



New Jersey State Council on the Arts

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Este documento también está disponible [en español](#).

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions directed to the Arts Council. Should your question not be addressed below, contact the appropriate [Program Officer](#). The [Glossary](#) is available for detailed definitions.

Compliance Questions

Q. My organization is incorporated and has been providing public programs for two and a half years, but we just started the IRS tax exempt process. Are we eligible?

A. No. You must have your IRS filings completed and approved at time of application.

Q. Where do I go to update or learn more about my Charities Registration?

A. Charities Registration is required by the State and managed by the NJ Department of Consumer Affairs. Organizations should consult New Jersey's Charities Registration Information [portal](#).

Q. Where do I go for my online renewal with the Division of Revenue?

A. Division of Revenue compliance is required by NJ Treasury. Organizations should visit New Jersey's Annual Reports and Change Services [portal](#).

Q. Do I need to register for a UEI at time of application? Can't I wait to do it if I get the grant?

A. No. All applicants must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM), and maintain an active SAM registration throughout the life of the award. To obtain a UEI, please visit [this sam.gov link for more information](#).

Q. My organization is not registered in NJSTART. Is it required?

A. [NJSTART](#) is required by the State in order to receive grant payments. Register at [NJSTART](#). The [vendor support page](#) has information to assist you with the registration process. All

grantees are encouraged to select the Electronic Transfer Funds (EFT) option in order to limit delays in receiving funds.

General Application Questions

Q. My organization has been a long-time Arts Council General Operating Support grantee but our circumstances have changed. Can we apply for General Program Support this year?

A. If you feel your organization is better suited for General Program Support, you may apply in that grant category. We do recommend that you speak to your [Program Officer](#) to ensure you are in full consideration of both options.

Q. How long does it take to fill out the General Operating Support or General Program Support grant?

A. For General Operating Support and General Program Support grant applications, allow at least six weeks to prepare your application and other supplementary information. That also includes time to proofread the application, ensure all links and uploads are working properly, and double check that all documents are fully uploaded.

Q. What is the Arts Council's policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the development and completion of grant application responses?

A. You may use AI to help compose your application. However, your application is expected to be a true and factual presentation of your programs and services. Care should be taken to certify that what you submit is accurate.

Q. My organization's mission is primarily arts based. Can I apply for GOS support?

A. No. GOS applicants must be organizations with 100% arts priority.

Q. Thank you for providing the guidelines in Spanish. Can I write my application in Spanish?

A. No. You must use English to prepare your application. You can use [Google Translate](#) to help you with your responses.

Q. Does the Arts Council offer translation services?

A. No. However, the Arts Council's website and documents can be translated using [Google Translate](#), a free, online, language translation service that translates text, documents, and websites from one language into another. Please note that the Arts Council does not guarantee the accuracy of the translated text.

Q. I see the narrative text boxes have character count limits. How does that translate to page length?

A. It is helpful to consider the character limits in relation to a word count or page length. Please note that the character limit includes spaces and punctuation. The estimates below are based on a rough average of six characters per word:

- 5,000 characters = 800 words or 1.5 pages single-spaced
- 3,500 characters = 575 words or 1 page single-spaced
- 1,500 characters = 250 words or .5 page single-spaced
- 500 characters = 80 words and 250 characters = 40 words

Discipline Questions

Q. Does my organization have a better chance of being funded based on the discipline we choose?

A. Choosing one discipline over another does not influence your chances of being funded by the Arts Council. Select the discipline that best matches your organization's mission so your application is reviewed by the most appropriate panel.

Q. I'm confused by the discipline "folk and traditional arts." Can you say more about it?

A. We use the phrase "folk and traditional arts" and "folk arts" interchangeably to refer to art forms practiced within specific cultural communities, shared from one person to another and passed down through generations. Communities have their own standards of excellence for each art form, and there are usually recognized master artists who help ensure that new generations understand and practice the art forms at the highest levels. If you have questions, please reach out to Program Officer [Sally Van de Water](#).

Q. My organization does historically accurate reenactments and includes historic art forms in our presentations. Are we eligible to apply through the folk & traditional arts category?

A. No. Folk and traditional arts are living cultural practices—things that people do today as part of their contemporary lives. They may be art forms that are handed down over generations (for example: quilting or community dance). They are not frozen in time.

Eligibility Questions

Q. If my organization is not a 501(C)(3), can we apply using a fiscal agent/fiscal sponsor?

A. No. Organizations using the services of fiscal agents or fiscal sponsors are not eligible to apply. You may be eligible to apply to your local [County Arts Agency](#) which receives funds from the Arts Council to regrant through its Local Arts Program.

Q. How can I be sure I meet the multi-county impact and majority New Jersey eligibility requirements?

A. To demonstrate the multi-county impact eligibility requirement, you can gather audience residence data in a variety of ways: surveys of zip codes and/or county, audience interviews, program follow-up assessments, program registration, and ticket sales. You cannot use website/social media analytics, mailing lists, or email lists.

Only count audiences who are directly engaging with your organization. Those who use your property but do not otherwise engage with your organization and/or its programs or services should not be reported to the Arts Council.

To demonstrate the majority (51% or more) New Jersey requirement, share relevant location and/or audience data. This can be accomplished in the following ways: 1) calculate the location of total performances, hours of programming, a ratio of expenses, or other. 2) To demonstrate through audiences, please see above.

Q. What constitutes a half-time administrative staff person?

A. Eligible organizations are supported administratively by at least one salaried (not contracted) employee working, at minimum, 20 hours a week. This individual must be available during regular business hours, be responsible for the administrative responsibilities of the organization, and be authorized as the SAGE contact.

Q. What constitutes a full-time administrative staff person?

A. Eligible organizations are supported administratively by at least one salaried (not contracted) employee working, at minimum, 35 hours a week. This individual must be available during regular business hours, be responsible for the administrative responsibilities of the organization, and be authorized as the SAGE contact.

Q. Can the staffing requirement for General Operating Support be spread out over two positions for a total of 35 hours?

A. No. For General Operating Support, there must be at least one full-time employee who works a minimum of 35 hours per week that is solely dedicated to the operations of the program or department. This requirement cannot be spread out or divided among multiple, salaried part-time positions. There is an exception, however, for those organizations in the Service Organization category. This requirement may be fulfilled by two individuals who work less than full-time.

Q. Can the staffing requirement for General Program Support be spread out over two positions for a total of 35 hours?

A. Yes. For General Program Support, this requirement can be spread out or divided among two part-time positions. Please work with your [Program Officer](#) to identify the one person who will represent the organization.

Q. My organization does not currently offer public-based programming for 10 months. Can we still apply?

A. No. Your organization must have a two-year track record of offering active public programming for at least 10 months of the year.

Narrative Questions

Q. We are open and welcome to all people. Why are you asking about our organization's inclusion and access efforts?

A. Arts Council grant awards are comprised of public funds. As such, the Arts Council has a priority and mandate to be representative of all people through its investment of public funds. A proven commitment to inclusion and access is an expectation of all organizations receiving grant funds from the Arts Council.

Q. How do I measure how much of my organization's programmatic work takes place in New Jersey?

A. This could be a calculation of the location of total performances, hours of programming, a ratio of expenses, or other. There will be opportunity in the application to describe how your organization measures your work.

Q. I don't know how to talk about the ways my organization is meeting accessibility requirements. How do I know if I am meeting both state and federal requirements?

A. Connect with your organization's ADA Coordinator or other individual(s) designated to oversee or address your organization's accessibility requirements to gain an appropriate understanding of your organization's specific offerings and policies around accessibility. If you are unable to locate an individual or group within your organization who fills this role, or if your organization does not undertake practices to meet accessibility requirements, you will need to adequately address this to be considered for Arts Council grants. All staff at an organization should be aware of accessibility and the organization's policies. For further information, education, and assistance on this topic, visit [The Cultural Access Network Project](#) website which includes a resource library designed to assist with the ADA planning process, as well as additional tools for providing and promoting access.

Recipients of state funding granted to serve the public are required to provide programs that are accessible and usable to individuals with disabilities. Please refer to the Arts Council's grant guidelines of the associated grant application/program for further details on specific requirements around the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act and accessibility. General Operating and General Program Support applicants are required to complete and upload an Accessibility Checklist at the time of application to outline and demonstrate compliance.

If awarded a grant, in partnership with the Council's partner the Cultural Access Network, grantees are required to complete a self-assessment and associated ADA Plan through a designated portal system once every three years. Please see the [ADA Planning](#) section of the [Cultural Access Network Project](#) website for further information and assistance.

Q. What is the Americans with Disabilities Act Plan/Policy?

A. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law designed to prevent discrimination and enable individuals with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of society. An ADA plan is a required plan that is administered by the Arts Council and its partner

at the Cultural Access Network. A grantee will see that the requirement of completing and/or submitting an ADA plan will be included with GOS and GPS grant contract specifications once every three years. The Cultural Access Network includes a resource library designed to assist with the ADA planning process, as well as additional tools for providing and promoting access.

Q. My organization's mission is not arts education based. Will my application be penalized if I don't have robust answers about arts education or lifelong learning?

A. We understand that many organizations may not have a mission that supports arts education programs. However, we encourage you to think holistically about your programming and identify where arts learning may be taking place. Arts education and lifelong learning is inclusive of all arts learning programming and is not solely focused on education within the school day or in a school setting. Community-based classes, talkbacks, lectures, docent-led tours, and workshops for all ages is considered arts learning and can fit within this section of the narrative.

Q. I am an Arts Basic to Education (ABE) applicant and our programming is centered around arts learning. How do I differentiate between Section 1: Programs/Services and Section 4: Arts Education/Lifelong Learning in the Narrative Questions?

A. We acknowledge that there may be overlap between your programs and services, as well as your arts education/lifelong learning work in the narrative responses. We encourage ABE grantees to focus their answers in Section 1 on the organization's goals and priorities, its process for how artistic decisions are made and evaluated, and how the organization integrates the audiences/community into decision-making. For Section 4, applicants can expand more deeply on their programming and services in arts education and lifelong learning. We encourage you to detail inclusive learning practices, how your organization supports teaching artists, and assessment methods in this section.

Q. Do I have to fill out the Long-Term Residency Supplement (LTRS) Form?

A. No. The LTRS form is completely optional. If you choose not to fill it out, it will not affect your panel review as that form is reviewed separately from the GOS and GPS application.

Finance Questions

Q. My budget has fluctuated year to year. Will the panel review those inconsistencies negatively?

A. Not necessarily. The past several years have affected the way nonprofit organizations do business. Panelists are looking for transparent explanations of the strategies employed to advance economic stability and improve mission-based outcomes and their results.

Q. My finance director insists that accrual accounting is the industry standard. Do I have to fill out the Arts Council's budget forms in cash basis accounting?

A. Yes, you must fill out all budget forms in cash basis accounting. Contact your [Program Officer](#) for additional support if needed.

Q. My organization has a different fiscal year than the Arts Council's fiscal year. Does that affect the way I report information and financials?

A. All information presented must be for the specified grant period (typically July 1 - June 30) even if the organization's fiscal year is different. Contact your [Program Officer](#) for additional support if needed.

Q. Are all my organization's expenditures allowable under the General Operating Support or General Program Support categories?

A. No. The Arts Council provides a comprehensive list of ineligible operating and programmatic expenses in the [Glossary](#). Organizations may not include these items in their organizational/program budget charts. Applicants may choose to detail them in the budget notes for panelists and Program Officers to fully understand the organization's/program's full financial picture.

Q. Can grant awards be applied retroactively?

A. No. Grant funds cannot be used toward expenses or projects that have taken place outside the grant period.

Colleges, Universities, and Units of Government Questions

Q. It is difficult to separate out my student/faculty-based programs from my public-facing programs. Why can't I present my complete season of programming?

A. Any expense associated with activities or programs that require college/university enrollment or employment for participation is ineligible.

Q. How does the Arts Council define public programming for colleges/universities?

A. If affiliated with a college or university, the applicant must provide programs or services to the general public and must document that its activities serve 75% or more non-student or faculty audiences across two or more counties.

Q. Can my department use funds from my college/university/county to help meet the required 25% community support source match? Those funds come from community support.

A. No. In order to meet this eligibility requirement, these funds must come from outside the parent organization. You must demonstrate that your department directly received the following sources of income based on your activities: corporate/foundation support,

ticket/admission sales, and individual contributed revenue. County, state, and/or federal grants do not satisfy the requirement.

Q. My advisory board is made up of faculty members (college/university) or commissioners (unit of government). Does that satisfy the definition of community-based board?

A. No. In order to meet this eligibility requirement, you must demonstrate that the board or advisory council responsible for the oversight of the program is community-based – reflective of the community you are serving.

Service Organization Questions

Q. My organization is applying in the Service category. I'm having trouble answering some of the questions because we have a different operating model than "traditional" arts organizations. Can you provide me with some general guidance?

A. We recognize the unique operating model and role that service organization play in support of the state's arts organizations, artists, and arts workers. Organizations in this category further the interests of artists, creators, arts organizations, and elements of the arts community. The organization's description of activities can include policy development, advocacy, provision of professional services, and production of collective projects. Contact the [Program Officer](#) in the appropriate discipline for additional assistance.

Q. My organization is applying in the Service Organization category for General Operating Support. How much can we request in grant funds?

A. Service organizations may submit a grant request that is reasonable and relevant to their needs. Funding decisions are based on multiple factors such as the number of eligible applications, panel score, operating budget, previous funding history (if applicable), and the Arts Council's budget.

Q. I see that Service Organizations do not need to demonstrate they have expense budgets of \$150,000 to be eligible for General Operating Support. Is that true?

A. Yes. However, Service Organizations must be able to demonstrate that they have maintained a \$100,000 expense budget since 2025.

Q. My organization is applying in the Service Organization category for General Program Support. Can I enter my whole organization's expenditures in the budget?

A. No. General Program Support application budgets should only include financial information specific to eligible arts activities. Contact your [Program Officer](#) for additional support if needed.

Application Submission Questions

Q. SAGE was running slow and I couldn't submit on time. May I have a deadline extension or apply after the deadline?

A. No, we cannot accept applications after the deadline. There are no exceptions. Be aware that SAGE can experience delays on deadline day, when many users are in the system at the same time. Failure to submit on time due to deadline delays will not be grounds for a deadline extension. We strongly encourage you to start and submit your application well before the deadline.

Q. I submitted my application and realized I forgot to attach a document; may I add the missing item(s) and resubmit the application?

A. Due to the high volume of applications received, an organization will not have the opportunity to add missing items and resubmit the application after submission. We encourage you to double check your application package against the grant guidelines to make sure that nothing is missing before you submit your application. We've included an application checklist to help you with this task.

Q. Will you contact me if my application is missing anything?

A. For an application to be considered complete, every item that is required must be included in your application at the time of submission. Applications must be submitted prior to the specified date and time listed in the guidelines. Due to the number of applications received, staff will not contact applicants to request missing material. Use the grant guidelines as your guide to make sure that you have included every item.

Q. What is the hold for correction period?

A. In the event that an applicant included a link that is broken or a file that is password-protected, we've included a hold for correction period for applicants to correct the error. Please make sure someone in your office is available during the time outlined in the key dates of the guidelines who can make the correction if contacted.

Grant Assessment Questions

Q. Who serves on the grant review panels?

A. Panels are comprised of regional and national arts and cross-sector professionals who are specialists in a variety of content areas. Panels are configured to mirror the applicant pool; are balanced with respect to artistic discipline, skill set, and various demography including race/ethnicity, ability, age, and gender/sexual orientation, et. al.

Q. Are all applications reviewed by panelists?

A. All applications are reviewed according to the grant guidelines for the specific program. When panel review is indicated as part of the process, applications are screened for completeness and eligibility. Applications that are deemed eligible will move to the panel process.

Q. How is it fair to compare my small organization to a major institution with a long history given that our applications are reviewed in the same panel?

A. Applications are not compared to one another. Each applicant states its mission-based or program-based goals, and the panel assesses how well the applicant is able to, or is poised to, carry out that mission artistically with sound governance, finances, and public benefit. Applicants are not “competing” with other applicants, but against the statement of their own goals in accordance with the evaluation criteria/rubric.

Q. Why is another organization that I believe is similar to mine getting more funding than my organization?

A. Many factors could be at play in this situation. Very often, an organization is not aware that an organization they perceive to be similar is, in fact, different. Each organization presents itself uniquely, which reflects their distinctive situation. Another possible factor is that the other organization may have received a stronger evaluation through the panel process, resulting in receipt of a larger percentage of their request.

Grant Award Questions

Q. How are grant applications selected for funding?

A. Arts Council grants are awarded based on an application review process that is designed to be fair, transparent, and free from political influence. The multi-step process takes many months to ensure that each application is given full consideration. Beginning with application intake, the Arts Council staff reviews each application for completeness and eligibility in accordance with the published criteria. After assembling diverse panels of content specialists from around the country, staff facilitates panelist review of often hundreds of applications at a time. Based on grant panel assessments and available resources, the Arts Council’s Grants Committee approves investment strategies that goes before the full board for consideration. The full Arts Council votes in public session on all grant awards.

Q. Isn’t the grants process political, and doesn’t it depend on who you know?

A. No. Arts Council members adhere strictly to State Ethics Commission rules on recusal which requires that State Officials recuse, or remove, themselves from any official business (discussion and voting) related to an entity with which they have a personal, financial, or professional affiliation. These rules apply even if there is an applicant to whom they have the perception of an affiliation.

Q. Why wasn’t my organization’s application funded?

A. Many factors go into the funding decisions. The evaluation by the panel is usually the most direct explanation. An evaluation that is not particularly strong indicates that all members of the panel agreed to a variety of weaknesses in the application. Also, applications may not be funded simply because the Arts Council did not have sufficient funds.

Q. My organization's application wasn't funded, what recourse do we have?

A. If the grant guidelines state that an appeal process is available for the grant opportunity, an applicant may appeal the Arts Council's decision. See the Arts Council's guidelines for additional information.

Q. How do grantees receive grant payments?

A. The standard distribution schedule is 75%/25%. Grantees will receive 75% of the award upon execution of the contract and the remaining 25% upon execution and approval of the final report.

Payment will arrive either by check or direct deposit, depending on which method the organization has selected in its NJSTART account. The Arts Council advises organizations to select direct deposit, since this is recommended by all NJSTART users.

Q. How long does it take to receive payment?

A. Payments typically take between four to six weeks after the grantee submits its contract or final report, following approval.

Q. When will I know if my grant application received funding?

A. Grant announcements will be made in July 2027 at the Arts Council's Annual Meeting for FY28 grants. Grant notifications will include information on the next steps required to receive your grant contract and the payment.

Q. How many grants do you expect to award?

The number of grants to be awarded is based on the legislative allocation to the Arts Council in the annual state budget, as well as the funds allocated to the Arts Council's approved FY28 spending plan. We will not know our FY28 budget until the Legislature approves the FY28 budget in summer 2027.

Q. If I meet all the eligibility requirements and I apply, will I receive a grant?

A. Applicants are not guaranteed to receive a grant because we will likely receive more applications than we will be able to fund. We expect that the number of applications will far exceed the number of grants awarded.

Q. Will I receive the amount of funding I requested in my grant application?

A. It is not likely that applicants will receive the amount requested. We expect that the total dollar of requests will far exceed available funds.