CREATIVE CAPACITY GRANTS
for small to mid-sized organizations · Levels 1 - 5

WHAT IS IT?

Creative Capacity Grants (CCGs) provide general operating support to nonprofit organizations whose primary mission is to produce, present, teach, or serve the arts.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Organizations that may apply for Creative Capacity Grants, Levels 1-5...

- are based in Arizona,

- are incorporated as a nonprofit organization* with tax-exempt status, or are a unit of municipal or tribal government,

- have a primary mission to produce, present, teach, or serve the arts,

- have an annual budget of between $4,000 and $399,999, and

- will incur eligible expenses during the funding period (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026)

    * *Unincorporated organizations that are otherwise eligible and whose annual budget is below $200,000 may apply through a nonprofit fiscal sponsor.*

MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND MULTIPURPOSE ORGANIZATIONS

Multidisciplinary or multipurpose organizations are eligible to apply if they meet the above requirements and can demonstrate that over 51% of their public programming and budget is devoted to the arts. Multidisciplinary or multipurpose organizations should contact Arts Commission staff to discuss eligibility before applying.

APPLICATION LIMITS

Across grant programs, the Arizona Commission on the Arts limits the number of applications an organization may submit to one application per funding period. Organizations applying for a Creative Capacity Grant in Fiscal Year 2026 may not apply for any other Arts Commission grants (e.g., Festival Grants).

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IMPORTANT DATES

Application Due Date
11:59 pm, April 14, 2025

Grant Review Panel Convened
May 2025 (dates TBA)

Grantees Notified
August 2025

Funding Period
July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

PRIMARY STAFF CONTACT

Hanna Spence-Schehr
Creative Capacity Grant Manager
Email: hspenceschehr@azarts.gov
Phone: (602) 771-6535

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

CCG funds are intended to support general day-to-day operating costs, such as the following:

Salaries and Personnel Expenses
Creative workers (i.e., artists, tradition bearers, designers, educators, curators, program administrators, service providers, and other creative contributors), production staff, administrators, teachers, contractors, consultants

Artistic/Production Expenses
Supplies, materials, equipment, venues, royalties, licensing

Administrative Expenses
Office space and supplies, insurance, professional services like accounting or payroll, fees for banking, online services and platforms, training and education costs, marketing and promotion costs

GRANT LEVELS & AWARD AMOUNTS

Organizations apply for CCGs at one of eight **grant levels**. An organization's grant level is determined by the adjusted annual revenue for their most recently completed fiscal year (e.g., Fiscal Year 2024). For the purposes of this program, **adjusted annual revenue** is defined as the organization's total annual revenue minus the monetary value of any in-kind support.

Award ranges are determined based on the agency's budget for the upcoming fiscal year, the Arts C14om-mission's funding priorities, and an organization's **panel review ranking** (low, medium, or high).

As the agency's budget is not known until well after grant guidelines are published, the amounts below are only projections of what may potentially be possible.

HOW RELIABLE ARE AWARD PROJECTIONS?

The agency's annual grantmaking budget each year is dependent on **one-time legislative appro-priations**, which have ranged from $0 - $5 million. The agency's grantmaking capacity for Fiscal Year 2026 will not be known until the State's budget is passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor. This typically happens in late spring.

The award ranges listed below represent two potential funding scenerios: a $0 legislative appro-priation and a $2 million legislative appropriation. Actual awards may be significantly different.

For more info on Arts Commission funding, visit https://azarts.gov/about-us/who-we-are/budget/.

Applicant's Adjusted Annual Revenue	Potential Award Ranges					
	Scenario 1: $0 Appropriation			Scenario 2: $2M Appropriation		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Level 1 $4,000 – $19,999	$200	$300	$400	$800	$1,200	$1,600
Level 2 $20,000 – $49,999	$400	$590	$790	$1,600	$2,360	$3,160
Level 3 $50,000 – $99,999	$790	$980	$1,180	$3,160	$3,920	$4,720
Level 4 $100,000 – $199,999	$1,180	$1,450	$1,750	$4,720	$5,800	$7,000
Level 5 $200,000 – $399,999	$1,750	$2,150	$2,550	$7,000	$8,600	$10,200

MULTI-YEAR FUNDING

The Creative Capacity Grant operates on a multi-year funding cycle. Organizations submit a full application once every three years. In their two "alternate" years, grantees submit only a brief status update and Funder Report and are not subject to panel review.

Grant Level	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028
Levels 1, 2, & 3	Alt. Year Application	**Full Application**	Alt. Year Application
Levels 4 & 5	**Full Application**	Alt. Year Application	Alt. Year Application
Levels 6, 7, & 8	Alt. Year Application	Alt. Year Application	**Full Application**

For Fiscal Year 2026, organizations will submit a full or alternate year application according to the table below:

Full Application

- Organizations that did not apply for and/or receoive a CCG in FY2025
- Grant Level 4-5 organizations who were awarded in FY2025.

Alternate Year Application

- Organizations who were awarded as grant levels 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, or 8 in FY2025

GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS

Match CCG Award

Grantees must be able to match their CCG award with cash, dollar for dollar, by the end of the funding period (June 30, 2026). Matching funds may be earned (e.g., ticket sales, participation fees, etc.) or contributed (e.g., private donations, other grants, etc.).

Submit a Final Report

To remain eligible for future grants, grantees must submit a final report to the Arts Commission at the conclusion of the funding period.

REVIEW PROCESS

All applications are subject to a public review process. First, Arts Commission staff review each application for completeness and eligibility. Applications that are incomplete or submitted after the due date are considered ineligible for panel review and funding. Eligible applications are then evaluated by independent review panels made up of individuals from communities throughout the state who work in or adjacent to the arts. They evaluate each application on its own merits and solely on the basis of the published evaluation criteria.

Panelists first review applications individually. They then meet as a body to discuss the applications and finalize assessment as a group. This meeting is open to the public and while applicants are not permitted to participate in the discussion, they are encouraged to listen-in online. Applicants being reviewed will be notified when panel dates are set. At the conclusion of their deliberations, the panel submits their funding recommendations to the Arts Commission's Governor-appointed board of commissioners for approval.

CREATIVE CAPACITY GRANT

GRANT TIMELINE

Application due
April 14, 2025

Panel Review
May 2025

Grantees Notified
August 2025

Award Acceptance Due
September 2025

Award Payment Disbursed
Oct. 2025 – June 2026

Final Report Due
Sept. 2026

Funding Period July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Awards are paid out over the course of the Arts Commission's fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) on a predetermined schedule. Grantees will be provided with a payment window alongside their award agreement.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

We encourage applicants to do the following prior to beginning their application:

Request Accommodations

If you require accommodation in completing the application, or otherwise participating in the grant application process, please contact Hanna Spence-Schehr at hspenceschehr@azarts.gov.

Obtain a Fiscal Sponsor Letter of Agreement (if applicable)

Unincorporated organizations applying with a fiscal sponsor will need to upload a Fiscal Sponsor Letter of Agreement. This official letter, signed by authorizing officials from both the applicant organization and the fiscal sponsor, must state that the fiscal sponsor agrees to receive grant funds on behalf of the applicant, deliver them to the applicant, and maintain appropriate financial records. Additionally, the applicant should be prepared to provide a fiscal sponsor contact and indicate the fiscal sponsor's administrative fee. (The fiscal sponsor's administrative fee is the percentage of any potential grant funding that would be retained by the fiscal sponsor to cover administrative costs associated with their sponsorship.)

If you are unable to obtain a Letter of Agreement before the application deadline, please contact Hanna Spence-Schehr at hspenceschehr@azarts.gov.

Create or Update SMU DataArts Profile

DataArts' Cultural Data Profile (CDP) is a free and secure online survey that collects financial and programmatic data from nonprofit arts, culture, and humanities organizations. Organizations can then produce a variety of reports based on this data, including the DataArts Funder Report submitted with the CCG application.

Log-in or register at https://da.culturaldata.org/.

If you are new to using DataArts, you can find a video tutorial for getting started at https://culturaldata.org/what-we-do/for-arts-cultural-organizations/the-cultural-data-profile/. For additional assistance, contact the DataArts Support Center: https://culturaldata.org/contact/.

Create or Update the SurveyMonkey Apply Account for Your Organization

Organization's submit applications through an online submission platform called SurveyMonkey Apply. Prior to applying, all new applicants will need to register their organization at https://azarts.smapply.io/.

If your organization already has an account, we encourage you to confirm all information is up to date and add or remove any team members as needed.

For instructions on how to create or update your account, visit our applicant resources page: https://azarts.gov/grants/applicant-resources/.

WHERE IS MY ORGANIZATION ACCOUNT?

When you log-in to SurveyMonkey Apply, you do not go directly to your organization account. In the past, this has caused some confusion for returning applicants.

Look for your name in the upper left corner of the screen. When you click on your name, you will see the organization(s) you are associated with. Click on the name of the organization to enter your organization's account.

Prepare Narrative Responses

Some applicants find it helpful to develop their responses using word processing software, outside the application platform. This allows them to draft responses with team members and monitor their word counts for each question. A Word document version of the narrative questions can be downloaded at https://azarts.gov/grant/creative-capacity-grant/.

HOW TO APPLY

When you're ready, go to https://azarts.gov/grant/creative-capacity-grant/ and click on "Apply Now." You do not have to complete the application in one session; at any point you can save a draft of your application and complete or submit it later.

APPLICATION

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Information collected in this section of the application is used for internal and reporting purposes only. You will be required to upload an IRS determination letter in the "Organization Type" section. (Units of government are exempt from this requirement.)

- Organization Name and DBA (if applicable)
- Organization mailing address
- County: Which county is your organization located in?
- Federal Congressional District: Which federal congressional district is your organization located in? To look up your congressional district by address visit: https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative
- State Legislative District: Which state legislative district is your organization located in? To look up your legislative district by address visit: https://azredistricting.org/districtlocator
- Secondary contact info (the primary contact will be the person submitting the application)
- ADA Coordinator contact info
- Year established
- Primary Disciplinary Category: Applicants can select the discipline that best applies from dropdown menu options.
- Is this your organization's first time applying for any grant through the Arizona Commission on the Arts?
- Organization type (choose from nonprofit or unit of government)
- Upload: Federal Tax Exemption Letter* if a nonprofit 501(c)3

    or

    Fiscal Sponsor Letter of Agreement, if applicable

  * This is the IRS determination letter granting nonprofit 501(c)3 status, not the letter assigning a Federal Tax ID Number

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

If you encounter any technical issues with the online application platform, click on the info icon (like the one on the right) in the black ribbon at the top of the application page. You can then select to explore the platform's FAQ page or submit a request for technical assistance.

Note: technical support hours are Monday to Friday from 8:00 am - 8:00 pm **Eastern Time**, and Sundays from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm **Eastern Time**.

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

Your responses to the following will be reviewed by the panelists:

- Provide your organization's mission statement. (150 word max)

1. Describe your organization's programs or services in relationship to its mission. (300 words max)

   The values expressed in a mission statement speak to an organization's unique vision, purpose, and goals. Consider how your organization's values are reflected in specific programs, services, events, workshops, community activities, or internal practices.

2. Describe what goes into the development of your programming. (300 words max)

   Consider how your organization approaches decision-making, determines program goals, and engages with creative workers (i.e., artists, tradition bearers, designers, educators, curators, program or service administrators, and other creative contributors).

3. Describe your organization's administrative structure. (250 words max)

   For example, what does your organizational chart look like? How are administrative and programmatic tasks managed? What kind of leadership model does your organization have?

   Questions 4 & 5 request information regarding your **executive leadership**. For the purposes of this grant, executive leadership are the people on your staff who have the most deciding power. Examples include executive director, CEO, president, artistic director, directors of larger departments, etc.

4. How many people serve the organization in an executive leadership capacity?

5. Please describe the composition or makeup of your organization's executive leadership.

   Questions 6 & 7 request information regarding your **governing board**. This should be board members who are part of the governance structure of the organization and have a role in voting. This includes those who only vote if there is a tie. If you are a 501(c)3, this would be the board members who are indicated on your 990 filing with the IRS each year.

6. How many people serve the organization on the governing board?

7. Please describe the composition or makeup of your organization's governing board.

8. How many governing board members overlap with your organization's executive leadership?

> *Responses to questions 5 and 7 can include any of the following categories that may apply:*
> - Age Group (youth, adult, senior)
> - Artists,
> - Disabilities (physical, neural, cognitive)
> - Gender
> - Geography (rural, metro)
> - Heritage
> - Income Status
> - Health Status
> - Military Status
> - Race & Ethnicity
> - Religion
> - Sexual Orientation

Depending on their mission, organizations engage their communities in very different ways. Some are established to engage individuals that share a particular demographic, social, or cultural commonality (e.g., a gay men's chorus, a rural artist guild, or a youth theater). Others take a broad approach, designing their programs/services to engage a more general community of participants, (e.g., a community arts center). Question 9 asks you to identify your organization's primary approach and answer questions specific to your choice.

9. Choose the statement below that best describes your organization:

- Our organization takes a **broad approach**, serving a general, non-specific population.
- Our organization centers a **specific community** or intersection of cultural communities.

If you chose **broad approach**, answer the sub-questions below:

a) How does your organization ensure an environment where all are able to participte, regardless of age, cultural background, ability, etc.? (350 words max)

   Consider how your organizational structure, programming, professional engagement of creative workers, community interaction, etc. reflect or respond to the broader community.

b) How does your organization use public input and feedback from the communities it serves. (300 words max)

If you chose **specific community**, answer the sub-questions below:

a) In what ways do your organization's operations, programs, and/or services reflect or respond to the specific community or intersection of communities you engage? (350 words max)

   Operational aspects could include programming, leadership, organizational culture, staffing, professional engagement of creative workers, community interaction, etc.

b) How does your organization engage the indicated community or intersection of communities in the development, implementation, and evaluation of your operations, programs, and/or services? (300 words max)

Please provide the following information for each indicated community:

c) What percentage of your executive leadership identifies as ___?

d) What percentage of your governing board identifies as ___?

> Your responses to the sub-questions to the left will be specific to the communities your organization's mission and programming specifically focus on.
>
> You will select all that apply from the list below:
>
> - *Age Group*
> - *Disabilities*
> - *Geography*
> - *Gender*
> - *Health Status*
> - *Heritage*
> - *Income Status*
> - *Military Status*
> - *Race & Ethnicity*
> - *Religion*
> - *Sexual Orientation*
>
> - *Asian*
> - *Black*
> - *Latine Middle Eastern/ North African*
> - *Native American*
> - *Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander*
> - *White/European*
> - *Not Listed*

10. What are some of the expected benefits for those who participate in your organization's programming and how do you gauge your success in delivering these benefits? (350 words max)

    Every organization approaches the feedback from, the documenting of, and the learning outcomes of its specific programming or activities differently; consider what approaches or methods your organization uses to better understand the effects that its work has on participants.

11. How does your organization adapt programming, communications, or services to ensure that programming, facilities, virtual platforms, and activities support the participation of and access for people of all abilities? (300 words max)

    Consider any efforts currently being employed or plans in place to ensure that all organizational programming, facilities, virtual platforms, and activities support the participation of and access for people of all abilities beyond required ADA compliance.

12. Describe the various resources your organization relies on to do its work and how they are allocated for maximum impact in pursuit of your mission and in service to your community? (300 words max)

    Consider your resources broadly. An organization's resources may include funding, in-kind or volunteer contributions, administrative and artistic labor, partnerships, and more.

13. What are your organization's long-term goals for growth or improvement and how do you track your progress toward these goals? (300 words max)

    An organization's long-term goals may relate to audience numbers, fiscal stability, accessibility practices, community engagement, specific programming/services, funder support, internal capacity-building, etc.

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION

The DataArts Funder Report and narrative will be reviewed by the panel and evaluated as part of the Fiscal Practices & Viability criterion.

If applying with a fiscal sponsor, all fiscal year and financial information in this section should be for the applicant organization, not for the fiscal sponsor.

- Enter the start and end date (month and year) of your organization's most recently concluded fiscal year (ex., July 2023 - June 2024).
- Fiscal Year Adjusted Annual Revenue
- Enter your organization's adjusted annual revenue from its most recently concluded fiscal year, as it appears on your DataArts Funder report. This is the figure labeled "Total Revenue Unrestricted Less In-kind Unrestricted" found at the top of the first page. Adjusted annual revenue is your organization's total annual revenue minus the monetary value of any in-kind support.

DataArts Funder Report

All grant applicants will upload an SMU DataArts Funder Report, containing data from their two most recently concluded fiscal years (for example, fiscal years 2023 and 2024), to their application. Applicants will need to enter the relevant financial and participation data for the required fiscal years into the DataArts platform, and then generate a Funder Report, selecting the most recent fiscal year as the reporting year. (See FAQ)

Funder Report Narrative

This is your opportunity to bring your Funder Report to life as if you were explaining aspects of it to the review panel. Please note: the Funder Report examined by the review panel will not display any of the notes you left for yourself during the data entry process within DataArts. (300 words max)

DATAARTS TECH SUPPORT

If you encounter any difficulties while entering data into DataArts or generating your Funder Report, please contact DataArts directly for technical assistance.

Note: technical support hours are Monday to Friday from 11:00 am - 5:00 pm **Eastern Time**.

Email: help@culturaldata.org
Phone: 877-707-DATA (877-707-3282)

CREATIVE CAPACITY GRANT

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Your organization's application materials will be reviewed by an independent panel according to the following criteria.

Please note: need is not a criterion. Application merit is based upon strength of response in relation to the review criteria.

Creative Capacity

Application demonstrates a strong understanding of the organization's capacity to realize its mission and describes effective strategies for achieving current and long-term goals.

What panelists will be thinking about: Is the scope of the organization's work in alignment with its mission and its capacity to deliver intended benefits? Does the application articulate a clear process for developing and implementing programming consistent with the organization's mission and values?

Quality of Programs & Services

Application demonstrates creative and responsive programming, strong evaluation methods, and mission-aligned engagement practices.

What panelists will be thinking about: Does the application describe mission-aligned programming and engagement practices? Does the organization demonstrate robust and authentic engagement with Arizona's creative workers and other key stakeholders in their programming and services? How does the organization engage the community(ies) it serves in the development and evaluation of its programs?

Integrity & Public Benefit

Viewed as a whole, the application demonstrates alignment between the organization's mission, operational practices, goals, programming, and a strong understanding of the community(ies) served.

What panelists will be thinking about: Are the organization's mission and values evident in their programming and operations? How does the organization's programming reflect or respond to the community(ies) served? Does the organization demonstrate an ability to make its programming or services accessible?

Fiscal Practices & Viability

Viewed as a whole, the application describes sound fiscal practices and demonstrates alignment between these practices and the organization's mission, values, and strategic goals.

What panelists will be thinking about: Are the organization's practices around the administration and use of resources aligned with their mission and values? How do the organization's practices around the administration and use of resources ensure their work remains viable and their goals achievable?

CREATIVE CAPACITY GRANT

FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Grant funds can only be used for the allowable expenses outlined in the guidelines. Additionally, this program does not fund the following:

- Applicants that received Arts Commission funding in fiscal year 2025, but fail to file a final report by Monday, September 16, 2025.

- Organizations not dedicated to producing, presenting, teaching, or serving the arts as their primary mission (the arts must comprise over 51% of public programming and budget to be eligible)

- Any division of local, state, tribal or federal government except arts and cultural organizations from Tribal Nations and Local Arts Agencies (including arts councils and arts commissions)

- Applications submitted by for-profit organizations

- Schools, including public, private, and charter

- Botanical gardens, parks, zoos or science centers

- Auxiliary/affiliate organizations

- Religious institutions or religious group-sponsored organizations not open to participation by non-congregants

- Religious institutions or religious group-sponsored organizations whose primary purpose is the religious socialization of individuals or whose arts programming exists as parts of religious sermons or services

- Debt reduction

- Regranting, unless permission is received

- Grant administration, overhead, or processing fees taken by an umbrella/parent organization as a percentage of the total award, with the exception of fiscal sponsors

- Lobbying expenses

- Expenses related to the construction of facilities

- Food and beverage for receptions and hospitality functions

- Fundraising projects

- Scholarships and awards

- Equipment or capital expenditures (basic computer devices and other such items that cost less than $5,000 are considered supplies and are eligible expenses)

- Indirect costs

This list is not comprehensive.

Additionally, according to the Arts Commission's enabling statutes, "Notwithstanding any other law, no monies from the Arizona Commission on the Arts may be spent for payment to any person or entity for use in desecrating, casting contempt on, mutilating, defacing, defiling, burning, trampling, or otherwise dishonoring or causing to bring dishonor on religious objects, the flag of the United States or the flag of this state." Recipients of Arts Commission support are further instructed to "take into consideration general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public" within funded programs.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **My organization is eligible for other Arts Commission grants. Can I apply to those too?**
   No. Across grant programs, the Arts Commission limits the number of applications that may be submitted by a given organization or unit of government to one (1) application per funding period (July 1 – June 30 of the following year). While an organization or unit of government may be eligible for more than one grant program, they may only apply for one of them in a given funding period. As an example, an applicant who applies to the Capacity Grant program in FY2025 may not apply for a Festival Grant or a Youth Arts Engagement Grant that same year.

2. **How do I generate a DataArts Funder Report?**
   In order to generate a DataArts Funder Report, organizations enter financial and programmatic data into the Cultural Data Profile (CDP), a free and secure online survey. In an effort to make data entry easier for arts and cultural organizations, the CDP was significantly streamlined in December 2020. You can find resources on preparing your data for entry at https://culturaldata.org/what-we-do/for-arts-cultural-organizations/the-cultural-data-profile/. And you can find an overview of how to run or produce a Funder Report at https://culturaldata.secure.force.com/Resources/articles/Article/How-do-I-run-a-Funder-Report/.

3. **Does this grant fund or focus on new projects or new work?**
   No. The production or generation of new projects is not a requirement of the CCG program. CCG provides unrestricted general operating support, meaning that organizations may use CCG funds for many different types of operating expenses. However, there are some expenses which cannot be funded with public dollars; please be sure to check the funding restrictions list before determining how you will apply the grant funds.

   For additional applicant resources please visit https://azarts.gov/grants/applicant-resources/

We imagine an Arizona where everyone can participate in and experience the arts.

One of 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies across the United States, the Arizona Commission on the Arts is a 58-year-old agency of the State of Arizona and a leading force in the creative and professional development of Arizona's arts sector. Through robust programs, research initiatives and strategic grantmaking, the Arts Commission catalyzes arts-based partnerships that strengthen Arizona communities through the arts.

For more information, contact us at (602) 771-6501 or email info@azarts.gov or visit www.azarts.gov. To request this or any other publication in an alternate format, contact the Arts Commission offices. An equal employment opportunity agency.