



Montgomery County Arts and Cultural  
District

# ARTIST OPPORTUNITY GRANT

2025–2026 Program Guidelines



Administered by Culture Works

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# 2025–2026 ARTIST OPPORTUNITY GRANT

Welcome to the Montgomery County Artist Opportunity Grant Program. This program is made possible by funding from the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District (MCACD) and is administered by Culture Works.

## About the Program

The Artist Opportunity Grant Program empowers Montgomery County, Ohio, artists to advance their careers through professional development opportunities and the creation of new works that expand on their area of expertise.

The program's goals are

- to assist artists in Montgomery County in furthering and innovating their work
- to encourage the development and raise the profile of individual artistic work in the region
- to help artists achieve their goals for their craft, thereby increasing their access and influence in the dynamic creative environment across Montgomery County.

Grants are intended to fund **specific, unique, and imminent opportunities** that have the **potential to significantly impact an artist's craft and deepen their creative and professional development**, regardless of where they are in their artistic career.

**The MCACD is providing \$75,000 for the 2025–2026 grant cycle, and grants will range from \$500 to \$5,000.**

## What Is an Opportunity?

An opportunity may be one of many things—such as

- an invitation to exhibit at an important gallery
- to audition for a major dance company
- to study with a mentor or renowned teacher.

It may also be an opportunity to create/complete a new work that

- advances an artist's career
- explores a new or innovative technique
- exposes an artist to new audiences.

In any case, an opportunity should be well suited to the artist's skill level and should represent a natural, meaningful step in their creative development and career in the context of their past artistic work and stated artistic goals. **An opportunity should not duplicate experiences the artist has already experienced during their career.**

**Applicants may only submit one application per grant cycle and must limit their funding request to one opportunity.** Requests to fund multiple activities will not be considered unless the activities are part of a formal series (e.g., a series of workshops hosted by the same organizer).

## Who Can Apply?

To be eligible for the Artist Opportunity Grant Program, an applicant must:

- Be a resident of Montgomery County, Ohio, with a valid street address (no P.O. boxes) demonstrated by a driver's license, utility bill, bank statement, voter registration document, etc.; and
- Be a United States citizen or a permanent legal resident; and
- Be at least 18 years old; and
- Be an active artist or creative entrepreneur.

**For the purposes of this grant program, an artist is defined as someone who has practiced their artistic discipline for at least three years\*, demonstrates artistic potential, and is committed to developing their craft and career. Artists devote a significant portion of their time to creating, practicing, or teaching their artform and receive compensation for their work – reflective of the stage of their career.**

- Have exhibited, performed, or published work as an artist within the past three years, including self-curated opportunities or those in non-traditional venues.

\*NOTE: An applicant's history of artistic practice can include time spent in, and activities completed as part of, an undergraduate or graduate art program.

## How Can Artists Use Funding?

**Artist Opportunity Grants range from \$500 to \$5,000.** As an opportunity-based grant, applicants must request a specific dollar amount within the allowable range, explain how funds will be used, and provide documentation of project expenses (e.g. screenshots of supply costs or registration fees, quotes from venues, etc.). If the Artist Opportunity Grant will not cover the full cost of an opportunity/project, the applicant must explain how they will cover the difference.

Grant funds must be used within the grant period—January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026. This program does *not* fund general supplies utilized in the course of normal business. All costs must be tied to a specific, unique opportunity/project. **Allowable expenses include:**

- **Artist's Time: *New in 2023.*** For artists applying for funding to create new work, up to 20% of the funding request may be used to offset the cost of the applicant artist's time

based on a typical hourly rate and estimated number of hours needed to complete project activities.

- **Presentation/Documentation/Portfolio Development and Marketing:** Costs related to producing materials such as slides, catalogs, portfolios, audio/visual recordings, manuscripts, brochures, etc. that are part of an imminent, concrete opportunity or are part of a clear marketing/outreach plan.
- **Professional Services:** Use of professional services to support the project (e.g., payments to contracted artist collaborators, production crew, professional consultants who help with project marketing plans and design, etc.).
- **Materials and Supplies:** Project-specific expenses for materials or supplies (e.g., paint, film, paper, fabric, etc.) needed to complete work for an exhibition, performance, publication, presentation, etc. as described in the application.
- **Equipment and Facilities:** Expenses for equipment rental or purchase (equipment purchases must not exceed \$500 per item) needed to prepare new work for an exhibition, performance, publication, etc. Expenses related to the short-term rental of venue/exhibition/rehearsal space (costs associated with home studios/workspace or leases are not permitted).
- **Fees and Travel:** Registration fees and travel costs associated with an imminent, concrete opportunity to perform, exhibit or audition, study with a mentor, or participate in a workshop, conference, residency, seminar, or other professional development opportunity. Lowest available fares and current IRS mileage rate apply. Reasonably priced accommodation is permitted if the opportunity is more than 100 miles from home.

## Restrictions

### Artist Opportunity Grants will *not* fund:

- Students' degree or certificate completion in ANY subject, or any projects assigned toward the completing of a degree or certification
- Non-residents of Montgomery County
- More than one applicant applying for the same project (Artists are welcome to collaborate, but one artist must be identified as the lead, applicant artist)
- Activities that have already taken place or take place outside of the grant period (January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026)
- Ongoing work or supplies for ongoing use (this fund exists to help artists take advantage of *unique* opportunities in their careers)

- Living expenses not tied to a specific project or opportunity (e.g., rent, utilities)
- Purchase of equipment costing more than \$500 (per item) or equipment not related to a specific opportunity
- Multiple opportunities that are not part of a formal series (e.g., a series of workshops by the same organizer)
- Arts-in-education programs or teaching opportunities (Artists interested in funding for these types of opportunities are encouraged to inquire about [the Special Projects Grant program](#))
- Activities of a commercial nature or fees or commissions that should be paid by others (e.g., works by creatives to be used by employers, commissioned artwork, etc.)
- Activities considered to be hobbies or of a therapeutic or recreational nature
- Curatorial projects of other people's work
- Personal medical, legal, accounting, or administrative expenses
- Banking fees, PayPal fees, or service fees from crowd funding projects
- Food or beverage expenses
- Fundraising events, religious activities or events, or advocacy of specific political causes or candidates.

## 2025–2026 Program Timeline

**For the 2025–2026 application cycle, all proposed opportunities must take place between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2026.**

**Wednesday, August 13, 2025** – Application available at [cultureworks.org](http://cultureworks.org).

**Tuesday, August 19 & Wednesday, August 20, 3:00pm, 2025**

### **Artist Opportunity Grant & Community Force Orientation**

Not familiar with the application? New to grant writing? Unfamiliar with the application portal, Community Force? Be prepared for a thorough introduction with time for your questions! No registration required – *Come when you can, stay as you can!* Check [cultureworks.org](http://cultureworks.org) [Apply for Funding](#) for the Zoom link.

**Wednesday, August 27, 3:00pm, 2025**

## **Artist Statement Workshop**

The Artist Statement is your opportunity to share your vision as an artist and to tell grant reviewers about your journey as an artist, but how do you write one? Come read through samples with your fellow applicants and begin writing your own! No registration required – *Come when you can, stay as you can!* Check [cultureworks.org Apply for Funding](https://cultureworks.org/Apply-for-Funding) for the Zoom link.

**Tuesday, September 2, 4:30pm & Wednesday September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3:00pm, 2025**

## **Project Budget Workshop**

A project budget is a crucial part of an Artist Opportunity Grant application, but how do you develop one? And how do you balance the story of your project with the projected costs of that project? This workshop will offer support as you create a project budget with supporting documentation and narrative. No registration required – *Come when you can, stay as you can!* Check [cultureworks.org Apply for Funding](https://cultureworks.org/Apply-for-Funding) for the Zoom link.

**Wednesday, September 10, 3:00pm, 2025**

## **Peer Review Workshop**

An opportunity to receive feedback on an early draft of your application from fellow applicants and past grantees. Registration is required by October 1 for participation in this workshop. *\*Dates and times may be updated based on participation. Check [cultureworks.org Apply for Funding](https://cultureworks.org/Apply-for-Funding) to register.*

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2025 APPLICATION DEADLINE, 4:00 pm EST.**

***Applications must be submitted online through the Community Force Application Portal.***

**Wednesday, October 29<sup>th</sup> (Panel A) and 31<sup>st</sup> (Panel B), 2025**

## **Virtual Public Grant Panel Meeting.**

Applicants will receive notification of their initial award status following the meeting. The panel's funding recommendations must then receive final approval by the MCACD board.

**November 2025**

## **Grantee Onboarding Sessions**

Grantees meet with Culture Works' Director of Grantmaking & Impact to review and complete grant agreements.

## January 2026

### Grant Payments

Culture Works begins issuing grant payments. (Grants are paid in one lump sum 30 days prior to each grantee's project start date and following completion of their grant agreement).

## Thursday, December 31, 2026

### Project Final Deadline

All projects/opportunities must be complete. (Note: Each grantee will have a unique project end date based on their timeline of activities, but *all* funded projects must be completed by December 31, 2026 at the latest. *A final report is due 30 days following the grantee's project end date.*)

## Completing the Application

The strongest applications are written as though the reader / panel reviewer knows absolutely nothing about your art form, project, or you – as if the two of you have never met.

Before beginning the application, as yourself:

- **HOW** is this opportunity unique?
- **WHAT** does the opportunity offer that isn't otherwise available to you?
- **WHY** is this opportunity appropriate for this moment in your professional and creative development?
- **WHY** is it important for you to complete this work – creatively and professionally?
- **WHAT** needs or interests do you perceive in your community?
- **HOW** does your project benefit your community or help meet one of their needs?
- **WHAT** impact will the opportunity have on your development as a creative, on the development of your craft, on your career and work?
- **WHO** is your particular audience?
- **WHY** is this chosen audience important to you?
- **HOW** does your project foster a sense of community and/or inclusivity?
- **HOW** does your project *reflect* the people of Montgomery County and the Dayton region?
- **WHO** will you be working with (if applicable) and why are they the best person to learn from/collaborate with right now?

### Application Components:

- **Proof of Residency:** On the application, the applicant address must be current and may not be a P.O. box.
- A clear and concise **Artist Statement** and an overview of your history as an artist.

- At least one recent artistic **Work Sample** and a description of this work and how it relates to the proposed opportunity/project. You will have the opportunity to either upload your work sample(s) or provide a link/URL. Work samples may include images, audio files, online galleries, Vimeo/YouTube videos, websites, or blogs where samples of your work appear or are archived. **Find tips and additional guidelines regarding work samples at [cultureworks.org](http://cultureworks.org).**
- A detailed **Project Description** that explains the *who/what/where/when/why/how* of the opportunity.
- A detailed **Project Timeline**. **The project or opportunity must take place between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2026.** If the grant is to complete a project already in progress, *it must culminate with a completed work*. Projects anticipated to not be completed by December 31, 2026 will *not* be considered.
- A **Letter of Invitation/Acceptance** (if applicable) from the organization or individual providing the opportunity. If you will not know whether you've been accepted into the program prior to the application deadline, indicate this in your application narrative and provide an anticipated confirmation date.
- A **Description of the Potential Impact** of the opportunity/project on your development as an artist, creative, and professional and how it will help enrich your craft and deepen your practice and bring you closer to your goals.
- A **Description of the Public Benefit** of the opportunity/project. Applicants must make their work available/accessible to the general public of Montgomery County in some way (e.g., a performance, exhibition, presentation, publication, workshop, class, a website documenting the project).
- **Each applicant must clearly identify one public presentation of the project** in their application, with clear marketing/outreach plans to ensure attendance/participation. Those pursuing professional development opportunities should think of a way to share their experience and knowledge with the public, e.g., through lectures, blogs, videos, websites, exhibitions, etc. *(See p. 8 for information on exhibition/presentation opportunities through the Dayton Metro Library.)*
- **Project Budget:** Applicants will be required to submit a complete **budget for the entire project** (not just the amount of the grant requested) **using the template provided** in the application. This budget spreadsheet should align with the application narrative and include all sources of revenue/ funding, even if they are only anticipated and not yet secured. **Note: If the total project budget exceeds \$5,000, applicants must provide proof of additional funding sources** (e.g., a letter of commitment from a foundation, a grant agreement from another funder, etc.).
- **Documentation of Expenses** such as quotes, brochures, registration forms, screenshots of products with pricing, etc. These should align with the expenses outlined in your budget spreadsheet.

## Evaluation Process and Funding Decisions

All applications are reviewed by Culture Works and MCACD staff for completeness and eligibility before advancing to an independent review panel of artists, arts administrators, educators, and other community members who understand and have an appreciation for the creative process, career paths, and professional development of artists and creatives. Every effort is made to avoid conflicts of interest.

Panelists review and score eligible applications independently over the course of a month. In late October, they will convene at a virtual public panel meeting to discuss applications and later in a private meeting, make funding recommendations as a group. To facilitate discussion and funding recommendations, applications with the lowest initial scores may be eliminated from consideration prior to the public meeting. Applicants will be notified in advance of whether their application will proceed to the panel meeting (through the email provided in the application).

Panelists receive online access to the applications, supporting materials, and artistic work samples. **Panelists score applications based on the five evaluation criteria outlined below. The highest possible score is 25.**

### Evaluation Criteria

**Artistic Merit (5 pts.):** The professional capabilities of the applicant; the artistic strength, quality, vision, and originality of the applicant's work as demonstrated in the application, previous work, and artist's statement. Grant reviewers will consider whether:

- The artist's work is well-executed and well-produced, demonstrating control of craft and technique and a level of skill appropriate to the artist's career stage.
- The artist's work is of compelling artistic vision and singular voice.
- The artist's work is inventive, imaginative, and substantive in form and content.

**Potential Impact (5 pts.)** of the proposed opportunity/project to advance/further the applicant's work/career. Grant reviewers will consider whether:

- The opportunity is unique, time-sensitive, and not a repeat of past experiences.
- The artist identifies clear and realistic artistic/professional goals and makes a case for how this opportunity will help achieve them through a deepened practice.
- There is a potential for the opportunity to facilitate future creative work.

**Quality of the Proposed Opportunity (5 pts):** The artistic strength, quality, vision, and originality of the proposed opportunity/project. Grant reviewers will consider whether:

- The opportunity/project is clearly defined and meets high standards reflective of the stage of the applicant's creative career.
- (As applicable) The mentors/instructors involved are well qualified and/or the artist demonstrates capacity for self-directed learning.
- The opportunity/project is original and reflects awareness of the history and contemporary practice of the artist's field and its relationship to both (i.e., it is not a duplication of an existing effort).
- The opportunity/project is significant to the applicant's artistic development or a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

**Administrative Capability (5 pts):** The feasibility of the proposed project as determined by the applicant preparing and clearly articulating a logical, well- conceived project plan that can be reasonably executed and includes a realistic timeline and accurate budget. Grant reviewers will consider whether:

- The artist provided a clear project timeline and explanation of how funds will be used.
- The project budget is realistic and supported by documentation of expenses. (*See page 6 for more about budget requirements.*)
- The artist has a history of presenting work to the public and a record of creative activity appropriate to their career stage.

**Public Benefit (5 pts):** The applicant seeks to increase the public's access to and direct participation in high-quality arts and cultural resources that celebrate diversity and foster creativity within Montgomery County. Grant reviewers will consider whether:

- The artist has a clear plan to share their work or project outcomes with the community.
- The artist articulates how the opportunity/project will benefit intended audiences.
- (As applicable) The artist has a commitment from the intended exhibition space or performance venue.

## Public Panel Meeting

During the public panel meeting, panelists discuss applications one at a time while referring to their own reading and review notes. As needed, panel members are given the opportunity to revisit an artist's application and/or supporting documentation. This is done for clarification purposes. Because materials will have been previously reviewed by panelists, they may or may not ask to review the same materials for every applicant. After the public panel review,

panelists will have up to 5 days to reflect on the panel discussion and update their written feedback and scores after considering alternate points of view.

## Private Panel Meeting and Final Decision

Up to a week after the public portion of the panel meeting, panelists discuss any updates to their assessment of applications and the scores after reflecting on the discussion that took place during the public panel review. The panelists will then finalize funding recommendations to be sent to MCACD.

When finalizing funding recommendations, a master list of all applicants will be ranked from highest to lowest average score. Funding recommendations will be made based on these rankings and the funding that is available. Upon panel recommendations becoming approved by the MCACD board, all award recipients will enter into a contract/grant agreement with Culture Works.

## Grant Payment and Grantee Responsibilities

**Grants will be made in a single, one-time payment 30 days prior to each grantee's project start date and following successful completion of their grant agreement.** Grant funding may only support expenses incurred during the grant period (January 1, 2026–December 31, 2026).

It is the grantee's responsibility to ensure that funds are spent throughout the year, or as appropriate and necessary, to cover costs proposed in the application.

Grantees are responsible for submitting a **final report** (financial, narrative, and evaluative, including examples of the results of the grant project) within 30 days of the completion of the project/opportunity. Receipts for purchases or services must accompany the final report. If grantees fail to submit a final report, they will be ineligible to apply to the grant again until the report is submitted.

If a grantee's project is delayed and will not be completed within the grant period, the grantee will be required to complete a **project revision form** identifying the delay and stating an expected completion date. Revisions must be reviewed by Culture Works staff for approval.

In all publicity, websites, printed or production materials related to the grant project, the grantee shall acknowledge Montgomery County as the funder and Culture Works as the administrator of the Artist Opportunity Grant and include both logos in programs, publications, and media releases associated with grant activities and the project the same size as other sponsors or larger.

## Dayton Metro Library Partnership

As an added benefit to grant recipients, **MCACD and Culture Works have joined in partnership with the Dayton Metro Library to facilitate convenient access to artistic**

**spaces.** Dayton Metro Library (DML) has high-quality performance and gallery spaces available at the Main Library, as well as access to Community Rooms and programming spaces nestled within neighborhoods all across the county.\* For the opportunity to access these spaces at no cost, DML requests that Artist Opportunity Grant recipients offer a program (performance, gallery show, film screening, educational workshop, etc.) that is free and open to the public during Library hours. In return for sharing your art/education with Library patrons, DML will market the program and provide limited space support.

Beyond this programming partnership, artists may also wish to consider DML's Opportunity Spaces (longer-term residencies typically of three to four weeks) or rental spaces (required for ticketed performances or performances after-hours).

If you are interested in learning more about partnering with the Dayton Metro Library for your Artist Opportunity Grant project:

- **Performing artists** should contact Mariah Johnson, Cultural Programming Manager, at [MJohnson@DaytonMetroLibrary.org](mailto:MJohnson@DaytonMetroLibrary.org) or 937-496-8803.
- **Visual artists** should contact Caitlin Wissler, Public Services Director, at [CWissler@daytonmetrolibrary.org](mailto:CWissler@daytonmetrolibrary.org) or 937-496-8854.

*\*DML follows all recommended protocols for health and community safety. As such, enclosed spaces and gathering areas may be limited and/or masks may be required due to COVID-19.*

This Artist Opportunity Grant program is made possible through a public-private partnership between Montgomery County and Culture Works.