

Huntsville Arts & Cultural Grant Program



ARTS AND CULTURAL GRANTS

FY2026 GRANT GUIDELINES

**NOTE: 2026 ARTS AND CULTURAL GRANT PROGRAM CONTINGENT
ON CITY OF HUNTSVILLE FY26 BUDGET APPROPRIATION**

GUIDE TO FUNDING

INTRODUCTION

Today, Huntsville, Alabama, is recognized nationally and internationally as a vibrant city made up of engineers, innovators, artists, and creatives. While Huntsville's strong economic base and moderate cost of living draw national attention, the city's excellent quality of life helps propel our community to the top of everyone's list of best places to live, work, and play in the United States.

Huntsville's arts and cultural offerings are important quality of life amenities that help our community attract new businesses and residents while creating opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. Huntsville's arts and cultural organizations also contribute financially to our local economy. Based on a 2023 study, arts and culture in Huntsville/Madison County is a \$99.8 million industry that supports 2,169 full-time equivalent jobs and \$9.2 million in local and state government revenue. At the same time, Huntsville's arts and cultural sector helps to develop local identity while celebrating diversity and fostering understanding within our community. In fall of 2012, the City of Huntsville joined local communities across the nation to establish a publicly-funded arts and cultural grant program.

FY2026 Arts and Cultural Grant applications have been released as of August 28, 2025. Potential applicants should be aware that FY26 grant funding is contingent on a FY26 City of Huntsville Budget appropriation. The Huntsville City Council is expected to finalize the City's FY26 budget on September 25, 2025.

Arts Huntsville has requested \$300,000 to be used in its entirety as pass-through grant funds for nonprofit arts and cultural organizations not otherwise supported through City of Huntsville direct operational or Council appropriations. In FY25, Arts Huntsville received a \$300,000 appropriation specifically for the Huntsville Arts and Cultural Grant Fund.

Arts Huntsville's FY26 pass-through grant funds will be awarded through a competitive grants process. Eligible Huntsville-based arts and cultural nonprofit organizations may submit a project or general operating support request for up to \$30,000 in funding.

GRANT PROGRAM GOALS

Arts Huntsville's goals in awarding grants to arts and cultural organizations include the following:

- Elevate the work of local artists and organizations.
- Increase the availability of high quality arts and cultural programming.
- Cultivate arts and cultural programming representative of Huntsville's multicultural community.
- Increase access to the arts for all Huntsvillians.
- Expand educational opportunities in the arts for all ages.
- Showcase arts and culture as an economic driver in the city of Huntsville.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Organizations must meet the following requirements to be eligible for project support:

Organizational Requirements

- Nonprofit arts and cultural (i.e., visual art, music, dance, theater, or literary) organization with current 501(c)(3) tax exempt status.
- Primary mission of year-round arts and cultural (i.e., visual art, music, dance, theater, film, or literary) programming.
- Have been in existence for three years as a nonprofit dating from January 2023 or earlier, with evidence of public programming in the City of Huntsville.
- Organizational business operations and primary programming located within the City of Huntsville or the downtown core (defined for grant purposes as the area bordered by California Street, Bob Wallace Ave., Triana Blvd., and I-565/Pratt Avenue).
- Ability to provide a 1:1 cash match for grant funding.
- A commitment to nondiscrimination practices as defined by Federal and Alabama State constitutional and statutory law.

Governance Requirements

- Active and financially supportive Board of Directors responsible for:
 - **Leadership** - Leading the organization to create positive community impact through effective fulfillment of the organization's mission.
 - **Fiduciary Oversight** –Acquiring sufficient resources for the organization's operations and accounting to the public for its mission-driven services and expenditure of funds.
 - **Legal Compliance** - Keeping the organization in compliance with all laws that relate to its activities.
 - **Operational Oversight** - Ensuring the organization's work is completed in all program/operational areas and that all work is completed in an ethical, legal, and effective manner.
 - **Strategic Direction** - Developing and approving a multi-year strategic plan that addresses program excellence, community services, and institutional stability.
- Current organization By-Laws approved by the Board of Directors.

The following entities will not be eligible for grant support:

- Arts and cultural organizations receiving support from the City of Huntsville through a direct operational or Council appropriation.
- Individual artists.
- Institutions of higher education or individual departments of colleges and universities.
- Foundations, guilds, or other auxiliary or fundraising organizations associated with arts and cultural organizations.
- Public broadcasting media, radio, and television stations.
- Churches or church-affiliated/religious-based programs or organizations.
- Governmental institutions, i.e., public libraries, park and recreation facilities, schools, etc.

USE OF FUNDS

The Arts and Cultural Grant Program funds **Project or General Operating Support Grants**.

Examples of **grant activities** include (but are not limited to):

- Art Exhibitions.
- Performances.
- Series of related Events (such as a season of performances or series of exhibitions).
- Audience Development Projects.
- Conferences and Workshops.
- Creation of New Works.
- Promotion of Arts and Cultural Activities.
- Residencies by Guest Artists.

Examples of **eligible arts and culture grant fund expenditures** include (but are not limited to):

- Artist salaries and stipends related to the funded project/operations.
- Project/organization personnel.
- Outside fees and services related to the funded project/operations.
- Space rental for project/operational activities.
- Project/operational marketing.
- Project royalties.
- Project/operational supplies and equipment (e.g., fabric, paint, music, gallery supplies, etc.).
- Ticketing/box office expenses related to the funded project/operations.

Arts and culture grant funds may not be used for:

- Projects already completed, exhibited, or performed prior to the application deadline.
- Activities not open to the general public.
- Activities intended to serve only an organization's membership.
- Programming offered outside the City of Huntsville or the downtown core.
- Fundraising activities/events.
- Food and/or refreshments.
- Capital expenses.
- Furniture, fixtures, or equipment exceeding \$1,000.
- Payment of accumulated deficits or debts.
- Contributions to cash reserve or endowments.
- Contingency funds - funds for an event that may occur but that is not likely or intended.
- Costs for selling and/or marketing any products or services of the organization unrelated to the funded project.
- Donations and contributions to other organizations, including re-granting.
- Entertainment costs (costs of amusement, diversion, social activities, ceremonials, and costs relating thereto, such as meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities) or costs for food or beverages for parties/receptions.
- Goods or services for personal use of the organization's employees or Board.
- Expenditures for any for-profit activity or entity.

MATCHING FUNDS

- **All grant awards require a one-to-one cash match by the applicant.** This means the applicant must cover at least half the cost of a project or program with their own income.
- **Matching funds must be collected or available during the grant year.** Funds that are pledged but not received by September 30, 2026, cannot be counted as matching funds. Organization cash must be available and expended during the grant year.
- **Matching funds may include:**
 - Earned income: admissions, concessions, contracted services, etc.
 - Individual and business donations.
 - Income from fundraisers.
 - Grants.
 - Organization cash on hand.
 - Unearned income: money from interest, endowments, rents, etc.
- **Matching funds may not include:**
 - Money from the City of Huntsville.
 - Donated goods or services (in-kind income).

You will be required to estimate in-kind goods and services in the budgeting process to demonstrate the organizational health and fiscal strength of your organization, but in-kind support may not be applied to the required 1:1 cash match requirement for all grant awards.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

- All applicants will be required to create and maintain a profile at www.artshuntsville.org
- All applicants will be required to submit a Final Report by July 15, 2026, which includes an evaluation documenting Artistic Excellence, Community Impact and Access to the Arts, Arts Education, and Organizational Management & Fiscal Stability. Organizations with funded activities after the Final Report date should submit a Final Report, which includes estimated income/expenses for the uncompleted activities by the stated deadline.
- FY26 is defined as the period beginning October 1, 2025, and ending September 30, 2026. Grant activities may extend from October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026.
- Awarded funds must be expended, and funded projects must take place during the grant year.
- Prior funding does not guarantee funding at any time.
- Submission of a grant application does not ensure funding. Each application will be evaluated on its merits by the grant panel.
- Any proposed Huntsville Arts and Cultural Grant may be adjusted as necessary prior to actual payment of the grant, if funds availability changes.
- The complete grant process is reviewed and evaluated annually by the Arts Huntsville Staff and Board.
- Availability of grants is subject to Arts Huntsville's direct appropriation from the City of Huntsville for pass-through grant awards, which is determined as part of the City's annual budget process.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- Applications received after the deadline are not eligible. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
- Grant Application is an online form to be submitted electronically.
- A link to the Grant Application will be available at <https://www.artshuntsville.org/for-artists/> on August 28, 2025.
- Grant applications must be completed in full.
- Up to 5 pieces of support materials may be uploaded.

Applications are a matter of public record.

Please note: Familiarity with these guidelines and application instructions is the applicant's responsibility.

Supplying accurate, complete, and clear information in the application package (including all narratives, budgets, and supporting materials) is the applicant's sole responsibility. Good grantsmanship and a quality proposal are fundamental and indicative of organizational management. Miscalculated budgets, non-descriptive narratives, narratives that do not respond to grant review criteria, incomplete information, or failure to itemize income, expenses, or In-kind may result in a negative review and the possibility of zero funding.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

All final grant applications must be received electronically by:

11:59 ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

OTHER AREA FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- **Arts IDEA Grants – Not ready for a Huntsville Arts & Cultural Grant?** As part of the Arts Huntsville's FY24 funding appropriation, the City of Huntsville provided an additional \$25,000 in funding to support grants to help grow community-driven, neighborhood-based, culturally diverse, inclusive, and accessible arts programming from community partners not otherwise funded through the Huntsville Arts & Cultural grant program. Arts Huntsville has requested renewed funding for this program in FY26 and works with the city's Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs and Music offices to make Arts IDEA grant awards. For more information visit <https://www.artshuntsville.org/for-artists/>
- **Community Foundation** – The Community Foundation offers multiple grant opportunities for area nonprofits. For more information visit <https://givehsv.org/for-nonprofits/grant-opportunities/> and sign up for their newsletter at <https://givehsv.org/for-nonprofits/nonprofit-resources/>
- **Huntsville Music Office Sponsorships** - The Huntsville Music Office is tasked with creating a more dynamic and diverse music scene that strengthens the Huntsville economy and enhances the quality of life for residents and guests. The Music Office supports the career development of music industry professionals and provides resources towards various music-focused initiatives. For more information, visit HuntsvilleMusic.com or contact the Huntsville Music Office directly.

GRANT REVIEW CRITERIA

All grants will be reviewed using the four criteria areas listed below. Under each criterion are bullet points that a grant reviewer may use to judge the level at which organizations or programs demonstrate the criteria. The bullet points are not listed in priority order, and applicants are not required to address each one. Applicants may describe any other ways they achieve the criteria. The total maximum score per application is one hundred points (100).

Artistic Excellence (30 points)

- Documented organizational awards, peer or public reviews of works and artistic personnel, as well as local, regional, national, and/or international recognition.
- The ability to position Huntsville as an artistically and culturally dynamic community while also establishing Huntsville artists and arts/cultural organizations as educational and economic resources in the community.
- Development of new works of art and content.
- The involvement of skilled artistic personnel.
- The incorporation of emerging artists into programs and performances.

Community Impact, Equity & Access to the Arts (30 points)

- Reaches groups of people that are not otherwise served by arts/cultural programming or that face obstacles when taking advantage of artistic opportunities.
- Evidence of free admission or discounted tickets, or any ticket subsidy program, and the method by which the accessible tickets are publicized.
- Presentation of programs in non-traditional arts settings.
- Demonstrated success in reaching new audiences for the arts.
- Growth in membership and/or attendance.
- Programmatic content designed to reach underserved populations (socio-economic status, race, gender, neighborhoods, age, disability, etc.).
- Depth and breadth in programming and use of artistic talent representative of the community.
- Marketing through collaborations.
- Marketing through cultural tourism initiatives.

Arts Education (20 points)

- Demonstrated success in providing quality educational opportunities and experiences.
- The exhibition or performance of works that enhance the community's experience with the arts.
- Creation of programs designed to develop future audiences, performers, artists, and arts patrons.
- Development of curriculum or content that supports educational learning standards.
- Integration with public school, private school, or area university curricular programming.

Organizational Management & Fiscal Health (20 points)

- Board governance and oversight.
- Overall fiscal health, stability, and fundraising.
- An established history or plan to manage finances consistent with acceptable business practices.
- Existence of a strategic business plan.
- Clear plan to eliminate debt (if debt exists).
- Evidence of board and staff/volunteer development and clear internal operating policies.
- An organization's openness to internal diversity (socio-economic status, race, gender, culture, age, etc.) in its management, employment practices, board of directors, and volunteers.
- Organizational commitment to arts advocacy.
- Demonstration of strong grantsmanship through complete, accurate, timely application and reporting (as applicable).

APPLICATION REVIEW

- Panelists will review the applications as submitted and rate them according to the above criteria. Applicants should not assume that any panelist will have any foreknowledge of their organization or project, and must state their case clearly and completely in the application.
- Numerical ratings will be averaged to derive a final numerical score for each application.
- Panel hearings will be open to the public.
- Panelists' written comments will be made available to applicants after awards have been made.
- Funds will be allocated by the panelists based on available funds, requested grant amounts, and the panel's rating of the grant application.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A citizen participating in the agency's grant review process shall avoid any action that might result in, or create the appearance of, any conflict of interest. Participants must disclose at all relevant times all relationships, associations, or affiliations that might influence the evaluation or funding of any applicant. Further, all panelists have affirmative responsibilities to maintain the highest ethical standards in the conduct of government business and are advised of the standards established by the City of Huntsville.

APPEALS

Arts Huntsville allocates grant awards based upon the average scores of the grant review panel, which assesses each grant application according to published criteria (see "Grant Review Criteria" in these guidelines). The grant panel process necessarily requires independent qualitative judgment. As a result, Arts Huntsville's funding decision cannot be appealed simply because an applicant disagrees with the assessment of the grant review panel. An applicant may appeal an Arts Huntsville decision only by demonstrating the following: (1) the appellant must show there was a defect in the process of considering the appellant's grant application, and (2) the defect in the process caused the appellant harm.

The following rules for making an appeal will be strictly followed:

- The appeal must be received in writing by the Executive Director of Arts Huntsville within fifteen (15) days of the announcement of the funding decision.
- Arts Huntsville will review and file the appeal within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of the appeal.
- Each written appeal must specifically state the exact nature of the claimed defect in the process, and must specifically state and identify the damage caused by the defect in the process. Written appeals that do not specifically provide this information will be dismissed summarily.
- The panel that considered the contested grant and/or the Arts Huntsville Executive Committee will provide a written response to the Arts Huntsville Executive Director and a copy to the appellant within fifteen (15) days of the appeal filing.
- Arts Huntsville's review will be based on the following information:
 - The information in Arts Huntsville's file on the contested grant application.
 - The appellant's written appeal to Arts Huntsville's Executive Director.
 - The written response of the panel that considered the contested grant application and/or the Arts Huntsville Executive Committee.
 - The oral response of the panel chair and/or the chair of the Arts Huntsville Executive Committee to Arts Huntsville members' questions during the appeal review.

The decision of Arts Huntsville is final.

ALLOCATIONS & GRANT MANAGEMENT

AWARD NOTIFICATION & CONTRACT DOCUMENTS

When an Arts and Cultural Grant is awarded, the grantee will be notified and must submit an amended grant budget. Arts Huntsville staff will send a packet including contracts and regulations that must be agreed to and signed by the grantees and returned to Arts Huntsville for signatures from the Executive Director before funds are released. The contract specifies the grant amount and the budget for the grant, plus other stipulations and/or financial reporting requirements. Grantees who fail to submit revised budget and/or grant documents within the assigned time frame will void their eligibility for grant funds. Funds made available through noncompliance will be redistributed at the discretion of Arts Huntsville and its staff.

FUNDED ACTIVITIES AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

Grant recipients must keep clear, separate ledgers or accounts to record the use of all grant and matching funds. Funded organizations must use an accounting system that is in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards and principles.

Arts Huntsville requires periodic reporting on the progress of grant activities contracted under the grant agreement. Recipients must file all documents by the dates enclosed in the contract. Grantees must provide an explanation of any item in the Arts and Cultural Grant Final Financial Report form that varies twenty percent or more from the original expense item in the grant application or revised grant budget. At Arts Huntsville's request, each recipient shall provide documentation of expenditures

including, but not limited to, letters of agreement, contracts, purchase orders, invoices, canceled checks, and bills. Such records shall be retained for a period of three years after submission of the Final Report. Inadequate record keeping can result in a loss of grant funds and eligibility to compete for future funding from Arts Huntsville.

Final payment of the grant balance will not be made until the final reports are received. The grantee, not Arts Huntsville, is responsible for submitting the grant reports on time. If the final reports are not submitted by the date due, the grantee will be in violation of the contract and may become ineligible for future funding. Any unmatched and/or unspent funds at the time of the final reports must be returned to Arts Huntsville. Failure to do so will cause the grantee to become ineligible for future grants until unspent funds are reimbursed to Arts Huntsville.

Grant Recognition and Logo Usage

- Grant funding recognition must be included in all promotional materials, press releases, publicity, advertisements, and printed programs.
- The grant program logo must be 1.25" wide by .845" high or larger in all materials.
- If the grant program logo cannot be accommodated at that size, the following statement must be included in 12 point Calibri (or equal size equivalent): Supported in part by the Huntsville Arts & Cultural Grant Fund, a program of the City of Huntsville and Arts Huntsville
- Put the logo in a prominent position on your website, with this address linked:
<https://www.artshuntsville.org/for-artists/>
- Do not manipulate or change the logo colors, shape, or wording. We understand that in some cases the logo may be printed in black and white; this is acceptable.
- Allow at least .25" around each side of the logo in print publications/advertising.
- When no printed materials are used, give verbal credit to the Huntsville Arts and Cultural Grant Program prior to each event.

ARTS HUNTSVILLE
FY2026 ARTS AND CULTURAL PROJECT GRANTS FREQUENTLY

ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How will my application be reviewed?

A: Volunteer community members serve as application review panelists. Panelists are selected and assigned based on interests and expertise, with one grant panelist representing each Huntsville City Council District. The panel is chaired by an Arts Huntsville board member. Arts Huntsville staff cannot serve as panel members. Panelists assess the strengths and weaknesses of each application. Based on panel evaluation and available funds, panelists make recommendations for funding to Arts Huntsville Board of Directors. Grant panelists are not required to attend activities and may not necessarily be familiar with your organization. Therefore, as you prepare your application, it is important to clearly articulate the value, impact, and quality of the project, as it may be the first exposure a panelist will have with your proposed project/organization.

Q: How much can I request?

A: Applicants may request up to \$30,000. Requests must be for a specific project or general operating support. Locally funded grants create an extremely competitive process; therefore, all applicants are encouraged to develop a strong application and be realistic with regard to funding expectations. Some applications may not receive funding based on the panel review process.

Q: Am I required to match the grant?

A: Applicants are required to leverage the investment by providing a 1:1 cash match. Applicants should project fundraising efforts, if they do not have the cash on hand.

Q: What is In-kind support?

A: In-kind support is defined as anything provided to the grant activities (space rental, supplies, printed materials, volunteer time, etc.) at no cost to the applicant. All contributions should be given an appropriate cash value. Commonly used in-kind support includes volunteer time. Nationally, the estimated dollar value of volunteer time by the Independent Sector is \$34.79/hour. In-kind support may not be used to match grant funds. *Remember that all volunteer time is in-kind support, whether artistic support or support in other categories.* Your expense budget may include categories that show in-kind without cash expenditure, i.e., Artists or Management in all-volunteer organizations.

Q: What can Arts and Cultural Grant dollars be used for?

A: Arts Huntsville funds can be used for grant-related fees & contracts, marketing & advertising expenses, expendable supplies & materials, space rental, etc. If you are unsure if you can use grant funds for a specific expense, please see the list of ineligible costs on page 4 or contact Ashley Hudson at 256-715-4967 or ahudson@artshuntsville.org.

ARTS HUNTSVILLE
FY2026 ARTS AND CULTURAL PROJECT GRANTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONTINUED

Q: May I submit any additional support material?

A: Each application is limited to five (5) pieces of support material. Appropriate support materials include, but are not limited to, brochures, programs, photos, and other materials that provide evidence of artistic quality, use of the grant program logo, and outreach.

Q: The application asks me to provide my City of Huntsville district number. Where do I find these?

A: If you do not know your district information, go to the website below and enter the address:
<http://maps.huntsvilleal.gov/myaddress>

Q: If my organization receives funding, what will be required?

A: Arts Huntsville Grant recipients will be required to do the following:

- Return an amended budget if your grant is not fully funded.
- Complete and return a Funding Agreement, which outlines the terms and conditions of the award.
- The applicant agrees to recognize and identify publicly Arts Huntsville and the City of Huntsville's financial support of its programs, to display the grant program logo on its property and its print materials, and to credit Arts Huntsville and the City of Huntsville in media releases and during performances and/or exhibits.
- Comply with all Arts Huntsville and City of Huntsville policies, and Office of State Budget and Management requirements, where applicable.
- Submit a final report and all additional forms and project documentation, no later than July 17, 2026.

Q: What is the difference between Other Revenue and Other Income on the budget?

A: Revenue is money you earn in some way, i.e., performing a service or selling something tangible. Other Income is monies you do not have to actively earn or passive income, i.e., the cash in your bank accounts, interest or dividends earned on investments, rent from owned property, etc.

Q: Are there other funding opportunities available?

A: Other funding opportunities include, but are not limited to, the Arts IDEA grant, Community Foundation grants, and support available from the Huntsville Music office.

Q: I have more questions. Where can I get help?

A: Arts Huntsville staff member Ashley Hudson is available at 256-715-4967 or ahudson@artshuntsville.org.