

CITY OF GASTONIA ARTS COMMITTEE

GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Program Overview

North Carolina General Statute Section 160A-488 authorizes local governments to establish and support arts programs and facilities; and, to appropriate funds to any governmental agency, public or nonprofit private association, corporation, or organization for the purpose of establishing and supporting such arts programs and facilities. For purposes of 160A-488 “arts” refers to the performing arts, visual arts, and literary arts and includes dance, drama, music, painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, crafts, photography, film, video, architecture, design, and literature, when part of a performing, visual or literary arts program.

Pursuant to the authority granted in Section 160A-488 the City Council of the City of Gastonia has established the Gastonia Arts Committee Grant Program. The Arts Committee Grant Program will provide grant funding to eligible nonprofit organizations for the support of qualifying arts programs. The goals of the Arts Committee Grant Program are to promote and provide expanded public access to quality arts programs, promote diversity in the arts and produce economic development and tourism for the citizens of the City of Gastonia.

Timeline for 2026 grant process

1. Open the Call for Grant Proposals- June 3rd, 2026
2. Receive applications- July 6th, 2026
3. Judge applications- July 20th, 2026
4. Notify Recipients- July 28th 2026
5. Receive signed contracts- October 2026
6. Mid-Term report due- January 15th 2027
7. Final report due- April 15th 2027

Grant Amounts to be Offered this 2026 Cycle

- The grant awards will range from **\$1,000 to \$10,000.**

Grant amounts for future years will be in accordance with the grant funding appropriated by City Council in future City budgets.

Eligibility

Any arts organization with 501(c)(3) status under the United States Internal Revenue Code, which maintains a permanent office, practice/performance space, or physical address within the municipal boundaries of the City of Gastonia.

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Non-Eligibility

Organizations and programs that already receive funding from the City of Gastonia **are not eligible** to apply for grant funding through the Gastonia Arts Committee Grant Program.

Qualifications for Grant Funding

Funding for arts programming and projects will be given priority. Funding for operational costs, facility renovations, or the salary of those directly involved in implementing programming may also be considered. Funding will **not** be provided for any indirect costs such as building rent, on-going operating costs (i.e., utilities). While funding can be used for salaries of those directly serving the program’s goal(s), funding will not be provided for employee benefits (i.e., FICA).

Funding may be provided for programming that accomplishes any of the following:

- that will be available to and directly impact the citizens of the City of Gastonia by promoting or producing public visual art, performing arts, art education, recreational, entertainment and cultural opportunities.
- that encourages school success.
- that encourages opportunities for therapeutic arts for citizens with mental and physical disabilities.
- that promotes diversity in the arts.
- that produces economic development and tourism within the City of Gastonia.

Process for Choosing Grant Recipients

Applicants for grants must submit a complete application online through the City of Gastonia web site. To be considered applicants must supply all information requested in the online application together with any supplemental information requested by the Arts Grant Sub-Committee. The Grant Sub-Committee will review each grant application and remove any application that is not complete or otherwise does not meet the qualifications. The remaining grants will be graded by the Grant Sub-Committee using the rubric adopted by the full City Arts Committee as that rubric may be amended from time to time. The grant applications with the highest scores will be presented as a slate for a vote before the City Arts Committee to be recommended to City Council for approval.

Sample Grant Scoring Rubric

All grant applications will be graded by the Arts Grant Subcommittee in accordance with the Grant Rubric Scoring System form attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference.

Award Notices

Organizations will be notified by e-mail of grant awards during the month of November. Organizations that did not receive grant funds will also be notified, by e-mail, during the month of November.

Grant Project Reports and Compliance Assurance

Grant funds may only be used for the qualified purposes approved by the City Arts Committee in the grant award notice. An organization awarded a grant is required to submit a mid-term grant report to the City Arts Committee by the July 15th deadline. A final grant report must be returned to the City Arts Committee by the December 15th deadline. Grant reports must provide a complete accounting with supporting receipts or other documentation satisfactory to the City Arts Committee clearly documenting the purposes for which all grant funds were spent. Failure to return completed grant reports by the required deadline can result in suspension or termination of the grant award, and/or legal action to recover the funds by the City Arts Committee. By signing and submitting its application form, the Applicant certifies that it will maintain records and submit the reports that are necessary to determine completion of the grant project as approved. The City Arts Committee may conduct a review of the Applicant's organization to ensure that it is in compliance with the terms of the grant award. If the City Arts Committee determines that a grantee has failed to comply with these terms, it may suspend or terminate the award, and/or recover all funds awarded.

Changes to Programs and Projects After Grant Award

Applicants must notify the City Arts Committee immediately of any significant changes in their program or project that occur after submission of their application. If the program or project or the organization's capacity changes significantly before an award is made, the City Arts Committee may revise or withdraw the funding recommendation. Grantees are expected to carry out a program or project that is consistent with the proposal that was approved for funding by the City Arts Committee. If changes in the program or project are required after the grant funding, the grantee must submit a written request with justification for the change(s) to the City Arts Committee and obtain approval of the change. Approval is not guaranteed, and grant funds must be returned to the City Arts Committee should the Applicant choose to proceed with the changes without City Arts Committee approval.

Disbursement of Grant Funds

If funding is awarded, the City Arts Committee will send the applicant a contract for the funding year. Monies will not be released until signed contracts are returned. Funds will be distributed at the beginning of the grant cycle established by the City Arts Committee.

Grant Rubric Scoring System

Evaluator's Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructions:

1. Review all grant application materials
2. Review scoring descriptions and grant criteria
3. Score the grant application using the scoring worksheets
4. Evidence for meeting the criteria may be found in any portion of an application or associated support materials

Evaluation Criteria

Organization Name: _____

	Public Access & Community Engagement (Score 1 - 3)	Artistic & Cultural Vibrancy (Score 1 - 3)	Project Planning and Organizational Capacity (Score 1 - 3)	Financial Oversight (Score 1 - 3)	Award History (Score 1 - 3)	Total Score (Max 15 points)
Notes						

- Subcommittee members should evaluate whether the applicant meets the criteria and make any notes that will clarify decision-making or list any questions/concerns the member may have.
- **Category Grading Description and Examples:**
 - **Public Access and Community Engagement** - How well the project displays access to diverse audiences and participants while providing a public benefit of some kind.

- Example: Provides wheelchair access to a play and/or allows potential participants with disabilities to have a role in the play.
 - Example: Attracts and is available to traditionally underserved communities.
- **Artistic and Cultural Vibrancy** - Displays a novel, high-quality piece of art or program that inspires and compels the community.
 - Example: An art panel display that can inspire other artists to explore other mediums.
- **Project Planning and Organizational Capacity** - Displays sufficient and qualified professional and volunteer staffing, whether permanent or contracted, for the project. Additionally, provides examples of how they will implement, market, and execute the project.
 - Example: Creates a public Facebook post for a guitar lesson project by hiring a qualified professional to organize the timeline and expectations of each class.
- **Financial Oversight** - The budget must be reasonable and appropriate for the program. Information on whether other financial resources have been explored or obtained. The organization displays solvency and exercises financial stability.
 - Organizations that are previous award recipients must demonstrate sound financial oversight as outlined in the required mid-year and final-year reports and/or the submitted financial information, such as bank statements or accounting records.
 - If the organization is new to the application process, it has not been able to show its timeliness for mid-year and final-year reports, making the column inapplicable. The subcommittee will need to base its scoring on the submitted financial information, such as bank statements or accounting records.
 - Example: The organization provides a budget for a performing arts show with a list of additional funding resources it has obtained or attempted to obtain, and provides proof of a loan or grant application.
- **Award History** - Consideration of whether the organization has received an award before and how many times they have done so. Staff will provide information to the subcommittee about previous winners.
 - Example: An organization has been awarded three years in a row. This will NOT disqualify the organization, but will be considered when grading submissions.
 - **The grading scale for this specific category will be different from the other factors, as such:**
 - 1 = Award has been granted every year/many times consecutively.
 - 2 = Award has been granted sometimes, but not more than three times consecutively.
 - 3 = The organization has never received an award.
- The scoring system for all categories except Award History will be based on a 1-3 scale. Examples of scoring are:
 - 1 = The organization has not demonstrated plans for a program/project, nor the implementation of the plans that deliver a successful outcome.

- 2= The organization has demonstrated plans for a program/project, but when implemented, some weaknesses may prevent a successful outcome.
- 3= The organization has demonstrated plans for a program/project, and the implementation of the plan delivers a successful outcome.