad-based participation in arts activities;
- **amplifying artistic expression** by
  - encouraging culture of creativity and innovation in the city of Fort Worth
- **increase business capacity** by
  - strengthening the service capabilities and business practices of arts providers; and
  - promoting tourism and economic growth in the City of Fort Worth.

To learn more about Arts Fort Worth's services and impact, [click here to view the FY25 Annual Report](#).

### Community Impact Funds Intent and Updates

Community Impact Funds provide fundamental mission support through unrestricted funding to established nonprofit arts organizations for general operations, administration, and programming costs. This grant opportunity combines the intent of the two grant opportunities previously called CORE and CORE Plus into one unrestricted grant.

This grant is **not** project specific; however, applicants will have the opportunity to provide information about specific projects and programs that demonstrate efforts to provide admission-free arts experiences for underserved participants in accessible venues. Past applicants will notice that this optional section of the application is similar to the past CORE Plus grant opportunity. Organizations that successfully complete this optional portion of the application will be eligible for additional funding. These additional funds will also be unrestricted for all allowable uses as described in these guidelines and in the final grant agreement.

Please note throughout these guidelines that there are updates to eligibility requirements, application processes and expectations around grant compliance and reporting. For convenience, these changes are labeled with "**NEW THIS YEAR**".

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## Timeline

Grant Application Open	May 11, 2026
Mandatory Applicant Orientation	May 11, 2026 (live); May 12 (online)
Application Deadline	July 10, 2026
Panel Review	August 25 – 28, 2026
Period of Performance Begins	October 1, 2026
Award Notification	November 2026
Midway Report Due	April 7, 2027
Period of Performance Ends	September 30, 2027
Final Report Due	October 7, 2027

## Mandatory Applicant Orientation

A representative from applicant organizations planning to apply for 2026-2027 Arts Fort Worth Community Impact Funds **must** participate in either the in-person Mandatory Applicant Orientation on May 11, 2026 from 9:00 am to 12 noon, at the Welman Project's new location 2109 S Main St, Fort Worth, TX 76110 **OR** via video conferencing on May 12, 2026 from 6:00 to 8:00 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. It is recommended that the grant writer or someone who can communicate well to the grant writer attends this orientation.

**NEW THIS YEAR:** In addition to receiving grant information, partners who are attending the in-person meeting will have the opportunity to participate in a listening session with Nico Leone, CEO of our North Texas National Public Radio affiliate KERA. Organizations may wish to attend. RSVP by using this link to reserve your spot. In addition to the organization's grant writer or a fundraising specialist, organization's may wish to bring executive and board leadership and/or program staff to participate in the listening session.

More information regarding the in-person or the online meeting will be provided when you RSVP.

[Click here to register for the May 11, in-person orientation](#) and listening session or [click here to register for the May 12 virtual orientation](#).

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## Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a grant from Arts Fort Worth Community Impact Funds, an applicant organization must:

- have a last fiscal year annual organizational operating budget of at least \$10,000;
- 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;
- **NEW THIS YEAR:** organizations with a budget of \$200,000 or more must have a salaried or contracted 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; organizations with an annual budget of \$199,999 or less are exempt from this requirement;
- 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 Use of Funds

Eligible uses for Community Impact Funds 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

**NEW THIS YEAR:** Grant requests are accepted once per year for this grant opportunity. Grant cycle announcements and deadlines are posted on the Arts Fort Worth website [www.artsfortworth.org/grants](http://www.artsfortworth.org/grants). All applicants must apply for funding online through Fort Worth Culturalyst at [fortworth.culturalyst.com](http://fortworth.culturalyst.com). Organizations already in the Culturalyst directory can log in with their existing account, and new applicants are encouraged to first create a profile, which will streamline the application process.

This new system replaces the previous Arts Fort Worth Grant Interface. Past grantees and applicants are strongly encouraged to download and retain past grant records, including applications, documents, notifications, agreements and follow-up reports. Records from past grant cycles will not migrate to the new Culturalyst system.

All records and reporting related to current grant agreements will remain with the Grant Interface (which is officially called the Foundant Grant Lifecycle Manager), until all funds have been distributed and final reports are received in the fall of 2026. This system will shut down in winter of 2026, to be fully replaced by the Culturalyst Opportunities Manager system.

**NEW THIS YEAR:** Applications are due **July 10, 2026 at 11:59 pm.**

For Spanish-language application support, please contact [grants@artsfortworth.org](mailto:grants@artsfortworth.org).

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## Application Process (Continued)

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;
- independent audit or compilation of year-end Statement of Activity for the most recent fiscal year. Only standard accounting practice format for year-end Statement of Activity or Profit & Loss will be accepted. Documents other than audit must be signed by the Board Chairperson.
- a copy of your organization's most recent end year 2023, 2024 or 2025 IRS Form 990, 990-EZ or 990-N; and
- audiovisual presentation.
- *\*Optional\** for the optional outreach portion of the application, a letter of support from a program or project stakeholder will be required to receive available bonus points.

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 and evaluation.

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## Audiovisual (A/V) Presentations

Requests for Community Impact Funds 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, Community Impact Funds FY27.  
**NEW THIS YEAR:** include, if applicable, venue name, location, date and programming.
- Presentations are limited to no more than **4 minutes**.
- Applicants are encouraged to create a new presentation every grant cycle.
- If stock footage is used, please mention this in your description, so panelists can understand when they are viewing actual samples of organizational programming.
- Please review materials multiple times on different systems before submission to ensure successful playback.
- 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 audiovisual materials for both applications to save staff time and resources.
- There are many free resources for creating a video, such as the Adobe Express online video maker <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.

## 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
<b>Outreach (Bonus)</b>	<b>5 points</b>
Total	105 points (max)

The following descriptions, prompts and questions are provided to help panelists determine a score in each category. It is strongly recommended that applicants attempt to address these points in the narrative segments of their application.

## Evaluation Criteria (Continued)

### Community Impact (50 points):

- 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, advisory 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 (30 points):

- Realistic organizational goals. Is the intended outcome clearly stated and viable?
- Ability to carry out the project or stated mission 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 organization's personnel.
- Current key metrics and evaluation plans to track success against stated goals.

### Artistic Mission (20 points):

- 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.

### **NEW THIS YEAR:** Outreach (Optional category worth 5 bonus points):

Feedback from past grantees, panelists, and grantmaking experts indicated that, while the intent of CORE Plus outreach grants is well-aligned with community need, similar impact could be achieved while reducing the administrative burden on grantees, review panels and the Arts Fort Worth team members responsible for managing the grantmaking process.

Applicants may provide additional information and attachments to showcase a program or event that demonstrates meaningful outreach to Fort Worth residents who may have limited access to the arts. For example, an applicant may cite the programs they present in Title I public schools, which, due to location or other factors, may not be receiving the same level of arts outreach opportunities as other schools in the same school district.

## Evaluation Criteria (Continued)

Applicants that previously applied for CORE Plus outreach support are especially encouraged to complete this supplemental section of the grant application for consideration of additional funding.

Unlike past CORE Plus outreach grants, these additional funds will be unrestricted for any allowable use as described in these guidelines and in the grant agreement.

Unlike the criteria above, each of the following bullet points is worth exactly one (1) bonus point:

- Taking programming directly to residents of underserved communities or providing transportation for residents of underserved communities to attend programming at the applicant's venue
- Providing free admission for audiences and participants
- Presenting programming in an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible venue
- Demonstrating efforts to increase inclusivity and accessibility through program design, marketing, and participant engagement
- Providing a letter of recommendation from a program stakeholder, such as a participant, partner or funder

## Awards

Grant awards are determined by the following factors:

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

Grants in this budget category in FY26 ranged from \$5,000 to \$38,000.

Once average panel scores are finalized, awards are allocated by Arts Fort Worth staff through use of a predetermined funding matrix. Funding matrices are developed prior to the grant review sessions to ensure award allocations are fair and replicable. Total possible grant requests traditionally exceed the funds available. Funding is not guaranteed. Award determinations are approved and finalized by the Arts Fort Worth Board of Directors.

### **NEW THIS YEAR:**

For each of the five points awarded in the optional bonus **Outreach score**, an additional \$1,000 dollars will be added to the grantee's total operating grant award. These additional dollars are also unrestricted within the allowable uses presented in this document.

Award notifications are sent to each applicant organization via email through the Culturalyst Opportunity Management System. **As such, all applicants should add the email address**

## Awards (Continued)

**noreply@culturalyst.com to their contact list or safe sender list to ensure timely notification delivery.** Applicants will also be able to monitor updates and decisions concerning their application by logging into Culturalyst.

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, with appropriate permissions and citations for promotional use. All awards are made public via the Arts Fort Worth website, Arts Fort Worth's annual form 990 tax documents, and through various agency publications.

## Matching Requirement

Community Impact Funds 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. The additional bonus Outreach funds are included in this matching requirement. 50% of the match may be in-kind and grantee will be asked to document the in-kind contributions in their application budgets and financial statements. The grant recipient's failure to meet the match by either method will result in a proportionally reduced grant award and may require reimbursement to Arts Fort Worth.

## Payments

Payments are made on a predetermined payment schedule. All grants in this category are distributed in two equal installments payable in January and October (upon submission of final report) of the funded year. All payments are contingent upon the satisfactory completion of Arts Fort Worth grant requirements, including but not limited to the execution of the grant contract, satisfactory past grant reporting, and completion of any Arts Fort Worth site visit action items. All payments are subject to the availability of funds from City contracts. All payments 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 Culturalyst Opportunity Management System will be provided.

If you have questions or have needs that make this application process inaccessible to you, please email [grants@artsfortworth.org](mailto:grants@artsfortworth.org) or call (817) 298-3038. 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 participate in discussion 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.

Due to the volume of requests, Community Impact Funds applications from large, medium and small budget organizations are reviewed by separate panels. Panelists are required to review and score 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 verify their final scores for the relevant application. 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.

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## Panelist Selection (Continued)

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](http://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, but a panelist cannot serve more than three consecutive terms (years). 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 (available for download [here](#)); 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 Fort Worth is a thriving place for the arts. By 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](http://artsfortworth.org/advocacy).

## Reporting

**NEW THIS YEAR:** Grantees are required to submit one midway service report throughout the year, sharing presentation numbers, attendance figures (including a s), 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 Culturalyst Opportunity Management System. 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;
- organizations with outstanding reports are ineligible to sign any new contracts for funding;
- organizations with outstanding reports are deemed ineligible to receive grant installments;
- organizations with three (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 making art accessible and available to all Fort Worth residents and visitors. Understanding that creativity transcends all barriers, 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, with community feedback and guidance.

## 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](mailto: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

All Arts Fort Worth grant applicants will be required to create a free organization account on Fort Worth Culturalyst <https://fortworth.culturalyst.com/explore>, where they will complete and submit their application. This same profile will help your organization and Arts Fort Worth promote grantee offerings to residents, visitors and potential collaborators. In addition to connecting local artists and audiences to cultural resources, Culturalyst can help your organization to discover grant opportunities, distribute audition or exhibition submission calls, find volunteer support and much more. Arts Fort Worth will regularly promote profiles, events and opportunities that are hosted on the Culturalyst platform.

Applicants with a complete Culturalyst profile will find key application fields — including organization name, address, mission, bios, and work samples — pre-filled in the application, saving significant time on future applications. Once submitted, applicants can track the status of their application in real time through their Culturalyst dashboard, including confirmation of receipt, review stage, and decision. Awardees will also be able to link events and programs from their Culturalyst calendar directly to their grant as evidence of impact, supplementing the formal reporting process.

## Thank You

As a representative of a Fort Worth-based arts organization, you are providing an important service to your community. Whether or not you are successful in securing a grant through this process, Arts Fort Worth values your contributions to the local arts ecosystem and encourages you to stay connected, as new opportunities to support and promote your programs and projects may become available in the future. Thank you for your work and your advocacy, which make Fort Worth a better place to live, work and create and celebrate.