National Scan of Local & State Arts Funders

In 2024, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture conducted broad research on nine arts and culture funders across the United States that make grants using public funds. The data presented here are a high-level summary of their grantmaking strategies, organized into key themes and funder profiles.

Throughout Cuyahoga Arts & Culture's history, we have often looked to other funders (local, regional, and national) to share best practices and ideas. This **National Funder Scan** was the latest effort to connect with a cohort of funding organizations to inform our work. This scan was led by CAC staff who identified and selected nine organizations from which CAC could benefit by learning about their current policies and practices. This included a robust website analysis, interviews with key staff members, and the development of summary documents included here.

> It is important to note that while we consider many of the organizations with whom we connected to be CAC's "peers" – the agencies vary vastly in budget size, scope of authority, funding source, and grantmaking practices. The purpose of this research was not to identify organizations CAC should emulate, but to learn how others are addressing key issues and find ideas that could be useful as CAC begins planning for its next levy cycle.

The resulting summary is broken into two main sections:
- **Key Themes**: trends, practices, and ideas sourced from across the organizations CAC evaluated, grouped by focus area.
- **Grantmaker Profiles**: summaries of each organization, and key takeaways that could be beneficial to CAC.

In all, the scan revealed that CAC is facing similar challenges and opportunities as other organizations nationwide. Additionally, CAC is well positioned with many of its current practices; our core focus on stewarding our public resource by making grants to arts and culture nonprofits (while other entities may conduct programs, manage physical assets, etc.) has resulted in a good baseline of policies and practices that ensure we are delivering on our mission. There is still room for improvement. Many of the organizations that participated in the scan have found ways to make their work more impactful, build deeper relationships with grantees and the community, and carry out new initiatives and programs that challenge the status quo. We invite you to explore the key themes and profiles, which we consider an ongoing resource as we shape our work for 2026, and beyond.

CAC developed a list of arts and culture funding agencies that span a variety of organizational structures, including state agencies, city departments, and a nonprofit intermediary using public funds. This list included funders that specifically had gone through the process of evolving their grantmaking in recent years, that primarily fund general operations, and that value and aim to increase equitable outcomes (by their own definitions) in their funding.

CAC conducted online research of the agencies and developed a common set of research questions and topics which were used in interviews. Nine organizations participated in Zoom or phone interviews. High-level questions were asked of all interviewees, but conversations were unique to each funder's process and points of interest. Data were compiled in a uniform format, and all who participated in interviews were given the opportunity to review the information and confirm its accuracy.

CAC's organizational structure is unique within the country, and it was not feasible to limit the scope of research to arts and cultural funding organizations that mirrored CAC's exact makeup. With the diversity in organizations included in the research, CAC was granted insight into the various complexities that exist within the work of grantmaking. In this research, you will see several styles of grantmaking strategies used to fuel decision making for these organizations. Some of these styles include responsive, participatory, trust-based, and outcome-focused grantmaking.

CAC will use the information in this document along with the data collected from CAC's grantee survey and community roundtables to assess CAC's current programs and inform future grantmaking.

Grant Panels & Application Scoring

Most funding organizations utilize panels to review and score grant applications based on a rubric or set of funding criteria. These value-based review processes determine who is eligible for funding, with some funders using panel scores to help determine grant amounts. Most respondents have more competition for and requirements of their smallest grants. The smallest grants are where panel scores matter the most.

CAC has a panel of experts from outside Northeast Ohio review applications based on a set of values-based funding criteria in a public review process. This review happens after CAC has determined a project's or organization's eligibility.

Examples:

- *Indianapolis:* Indy Arts integrates one staff and one board member on the panels, based on applicant feedback. Applicants may also answer questions that arise during the panel review.

- *Ohio:* Ohio Arts Council (OAC) adjusts the cut-off score (base level score required to receive funding) depending on its biennial budget.

- *Maryland:* Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) panelists must have a Maryland connection, unlike other agencies that mostly seek panelists from outside the region.

- *Washington DC, Austin, and Seattle:* They incorporate local panelists to enable those directly affected by the programming to have a say in who is funded.

- *Michigan:* Michigan Arts & Culture Council has eliminated panel in favor of staff-managed, compliance-based model, no funding criteria or values-based scoring.

- *Austin:* The City of Austin incorporates equity training for panelists as part of their onboarding process.

Involving Grantees in the Process: Sharing Power and Co-Creation

Many funders trust and work in partnership with their grantees by involving them in meaningful ways in the evaluation and creation of their grantmaking processes. It's common for these funders to have working groups that provide feedback and help co-create the grant guidelines.

CAC has for many years provided a public comment period on guidelines and solicited survey feedback on our processes. In 2024, CAC commissioned its first externally managed, anonymous survey, held grantee meetups, and is planning other modes of involving grantees in the shaping of grant policy recommendations. In previous years, CAC has engaged grantees in a variety of ways to inform its work. Examples include formal and informal networks, such as Neighborhood Connections, and feedback sessions to shape our funding criteria.

Examples:

- *Indianapolis:* Every three years, the organization does a more involved grant assessment in partnership with grantees, including a public comment period and focus groups to integrate feedback into the next draft of guidelines.

- *Maryland:* MSAC held an in-depth 14-week editing process to help shape the program, which included an open call for editors (the public) and individuals participating on behalf of grantee organizations. They worked with an equity consultant to shape and set the tone for the common goal of more equitable grantmaking, which worked well for them.

- *San Antonio:* San Antonio Office of Arts & Culture revises their grants every three years in a process that includes the community.

- *Seattle:* City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture held round tables, disbursed surveys, and conducted group/one-on-one sessions to solicit feedback from their community to ensure the inclusion of voices from all levels.

Determining Grant Sizes: Tiers, Funding Formulas, Caps + Floors, and Other Structures

In nearly all organizations, applicant and grantee budget sizes play a role in determining grant amounts. This is also commonly paired with a "tiered" approach, where applicants with similar budget sizes are grouped together and receive set amounts or ranges of grant funding. When grantee organization sizes vary so much, this tiered approach helps ensure that the smallest organizations still receive meaningful grant amounts, reserving funds for organizations of all sizes.

CAC's grants are determined using a funding formula that considers organizational budget size and, for the GOS grant, does have a weighted system to ensure the smallest organizations receive grants of a higher budget percentage than the larger ones, but does not currently have a tiered method. The formula was created by The Ohio State University for Ohio Arts Council's grant calculations. Learn more.

Examples:

- *Indianapolis:* Indy Arts Council has four "levels" determined by budget size. It recently added a level and shifted its focus to pushing more money to small and mid-sized organizations.

- *Ohio:* The 40 largest organizations by budget size are "Sustainability Large" and the four largest are capped at $750,000. Then, there are categories for "Mid" and "Small" organizations (budgets less than $50,000).

- *Denver:* The Scientific & Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) has three tiers that are treated differently: Tier 1 is the five largest organizations, as outlined in state statute (5); Tier 2 is large organizations (33); and Tier 3 is the remainder (about 260). The largest organizations are funded with an allocation, and the smallest nonprofits are evaluated through a competitive process, where panel scores impact grant amounts. SCFD has initiated a community process to plan for a potential reauthorization in 2028.

- *Maryland:* MSAC has five levels ranging from $50,000 to $10 million and over that each have a grant cap equal to a percentage of their budget, which will ultimately end up at 12% for the $50,000-$500,000 organizations, and 4% for the $10 million and over organizations.

- *Michigan:* Michigan Arts & Culture Council eliminated budget as a tool for determining grant amount; all eligible organizations may request up to the max grant amount ($25,000).

- *San Antonio:* There are eight tiers for grants within their "funding matrix." This matrix has a maximum grant allocation based on the most recent three-year average of net operating expenses coupled with a percentage that decreases as organizations have larger operational budgets. For example, organizations with budgets starting at $50,000 receive 30% rates, but organizations with budgets over $15 million receive 0%.

- *Washington, DC:* DC Commission of the Arts & Humanities has three classes for organizations to select the best path that suits their current endeavors. Organizations must show proof of 51% of both the organization's previous year's cash expenses and programming/services are devoted to the arts and humanities and/or arts education.

- *Austin:* The City of Austin categorizes by organization types: (501c3) organizations, individual artists, and creative businesses. Their highest cap is $80,000 for organizations while individual artists and creative businesses are capped at $30,000.

- *Seattle:* The organization no longer uses budget sizes to determine award amounts and has made a commitment to distributing 50% of allocated funds to organizations that are defined as People of the Global Majority (PGM) Centered or Progressing.

Allocations: Determining Funding Amounts Across Programs & Priority Areas

Most agencies, except those with it codified in local or state law, may not have a clear policy for how funds are divided among their respective grant programs or tiers.

Historically, CAC has committed 80-90% of its grantmaking budget to the General Operating Support grant program. CAC uses its board-approved allocation policy to inform its allocation decisions.

Examples:

- *Indianapolis:* The grant budget is determined by the city's budget allocation, but the amount that goes into each tier is flexible based on final scores, which impact grant amounts.

- *Ohio:* OAC prioritizes its sustainability (general operating) grant program. After the sustainability grants are calculated, the remaining funds are distributed to other grant programs. The agency also adjusts the minimum panel score required to receive funding to help meet the budget for each program.

- *Denver:* The allocation is set into state statute. "Tier 1" organizations (the five largest) receive 2/3 of the money, every year. An organization with a $55 million budget may receive up to $12 million. The agency will undergo an extensive, multi-year community planning process before its potential reauthorization in 2028.

- *Michigan:* Historically, 50% of grantmaking budget goes to operational grants, and the budget for remaining programs is determined after that is designated.

- *Austin:* Staff practices responsive grantmaking by creating grant programs to further support their grantees based on feedback and responses received from their surveying efforts.

Equitable Grantmaking Practices

Several grantmakers nationwide are undertaking efforts to embed equity into their work. Grantmakers have different ways of addressing equity in their grantmaking – for some, the focus is racial equity; for others, the focus is equity across the size of organizations and geographical diversity (urban/rural, focusing on specific zip codes). These efforts include making grants that promote racial equity and support organizations led-by and serving people of color, as well as broader efforts to redistribute funding that has historically gone to large, predominantly white institutions. Some agencies exist in communities or political contexts where prioritizing equity may result in push-back or other issues.

Equity is a core value of CAC. In all areas of our work, CAC strives to promote racial equity, inclusion, and belonging. CAC seeks diverse voices in the panel process, embeds equity within the Funding Criteria, and asks grantees to report on racial equity goals. In 2022, CAC received the Michael G. Shinn Award for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in Philanthropy from Philanthropy Ohio for the agency's efforts to implement equitable practices in organizational operations and its grantmaking.

Examples:

- *Denver:* The largest (founding) grantee organizations (each receiving between $8-12 million a year) acknowledge that the current funding model is inequitable. To address this, the larger nonprofits created the communityactsfund.org, which they use to fund Tier III (small organizations). The funds distributed are operating funds of the larger nonprofits and are not a passthrough of Denver's Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). SCFD embeds equity into its process in small ways at a staff level: equity statement, panelist training, improving application system, questions in the application.

- *Maryland:* See Maryland State Arts Council's Equitable Funding Model Research Packet, which outlines the changes they are making in their panel process, grants policy, and funding formula to increase the more equitable distribution of funds and reduce the burden for grantees. These changes include tracking demographics of panelists; training panelists; adjusting application questions; transitioning their formula to move more funds to smaller organizations and reduce historic and policy-driven bias against BIPOC led-organizations; and increasing technical assistance and outreach.

- Michigan: Michigan Arts & Culture Council's political environment makes funding equity-focused initiatives difficult; they focus on accessibility, by reducing barriers to apply (application fee) and by allowing organizations of all sizes to apply for maximum grant amount. They strongly emphasize geographic diversity and aim to make grants in every county.

- *Austin:* The organization hired a consulting group, had public listening sessions, solicited survey data, and provided all obtained information to the public before implementing their new grants which help to prioritize historically underrepresented communities. Based on their most recent final report, they have shown a steady increase in growing a more diverse recipient pool.

- *DC:* The organization exercises responsive grantmaking by incorporating a specific grant program, the East Arts grant, that benefits BIPOC-centered non-profit organizations that have suffered displacement due to gentrification in the Northeast and Southeast quadrants of their city. Organizations that are BIPOC and are awarded through the General Operating grant can also apply for the East Arts grant to utilize both funding sources.

Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

Some funders provide intensive technical assistance that may also inform their work:

- *Ohio and Indianapolis:* Ohio Arts Council and Indy Arts offer to review drafts of applicants' proposals before submission, providing objective guidance.

- *Austin:* The city agency has weekly open office hours, which allow grant recipients to easily connect with grantmaking staff.

Where is CAC in relation to what other agencies do in communities across the nation?

In many ways, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture does not have an organizational equivalent in structure, size, or revenue source. However, we know that by looking at the work of public funders across the nation, many make grants in similar ways and grapple with common issues and concerns. As we look to actions CAC might take in the future, we reflect on our current policies and processes in relation to the key themes identified through the national funder scan.

Funding Formulas

CAC's General Operating Support grant funding formula already does what many other funders are aiming to do (get away from direct budget-to-grant ratio funding, see Maryland), however, it is unusual not to use discrete tiers for funding based on grantee budget sizes.

Grant Panels

CAC's public panel system receives high praise from other funders who participate as panelists, some of whom cite CAC's model for their own panel development. Specifically, they take note of CAC's recruiting a diverse team of panelist from outside the region, clear parameters around panelist responsibilities, clear articulation of the funding criteria and how to frame their scores, and public conversations between panelists to determine final score.

Steady Cohort
Funders that have an interest in Trust-Based Philanthropy are moving to a model of funding for operating support that is similar to CAC's "steady cohort" model. (See Michigan's removal of values-based applications and Maryland's updated timeline for accepting new applications each year that foregoes the application for regular returning organizations on a multi-year cycle.)

Grantee Feedback
The peer funders CAC interviewed invest a good amount of time in involving grantees in the grantmaking process. CAC is finding new ways to incorporate grantees' voices in the grantmaking process through its series of Grantee Connect Meetings, and recent comprehensive and anonymous survey. CAC also utilizes a public comment period for its grant guidelines. CAC has not regularly held working groups or more in-depth opportunities, (though CAC has used this practice when developing its Public Benefit funding criteria) but will consider a variety of opportunities for grantees to be a part of the program development process in the future.

Exploring "Cultural Heritage"
This peer research project intended to research grant programs analogous to our General Operating Support and Cultural Heritage grants, however we did not find grant programs that were similar to our Cultural Heritage grant. The Cultural Heritage grant was initially designed to mirror a grant that Ohio Arts Council had (now the ArtsRISE grant). CAC's Cultural Heritage grant program has successfully increased flexible, multi-year commitments to organizations that otherwise are not eligible for General Operating Support. Still, it may be possible to do this without determinations around cultural heritage organization status.

City of Austin Texas Economic Development Department's Cultural Arts Division

Location: Austin, Texas

Agency Type: PUBLIC - Citywide agency

Funding Source: Hotel Tax (5%)

Staff Size: 5

Full Organizational Budget: $60 million

Grants Range: $5,000-$150,000

Number of Grants/Year: 366

Relevant Programs: Thrive (Cultural Heritage related) & Elevate (General Operating Support related)

- Thrive Grant
  - The Thrive Grant is a cohort-style grant with an estimated 35 contracts awarded, ranging $85,000 - $150,000.
  - These grants seek to address a long-term need for intentional investment to support and develop arts organizations and cultural institutions of, by, and for communities that are at immediate risk of cultural erasure and displacement within Austin.
- Elevate Grant
  - The Elevate Grant supports the creative, administrative, and operational expenses of creative activities for tourists and residents of Austin.
  - Elevate for Nonprofits grants range from $40,000 to $80,000 and an estimated 125 contracts are awarded.
  - Elevate for Individual Artists and Creative Businesses grant range from $15,000 to $30,000 and an estimated 104 contracts awarded.
- Priority is given to those who have been at immediate risk of cultural erasure and displacement within Austin and/or have been institutionally marginalized and under-funded by the City of Austin Cultural Arts Division.
- Grants are score-based and not guaranteed by merely meeting eligibility criteria.

Points of Interest

- **Focus on race:** These equity practices are highly driven by data and community input, led by the Economic Development Department of the City. LGBTQIA and disability communities are included in the focus of equity along with BIPOC communities.

- **Panelists:** Panelists are local, national, and international participants who have equity training embedded in the preparation process for application reviews. In training and during the review panels, they utilize a training facilitator to emphasize equity points.

- Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue requires applicants to:
  - Produce activities that are open and advertised to Austin residents and tourists.
  - Promote and enhance the City of Austin as a cultural destination.
  - Hold events that occur in Austin or its extraterritorial district.

- Within their grant cohort, each organization does the following:
  - Meet with staff to discuss goals and path to becoming a city-funded institution.
  - Receive tailored support through optional training and networking.
  - Participate in peer leadership opportunities by sharing expertise with others in the cohort.
  - Provide feedback on future programming.

Scientific and Cultural Facilities District - Denver

Location: Denver, Colorado (7-county region)

Agency Type: PUBLIC – Tax district created within Colorado law, approved by voters
- Four members of the board are appointed by the governor, one is appointed from each of the seven counties (by the board of county commissioners or city council).

Funding Source: Sales tax (1 cent per 10 dollars)

Staff Size: 6

Organizational Budget: $86.5 million

Grantmaking Budget: $85 million

Grants Range: $1,000–$12.3 million

Number of Grants/Year: 300

Relevant Programs: General Operating Support
- These operating grants are for 501c3 organizations that are at least 5 years old with an "arts or science" related mission (like CAC's definition of arts and culture).
- They use an annual application cycle, with organizations that have received three consecutive years of funding only needing to do the eligibility check every three years.

Points of Interest

- **Paid attendance:** Paid attendance is incentivized in the application process (accounts for 48% of the formula for mid-sized applicants). This has led to organizations offering "penny tickets" or benefits to SNAP recipients (e.g., 10 people for a dollar) to increase "paid" attendance rates.

- **Tiered grant structure:** Tier I is made up of the five largest organizations, named in the state statute; Tier II funding is determined by budget size; and Tier III by competitive (score-based) grantmaking process. Outside of the paid attendance incentive, grant amounts are directly correlated to a budget size within a tier. Under the current structure, a $55 million organization (in the largest tier) may receive a grant of up to $12 million.

- **Priority for large organizations:** The five largest grantees (Tier 1) were instrumental in creating the tax, which failed the first time but passed by voters in 1988, 1994, 2004, and 2016. Tier 1 organizations receive 65% of the tax generated by statute, which is distributed by a budget-based funding formula.

- The largest (founding) grantee organizations (each receiving between $8-12 million a year) acknowledge that the current funding model is inequitable. To address this, the larger nonprofits created the communityactsfund.org, which funds Tier III (small organizations) with their own operating funds (not SCFD passthrough).

DC Commission of the Arts & Humanities

Location: Washington, District of Columbia

Agency Type: PUBLIC - Independent agency of the District of Columbia government. Designated as the state arts agency for DC.

Funding Source: Sales Tax (0.5%)

Staff Size: 39, 7 staff members specifically for grants

Organizational Budget: $51 million

Grantmaking Budget: $42 million

Grants Range: up to $200,000

Number of Grants/Year: 1,025 in 2023

Relevant Programs: General Operating & East Arts grant

- There are three categories of General Operating grants:
  - Generalists are organizations with primary purpose to present and/or produce arts and humanities experiences for the residents of DC, and for the children and youth of DC.
  - Service Organizations are organizations with primary missions to provide specialized services, including professional development, technical assistance, networking opportunities, shared operational services, printed materials, and research to DC and humanities organizations.
  - Capacity Building is a cohort that will support small arts and humanities organizations that have not previously been awarded a grant. This can include but is not limited to staff training, longer organizational initiatives, and sector-strengthening work that increases access and awareness of programs for DC. This grant does not require having a previous award.

- Currently this is a pilot program providing two years of funding, with applications every other year. Organizations can apply to other grant opportunities if they are considered Arts Education entities; if they are headquartered in the NE and SE quadrants, they are eligible to apply to the East Arts grant program.

Points of Interest

- **East Arts grant program:** This is a responsive program designed to combat the gentrification in the SE quadrant of DC. This grant supports BIPOC organizations and artists in this geography. This is a project specific grant that also allows grantees to apply for General Operating. This, paired with General Operating's Capacity building opportunity, allows BIPOC organizations to access more funds.

- **Grant "enhancement" recommended by managers:** Grant budget is assumed to be set for 90% of expected funding. The remaining 10% is offered, if available, as an enhancement grant – up to 50% of their awarded General Operating Grant – later in the same fiscal year. The grant managers oversee communication with organizations, and they will recommend funding to specific groups as this is not offered for all grantees.

- **Operating Reserve:** General Operating allows for a percentage of the award to be used to create or expand their operating reserve. This can only be done by submitting a separate specific request before accepting their General Operating award.

Indy Arts Council

Location: Indianapolis, Indiana

Agency Type: NONPROFIT
- Board members are nominated and confirmed by existing Board members, not determined by city or funders.

Funding Source: The majority of funds ($2-3 million) come through the City of Indianapolis and are passed through the Parks and Rec Committee, as well as from the Capital Improvement Board. The organization was created as a nonprofit so they could raise private funds.

- Indy Arts must annually advocate for funding from the mayor, showing value related to cultural tourism. Historically the city has preferred their funds going to larger organizations for this purpose.

Staff Size: 15

Organizational Budget: $5 million

Grantmaking Budget: $2.8 million ($1.5 to Annual Grant Program)

Grants Range: $5,000-$72,000

Number of Grants/Year: 91 (300-800 including artists grants)

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Relevant Programs: City of Indianapolis Annual Grants Program

- These grants are for nonprofit or fiscally sponsored organizations that do year-round arts and cultural programming.
- Grant sizes range from $5,000 to $72,000. The largest organization could receive up to 1% of their budget, and the smallest has the potential to receive up to 100% of its budget.
- Applicants must demonstrate community impact and meet external goals around supporting tourism/hotel occupancy.

Points of Interest

- **Tiered funding:** In 2016, the agency created three levels for budget size so small organizations do not compete directly with big organizations for the same funding. More recently, Indy Arts has split this into four levels.

- **Focus on equity:** In 2019, they worked with grantees to evolve the funding criteria to consider socioeconomic and racial equity.

- **Funding for BIPOC groups:** The organization is employing a variety of approaches to increase funds to BIPOC organizations including increased marketing and technical support/outreach; diverse perspectives on panel and panelist training; and eligibility for fiscally sponsored organizations and those without a primary mission of arts and culture.

Maryland State Arts Council

Location: Baltimore, Maryland

Agency Type: PUBLIC – State agency within the Maryland Department of Commerce

Funding Source: annual appropriation from the State of Maryland and the NEA, some private/non-governmental contributions

Staff Size: up to 19

Organizational Budget: $32 million

Grantmaking Budget: $28 million; $18 million for GFO program

Grants Range: $3,500–$1.3 million for GFO program

Number of Grants/Year: 300 for GFO program

Relevant Programs: Grants For Organizations (GFO)

- The operating support grants are for nonprofits and government units that produce/present ongoing arts programming for the public.
- The minimum eligible income threshold is $50,000; grants are open to art departments/programs of larger entities (museums at a university, for example).
- All grantees re-apply annually but only go through the full application and panel review every three years on a rolling basis (applications accepted annually); grantees can request reapplication or be required to reapply by staff at any time.

Points of Interest

- **Moving towards equity:** In 2021, MSAC conducted in-depth research on funding models and proposed a unique five-year transition toward a more equitable model. This model is currently in its second year, with guidelines in place to prevent drastic year-to-year changes for any given grantee.

- **Simple funding formula:** There is a dollar-cap amount and percentage cap for each budget category, resulting in the smallest applicant receiving up to 15% of its annual operating budget, and the largest organization receiving 4%. The tiers only go up to an organizational budget of $10 million+, so the largest organizations still receive a relatively higher percentage than the largest organizations in CAC's grantee pool.

- MSAC's website and guidelines are especially clear in articulating the structure of their organization, how their grants work, and lay out their five-year transition for grantees and the public.

- From their Equitable Funding Model Research Packet – "Approximately 20 State Arts Agencies across the nation currently use a form of an equitable funding model (graduated/tiered) where the formula results in smaller and mid-sized organizations receiving a larger percentage of their budgets to support general operations… Additionally, only one other state arts agency awards general operating grants over $500,000 (MN), and no other agency awards grants over $1,000,000 to a single organization."

Michigan Arts & Culture Council

Location: Lansing, Michigan

Agency Type: PUBLIC - Independent agency within the State of Michigan's Michigan Economic Development Corporation (a quasi-state agency)
- Board of 15, appointed by the Governor

Funding Source: State and federal NEA appropriations

Staff Size: 7

Organizational Budget: $11 million

Grantmaking Budget: $10 million

Grants Range: up to $25,000

Number of Grants/Year: 600, with approximately 300 in operational support

Relevant Programs: Mission Support grant (operational support)

- These grants are for nonprofit organizations in Michigan who complete the NEA's self-evaluation workbook. Only organizations with an NTEE code that starts with A (arts and culture) are eligible.
  - There is a public programming requirement– organizations must show proof as part of eligibility.
- Grants are compliance-based with no evaluation of narratives or values-based scoring. Applications only require documentation to prove the organization is eligible for the grant.
  - There is a certain level of subjective review in the eligibility application on whether a project/organization provides "benefit to the community"; staff make a yes or no determination.
  - Final reports are also compliance-based and are reviewed by staff in a similar capacity to how CAC reviews final reports.
- Their goal is to reach the full geographic spread of Michigan.

Points of Interest

- **Using feedback to make change:** With support of the State Office of Continuous Improvement, the organization conducted an in-depth research project (grantee surveys, workgroups, townhalls) resulting in policy changes to streamline/transform funding as revenues diminish:
  - They switched to a compliance model with specific eligibility, a shared max grant amount for all organizational support grants of $25,000, and all grantees receive the same percentage of their request amount.
  - The largest grantees saw the biggest change; previous max grants were around $60,000. Staff had individual conversations with all organizations that would see significant drops, and most were amenable to the changes and supportive of the flatter spread of funds.

- **Increasing geographic distribution:** If there any counties or districts they're not funding, the organization will do a second round of grantmaking with increased marketing specifically in those regions, typically in smaller, less metropolitan districts.

Ohio Arts Council

Location: Columbus, Ohio

Agency Type: PUBLIC - state funding agency, with permitting legislation in the Ohio Revised Code
- The 19-member board is appointed by the governor (15) and by the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives (two each).

Funding Source: State budget and National Endowment for the Arts

Staff Size: 19

Organizational Budget: $27 million

Grantmaking Budget: $24 million

Grants Range: $500-$750,000

Number of Grants/Year: 1,332

Relevant Programs: Sustainability – operating funds for organizations that produce arts and cultural programming of all sizes

- OAC's operating grants are open to organizations both with and without a primary mission of arts and culture (only arts and culture budgets go toward determining grant amount).
- Grant amounts are determined by the same basic formula as CAC but also include panel score. Organizations are divided into tiers with varying requirements:
    - The four largest organizations are pulled out and capped at $750,000.
    - Large – for the 40 largest arts & culture mission organizations.
    - Medium – for organizations larger than $50,000 budget.
    - Small – for organizations with a budget of less than $50,000, may request up to $10,000.
- While organizations can receive multiple OAC grants, the aim is for all applicants doing regular arts and culture programming to end up in this grant category.

Points of Interest

- **Focus on "Equity Gap":** A recent Equity Gap project led to several programmatic changes:
    - Operating support applications are accepted every two years (used to be every four years), making easier and more frequent entry-points for newer organizations. For the "Large" category outlined above, organizations still apply every four years.
    - Funding Criteria overhaul: The main categories remain, but the language has adjusted to focus more on serving underrepresented populations.
    - The ArtsRise grant program was created.

- **ArtsRise program:** These grants are up to $5,000 and aim to invest in historically underrepresented populations. Grants are made to organizations whose staff and board are of a culturally specific population, or organizations with projects to specifically to improve their accessibility, inclusivity, equity, and diversity with these identified population groups. OAC includes a broad list of culturally specific populations, and includes people with disabilities, older adults, Appalachian and rural communities, low income, LGBTQ+, and veterans in this category as well.

- **Reaching all residents:** OAC strives to reach every county in Ohio. They emphasize removing barriers for under-resourced Appalachian and other rural cultural organizations as a part of a more general focus on diverse applicants.

San Antonio Office of Arts & Culture

Location: San Antonio, Texas

Agency Type: PUBLIC Citywide agency

Funding Source: Hotel Tax (15%)

Staff Size: 25 in Arts & Culture department

Organizational Budget: $13.5 million

Grants Range: $15,000–$450,000

Arts & Cultural: $7.7 million

Number of Grants/Year: 36 operational grants (2023)

Relevant Programs: Operational & Culturally Specific Grants

- San Antonio-based nonprofit arts organizations with operating budgets ranging from $50,000 to $15 million may apply for an Operational Support Grant with a seven-tier matrix determining maximum grant allocations.
- Operational Support Grantees with a focus to preserve or promote specific cultures may qualify for a Culturally Specific Grant of an additional 20% of the organization's three-year average of net operating expenses, not to exceed $150,000.
- An organization's operational Grant will not increase more than 25% of its prior year's grant amount.
- Culturally Specific Organizations' grant amounts will not increase more than 50% of their prior year's grant amount.
- These grants operate on a three-year funding cycle, with a provision of no decreases in grant amounts, pending funding availability.

Points of Interest

- **Tiered-funding structure:** a tiered funding structure was implemented in 2018. The changes included:
  - Switching from a competitive format (based on panel scores) to a tiered funding formula (based on budget size).
  - Replacement of panel reviews with reviews by staff and select community stakeholders.
  - A "phase-in" initiative to allow new organizations to access Operation Grants. New organizations are "phased-in" at 33% in year one, 66% in year two, and 100% in year three of their eligible amount (pending funding availability).

City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture

Location: Seattle, Washington

Agency Type: PUBLIC - Citywide agency

Funding Source: Admission Tax (0.05%)

Staff Size: 42, 8 specifically for "partnerships, education and grants"

Organizational Budget: $18.885 million

Grantmaking Budget: Depends on tax revenue, current year $25 million

Grants Range: $1,000-$150,000

Number of Grants/Year: 241

Relevant Programs: Centering Art & Racial Equity (C.A.R.E.) Grant

- Previously known as CIVIC Partners grant (2022), the C.A.R.E. Grant is general operating support grant, strategically re-named to highlight their city-wide goal of equity.
- It operates on a 3-year cycle with 60% of funded dollars now going to BIPOC and BIPOC-Progressing organizations.

Points of Interest

- The City of Seattle was the first government group to eliminate revenue requirements in application process, in an effort to promote reparative justice. Funding is based solely on scoring.
  - Inclusive Anti-Racist Values and Action are included in scoring points (10%). These include:
    - Values that are inclusive and welcoming of all people including those who have been most marginalized by our society's inequitable systems and structures.
    - Demonstration of evolvement and progress towards an anti-racist work practice.
    - Staff, board, artists, and key collaborators inclusive of those who have been most marginalized by our society's inequitable systems and structures.
  - 50% of available funding budget is distributed to organizations that are defined as People of the Global Majority Centered or Progressing (PoGMC), a term used by Grantmakers in the Arts.
  - Grantees must meet four to five points of interest to be considered People of the Global Majority Centered or BIPOC. However, if an organization meets four points but is lead by a white majority, it is determined to be PoGM/BIPOC progressing. These points of interests include their diversity of their leadership, staff, and representing artist; mission statement aim; and the significance of the audience.

- **Focus on BIPOC organizations:** Since 2011, Seattle has focused explicitly on racial equity and Black, Indigenous, and Person of Color (BIPOC) organizations. This has included a variety of approaches, such as:
  - Training for grantees;
  - In-person meetings and listening sessions;
  - Assessing how long inequitable practices have or have not benefited groups;
  - Proactive communication and advance notification to groups regarding structural changes to programs and how everyone benefits from equitable practices; and
  - Encouraging everyone's participation, even organizations who receive less money because of changes, to help build a more equitable community.

Local & State Funders

Funding Agency	Website	Funding Source
City of Austin Texas Economic Development Department's Cultural Arts Division	https://www.austintexas.gov/department/cultural-arts	Dedicated hotel tax
Scientific and Cultural Facilities District	https://scfd.org/	Dedicated sales tax
DC Commissions of the Arts & Humanities	https://dcarts.dc.gov/	Dedicated sales tax
Indy Arts Council	https://indyarts.org/	City budget appropriation
Maryland State Arts Council	https://msac.org/	State budget appropriation
Michigan Arts & Culture Council	https://www.michiganbusiness.org/industries/macc/	State budget appropriation
Ohio Arts Council	https://oac.ohio.gov/	State budget appropriation
San Antonio Office of Arts & Culture	https://www.sa.gov/Directory/Departments/Arts	Dedicated hotel tax
City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture	https://seattle.gov/arts	Dedicated admissions tax

Other Resources

Ohio Arts Council's Equity Gap Project
https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/equity-gap

Community Acts Fund
https://communityactsfund.org

Maryland State Arts Council's Equitable Funding Model Research Packet
https://msac.org/media/455/download