



# 2024-2025

## GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

### Guidelines and Application Instructions

ELIGIBILITY CHECK DUE: **THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2023 BY 4:30PM ET**

APPLICATION DUE: **THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 2023 BY 4:30PM ET**

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## GREETINGS!

Thank you for your interest in a 2024-2025 General Operating Support (GOS) grant. Cuyahoga Arts & Culture’s [mission](#) is to inspire and strengthen the community by investing in arts and culture. CAC is excited to work with you to connect Cuyahoga County residents to arts and culture in our community.

### LOCAL PUBLIC FUNDER

CAC is the region’s largest funder for arts and culture, helping hundreds of organizations in Cuyahoga County connect millions of people to cultural experiences each year. Cuyahoga County residents created CAC in 2006 when they approved a tax to support arts and culture.

### \$230 MILLION+ INVESTED

Since 2007, CAC has invested more than \$230 million in more than 470 organizations both large and small, making Cuyahoga County a more vibrant place to live, work and play. CAC funds nonprofit 501(c)(3) arts and culture organizations based in and serving Cuyahoga County residents.



### OUR CORE GRANTS ARE:

#### PROJECT SUPPORT

Annual grants of up to \$20,000 for arts and culture projects.

#### GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

Multi-year core support grants to qualifying organizations with a primary mission of art and culture in Cuyahoga County.

#### CULTURAL HERITAGE

Multi-year core support grants of up to \$30,000 for qualifying cultural heritage organizations with a primary mission of arts and culture.

This document contains the guidelines for **2024-2025 General Operating Support**. Organizations may only submit one application per cycle. First-time applicants must apply for Project Support. To learn more about the differences between CAC’s grants, refer to the [2024 Grant Guide](#).

Our team is here to support you throughout the application process. For additional information and resources, please contact a [member of the Grantmaking Team](#). Visit [cacgrants.org](#) to learn more about workshop opportunities, and [sign up](#) to receive email updates.

For additional information about terms in the guidelines or application materials, please see [our glossary](#).



### 2024-2025 GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE

- Eligibility Check Due ..... June 1, 2023 at 4:30PM
- Application Due ..... August 3, 2023 at 4:30PM
- Public Panel Review..... Week of September 18, 2023
- Board Approves Grants ..... November 15, 2023
- Grant Agreements Sent and Signed ..... November and December 2023



Cleveland Public Theatre - Dia de Muertos photo by Steve Wagner

## ABOUT THE GRANT - GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

**CAC strongly encourages applications from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)-led and serving organizations, as well as others that have been historically excluded or marginalized.**

The purpose of Cuyahoga Arts & Culture's General Operating Support (GOS) grant is to strengthen the community by deepening its access to arts and culture through meaningful, multi-year core support to arts and cultural organizations based in and serving Cuyahoga County. Grant applications are reviewed through a transparent panel review process. CAC is accepting applications for 2024-2025 General Operating Support.

### SUCCESSFUL GOS APPLICANTS HAVE:

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A primary mission to create, produce, present or provide arts and/or cultural services for the public;

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A history of vibrant artistic and/or cultural programming; and

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Strong organizational capacity to carry out their work.

### 2023 GOS Grant Recipients

All current GOS grant recipients are required to submit an Eligibility Check. If your organization has received four consecutive years of CAC funding (two GOS cycles or one GOS and two PS cycles), you will not need to complete application and panel review. Contact your [grant manager](#) to learn more. Current GOS grant recipients not meeting this requirement will be required to complete an application and panel review.

**ARTS & CULTURE DEFINED:** Arts and Culture is defined in the [Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3381](#), CAC's enabling law, as "including, but not limited to, literature, theater, music, dance, ballet, painting, sculpture, photography, motion pictures, architecture, archaeology, history, natural history, or the natural sciences."

## ELIGIBILITY

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY

To be eligible for a General Operating Support grant, organizations must meet **all** the following criteria:

Have a **primary mission** to produce, present or create programs or activities in areas directly concerned with arts or cultural heritage (as defined by the [Ohio Revised Code](#)) for the general public

Have a **permanent and viable base** in Cuyahoga County for at least three years prior to June 1, 2023. Applicant organization must have a business address in Cuyahoga County and conduct the majority of its local programs and services in Cuyahoga County for the residents of Cuyahoga County and visitors to Cuyahoga County

Exist as a **501(c)(3)** organization for at least three years or be a successor to an arts or cultural organization that had been a 501(c)(3) organization for at least five years prior to June 1, 2023, and be verified as a 501(c)(3) by [GuideStar's Charity Check service](#)

Employ for a minimum of two years prior to June 1, 2023, at least **one paid, professional** cultural/artistic and/or administrative staff person working a minimum of 20 hours per week (or 1,040 hours per year) at or above the state-designated minimum wage. This staff person must receive an IRS Form W-2 from the organization reporting wages and withheld taxes and must have approval from the organization's Board of Directors to sign for financial transactions and grant-related documents

Provide independently certified audited **financial statements** for FY20, FY21, and FY22 if its FY22 total expenses are \$750,000 or more; or provide either independently certified audited or reviewed financial statements for FY20, FY21, and FY22 if its FY22 total expenses are less than \$750,000

Provide an IRS Form **990 or 990-EZ** for the most recently completed fiscal year (Required for all budget sizes)

Be **incorporated and authorized** to do business in Ohio as verified by the [Ohio Secretary of State](#)

Meet **minimum income threshold** of \$100,000, as determined by a financial review/audit or Form 990

Have previously **received and successfully completed** at least two Project Support grants from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture

### WHO IS INELIGIBLE TO APPLY

The following types of organizations are ineligible to apply for the GOS grant (this list is not meant to be exhaustive):

- Organizations whose primary mission is not arts and/or culture
- Organizations that are not in good standing with CAC and/or not in compliance with previous grants
- Organizations that are serving as fiscal agents or fiscal sponsors for an organization or program
- Religious institutions without a separate 501(c)(3) organization that specifically administers non-sectarian public programming
- Organizations that are the primary responsibility of a government agency
- National or state service organizations or supporting organizations
- K-12 schools, including parent- teacher associations and similar groups
- Fundraising organizations of any kind or "friends of" or "foundation" established for the primary purpose of supporting the activities of or fundraising for another ineligible organization
- Private foundations of any kind
- Units of government
- Private libraries
- Cemeteries
- Individuals
- Organizations that are applying for another core (Project Support or Cultural Heritage) grant in the same grant cycle



Beck Center for the Arts, credit Beck Center, Michael Simile with music students

## FUNDING CRITERIA

Successful grant applications will demonstrate Cuyahoga Arts & Culture's three funding criteria: **Public Benefit, Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy, and Organizational Capacity.**

### PUBLIC BENEFIT

An organization's ability to meaningfully connect with its community to achieve its mission.

Examples of how an organization can demonstrate public benefit include, but are not limited to:

- Understanding, respecting, and [sharing power](#) with its community
- Listening and responding to its community
- Building and strengthening relationships
- Being inclusive and engaging diverse populations
- Being accessible and inviting to its community and the broader public

### ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL VIBRANCY

An organization's ability to create relevant and engaging work that furthers its mission.

Examples of how an organization can demonstrate artistic & cultural vibrancy include, but are not limited to:

- Incorporating a process of reflection to ensure that programming is relevant to or created with its community
- Building the capacity of arts and cultural professionals, helping them to thrive
- Engaging a [diverse](#) team of arts and cultural professionals qualified to achieve the mission
- Identifying opportunities to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and [belonging](#) through its work

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

An organization's ability to successfully plan for and manage its resources.

Examples of how an organization can demonstrate organizational capacity include, but are not limited to:

- Setting goals, measuring progress, and evolving
- Recruiting and retaining a diverse staff and board that can carry out the mission
- Planning strategically to achieve and maintain a strong financial position
- Evaluating organizational processes and structures to ensure a culture of belonging where everyone can thrive



Karamu House - photo by Will Lindsey

## PRE-APPLICATION

### Get Connected with CAC

News, updates, and events, including technical assistance workshops and webinars, will be posted on the CAC [website](#) and distributed via email. Sign up [here](#) and opt-in to receive CAC Grant Information to learn more. Add CAC's URL and staff email addresses to your email safe senders list, address book, or contact list to continue receiving important information from CAC. CAC will not extend any deadlines if our emails are sent to your spam or junk mail.

We recommend that all new applicants schedule an informational meeting with CAC before the eligibility check deadline (June 1, 2023). To schedule a meeting, contact your organization's [grant manager](#).

### Submit the Eligibility Check

All new GOS applicants and returning GOS grantees must submit an Eligibility Check via CAC's [online application and reporting system](#). CAC uses the Eligibility Check process to determine whether an organization meets the criteria to receive a grant.



### REQUIRED MATERIALS INCLUDE:

- Organizational Information
- Audited or Reviewed financial statements for FY20, FY21 and FY22
- Most recently completed 990 or 990EZ (FY22 or FY23)
- Articles of Incorporation
- Secretary of State certificate of good standing

CAC Staff will review documents, verify nonprofit status, and confirm eligible organization requirements. Within a few weeks of the submission of the online Eligibility Check, CAC will reach out to applicants regarding their eligibility status.

**SEE THE FULL ELIGIBILITY CHECK  
INSTRUCTIONS HERE**

KEY  
DATE

**ELIGIBILITY CHECK - DUE THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2023 BY 4:30PM ET**



The Cleveland Orchestra - © Roger Mastroianni, courtesy of The Cleveland Orchestra

## APPLICATION

**Start early and submit early! The application must be submitted by 4:30 pm ET on Thursday, August 3. The online system will not accept late or incomplete submissions.**

### Complete and Submit Online Application

If your organization is deemed eligible through the Eligibility Check process, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture will notify you via email and provide access to the application. Applications must be submitted online using CAC's [online application and reporting system](#). To be considered complete, an application must include all required application question responses and required materials.



### BE PREPARED WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

- Organizational Overview
- Funding Criteria Narratives
- Institutional Goals
- Arts + Cultural [Support Materials](#)
- Organizational Support Materials
  - [SMU|Data Arts Cultural Data Profile Funders Report](#) for FY20, FY21, and FY22  
We recommend starting the CDP well before the application deadline. It may require you to compile additional data about your organization. More information can be found [here](#).
  - FY22 Audit or Review
  - Board of Directors List including affiliations
  - Current year organizational budget
- Statement of Assurances

**SEE ALL APPLICATION QUESTIONS  
AND EXPLANATIONS HERE**

KEY  
DATE

**APPLICATION DUE - THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 2023 BY 4:30PM ET**



## REVIEW PROCESS

**All eligible applications are evaluated by a panel of arts or cultural professionals from outside the region in a transparent panel review process.**

Panelists are chosen to represent a cross-section of professionals qualified to provide expert knowledge of specific arts or cultural disciplines, as well as for their management experience, professional knowledge of the sector and prior panel experience. CAC makes every effort to ensure that the panel is diverse in all respects. All panelists receive an honorarium for their service.

CAC provides the applications and support materials to panelists approximately four weeks prior to the panel review to allow panelists sufficient time for their evaluation. During the panel review meeting, the panel will evaluate all eligible applications based on CAC's Funding Criteria:

- **Public Benefit**
- **Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy**
- **Organizational Capacity**

CAC reviews applications for completeness but does not score or provide opinions. CAC will manage all administrative and logistical tasks necessary to conduct a successful panel review; provide panelists all documentation necessary to evaluate applications effectively; inform the panel in matters of CAC policy and procedures; provide all available objective information regarding an applicant to the panel, and serve as panel chair.

### Public Panel Review Meeting

The panel review will stream live on CAC's website for the public to watch the week of September 18, 2023. CAC will notify all applicants of the panel review meeting times and will post all details on the CAC website in advance.

## POST-APPLICATION

### Appeals Process

CAC will only consider and review appeals that are evidence-based and due to materially significant CAC processing errors that could have compromised an applicant's grant proposal. This does not include information that was in excess of the application's

space limitations or information that was submitted after the application deadline. Any requests for appeals must be filed with the Executive Director within 10 working days after the conclusion of the panel review meeting. Requests received after 10 days will not be considered.

Please note: The panel's analysis and scoring of applications are not subject to appeal and therefore will not be considered for appeal by the CAC Board of Trustees. Neither grant awards nor grant award amounts are subject to appeal.

### Board Meeting

Panel scores and grant amounts will be approved at the November CAC Board of Trustees meeting. This meeting is open to the public, and applicants are welcome to attend but not required.

GOS grant amounts are determined by a formula designed to distribute funding to recommended organizations by considering several factors, including:

- The total amount allocated to be granted for that GOS cycle;
- The averaged operating budget for the previous three fiscal years (FY20, FY21, and FY22) of each organization, as determined by each applicant's Eligible Revenue and Support (ERS) forms; and
- The aggregation of all GOS grant recipients' operating funds as determined by ERS forms; and
- The maximum annual grant amount for any one organization which will be adjusted in proportion to changes in the allocation.

Recommended grant amounts will be shared with applicants prior to the November board meeting.



### COMPLETE ERS FORM

All organizations that receive a score of 75.00 or higher must complete the [Eligible Revenue and Support Form](#) for FY20, FY21 and FY22. The ERS form is where an organization enters its annual sources of funding. It is used to determine the base revenue figure for each organization in the GOS pool, which is used in the funding formula. A grant manager will reach out to organizations recommended for a GOS grant after panel is concluded to begin this step in the process.

KEY  
DATES

**PUBLIC PANEL REVIEW MEETING - WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2023**  
**BOARD MEETING - WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2023**



Valley Art Center - photo by Michael Steinberg

## PANEL SCORING FRAMEWORK

Panelists will submit a score for each of CAC’s three funding criteria, creating a total score based on the following framework:

Has the application demonstrated the funding criteria?	Public Benefit: 45%	Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy: 35%	Organizational Capacity: 20%
<b>STRONG</b> The applicant has provided <u>strong</u> evidence that this funding criterion is met.	39-45	31-35	18-20
<b>FAIR</b> The applicant has provided <u>fair</u> evidence that this funding criterion is met.	28-38	22-30	13-17
<b>WEAK</b> The applicant has provided <u>weak</u> evidence that this funding criterion is met.	0-27	0-21	0-12

The highest possible total score is 100. Applicants who receive a combined score of 75 or higher will be recommended for funding.

## 2024-25 GRANT RECIPIENT REQUIREMENTS

**Grant Period: All funded activities and grant expenditures must occur during the two grant periods: January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024, and January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025.**

The grant amount is paid during each calendar year pending grant agreement compliance. All funded activities and expenditure of grant dollars must occur during the respective calendar year.

### Grant Agreement and Compliance

Recipients must sign a grant agreement each year of the two-year grant period. Grant agreements will be issued following Board approval at the 2023 and 2024 November meetings. To be considered an active grant recipient and receive funding, recipients must sign a grant agreement and meet the requirements therein.

### Grant Payments

CAC grants are reimbursement grants, and are paid in increments upon approval of organizational goals, reporting at mid-year, and year-end reports.

### CAC Grant Funding Restrictions

Grant Recipients shall use the GOS grant for organizational expenses relating to programs or activities directly concerned with arts or culture heritage. Prohibited uses of this grant are:

- costs of any programs or activities located outside of Cuyahoga County;
- activities that are not open to the general public;
- fundraising or benefits;
- regranting;
- scholarships, tuition assistance, awards or cash prizes;
- deficit reduction or elimination, trust endowments, cash reserves, penalty or litigation fees, loans, or interest on loans;
- capital improvements, facilities or equipment;
- religious ceremonies or events advancing or inhibiting a particular religious ideology;
- cost of receptions, food and beverages;
- agent's fees for programs contracted through commercial agencies;
- travel outside of the United States; or
- advocacy of specific political causes or candidates.

### Matching Funds

GOS grants are matching grants. Applicants are required to leverage CAC funds to secure additional income from other sources. This grant requires a 1:1 cash match. Sources of your matching funds can include, but are not limited to, foundation or government grants, private donations, ticket sales, and member dues. Matching funds may not include other funds from CAC. This includes any CAC co-funded grants. Contact CAC with any questions.

### Events Calendar and Credit Requirements:

Grant Recipient shall submit events through CAC's online events system, [ClevelandArtsEvents.com](https://ClevelandArtsEvents.com), in order to ensure a broad representation of their programming is included in the event system.

**Recipients shall have active events for each month that the organization has public programming.**

Grant Recipients shall also acknowledge funding from CAC and the residents of Cuyahoga County at their publicly funded programs. Grant recipients that do not comply with these expectations may be subject to a reduced final grant amount. [Calendar and Credit Requirement details can be viewed here.](#)

### Reporting Requirements:

All 2024-25 GOS grant recipients will submit yearly goals and have four online reports to submit throughout the cycle: mid-year and year-end reports in 2024 and 2025. These reports allow CAC to better understand progress made against goals, offer support where necessary, and provide an opportunity for organizations to reflect on their activities during the year. Reports consist of a narrative portion, financial documentation, and other required support material; instructions will be posted online at least 45 days in advance of deadlines. Grant recipients that submit a late final report, or do not submit a final report, may receive a reduced or revoked final grant amount.

### Maintaining Good Standing:

To receive CAC funds, a grant recipient must maintain its good standing with CAC during the grant period. A grant recipient is in good standing if it:

- fully and completely meets all requirements as stated in the grant agreement for the duration of the grant period;
- accurately represents its organization and its activities in all documents submitted to CAC. This includes, but is not limited to, the eligibility check, application, final report and all other reports and forms; and
- continues to meet the [eligibility criteria](#).

A grant recipient not in good standing with CAC will be officially informed of this status in writing.



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**arts & culture**  
strengthening community