



# Support Grant Guidelines

## General Operating Support Grants *for Arts Organizations*

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**Applications are due by 5pm on Wednesday, October 23.**

Please plan to submit your application well before the 5pm deadline in case of technical difficulties. Late applications are not accepted.

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### Quick Links

- [Support Grants Webpage](#): Download the grant guidelines and application question list, read the FAQ, check important dates, and register for the grants orientation.
- [Grants Portal](#): Apply for a grant, complete your final report, and download copies of your previous applications.

**QUESTIONS?** Email Tamara Liu, *Grants Program Manager* at [grantsprogram@artscouncilsc.org](mailto:grantsprogram@artscouncilsc.org):

## Key Dates

Please visit our [Support Grants Webpage](#) for a list of key dates, including the orientation, office hours, the application deadline, and when decision emails are sent out.

## Grant Program Overview

General operating support for Santa Cruz County nonprofit or fiscally-sponsored arts organizations of all budget sizes. Applications accepted once per year for grants up to \$7,000. Visit our website for a list of [2024 Support grantees](#).

## Grant Program Objectives

We provide funding for artists and arts organizations in Santa Cruz County to:

- Support the creation and presentation of artistically excellent work
- Increase the success of artists and the sustainability of arts organizations
- Engage new audiences in the arts
- Expand equitable access to the arts
- Increase social impact through the arts

### Definitions

*Equitable access*: how you are improving disparities in representation and access in the arts.

*Social impact*: how you are advancing racial justice and/or social issues in your community.

## Awards

The Support grant program is competitive, with an estimated 65-75% of applications funded. Grants of \$3,000-\$7,000 will be awarded to arts organizations of all budget sizes. Grant award size will be based on results of the review process.

The top-scoring applications will also be considered for two-year or three-year grant awards (grants automatically renewed for additional years, though funding level is subject to change based on available grant funds). When considering two-year and three-year grant awards for the top-scoring applications, the Equity & Accessibility score will be weighted.

## Eligibility Criteria

Applicant eligibility is based on the following criteria. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact [grantsprogram@artscouncilsc.org](mailto:grantsprogram@artscouncilsc.org).

- Applicant must:
  - Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or have a fiscal sponsor that is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization;
  - Have as its primary mission the development and delivery of arts and/or cultural programming to the public;
  - Be based in and produce the majority of its work in Santa Cruz County;
  - Have a board-approved non-discrimination policy.
  - Have completed required reports for previous Arts Council grants (the Support grant final report is now completed as part of the application).
  - Submit only one application for one Arts Council grant per cycle.
- **Support Grants Do Not Fund:**
  - Capital improvements, construction, or renovation projects.

- Government departments, boards, or programs.
- Foundations that do not produce arts programming.
- Social services, political or religious advocacy, or for-profit organizations.
- School programs (the Arts Council funds school programs through our Arts Ed program).
- Culinary arts or healing arts organizations.
- Universities and colleges, unless they are providing fiscal sponsorship for one arts program only.

## Review Process

Proposals are reviewed and scored by the Grants Program Manager and members of the Grants Committee, composed of majority BIPOC community volunteers with diverse arts backgrounds. The Grants Committee considers the scores and comments and makes funding recommendations to the Arts Council Board of Directors for approval.

## Review Criteria

The following three criteria are used to evaluate Support grant applications; we highly recommend you review them carefully as you work on your application. **NEW:** The questions have been tweaked slightly since last year. The bulleted questions marked with an asterisk (\*) are the ones that have been adjusted.

Each bulleted question is scored on a scale of 1-4: 1 - Weak, does not meet criteria; 2 - Fair, meets the review criteria to a limited degree; 3 - Good, meets the criteria to a significant degree; 4 - Exemplary, meets the criteria to the highest degree.

### ➤ **Artistic Excellence & Relevance** (50 of 150 points):

- Is a clear description of artistic excellence provided?
- Does the organization's programming align with their view of artistic excellence?
- Does the applicant demonstrate a strong understanding of the audience and/ or participants they engage? (in terms of geography, age, race/ethnicity, etc.)
- Does the applicant clearly explain how their programming and engagement strategies are relevant and responsive to their community? This could include strategies used to engage their community, to incorporate community input into programming, and/or to respond to feedback.\*
- Do support materials (work samples, supporting documents) align with the responses to the Artistic Excellence and Relevance & Responsiveness prompts?

### ➤ **Strategy & Sustainability** (50 of 150 points):

- Does the organization have clear and appropriate long-term goals/strategy in place?\*
- Is the organization actively making progress on their long-term goals/strategy?\*
- Does the applicant demonstrate awareness of the organization's strengths?
- Does the applicant identify the organization's biggest risks/challenges, as well as appropriate strategies to address them?
- Do budget and financial documents demonstrate sound financial management? (This financial question is scored by Arts Council staff only\*).

➤ **Equity & Accessibility** (50 of 150 points):

- Do staff, board, and artists include diverse representation from underrepresented communities?<sup>1</sup>
- Has the organization taken steps to reduce barriers to access and/or increase representation in the past? This could be for the organization's audience, participants, artists, and/or collaborators.\*
- Is at least one future goal related to equity & accessibility clearly articulated, with a plan in place for the coming year to make progress on the goal?\*
- Does the applicant specify which underrepresented communities will have improved access to the organization's programming through those strategies?<sup>1</sup>
- Is the organization's commitment to equity and accessibility evident in the support materials (work samples, supporting documents)?

<sup>1</sup>Examples of underrepresented communities could include but are not limited to: people of color, LGBTQIA+, those with disabilities or neurodiversity, low socio-economic classes, residents of different geographic locations, unhoused community members, immigrants, etc.

For all applications, further consideration is given to: organizations whose programming primarily takes place in neighborhoods most disproportionately impacted by inequities as indicated by the California Healthy Places Index (HPI). HPI is determined by mapping 23 key drivers of health outcomes — like education, job opportunities, and clean air and water. [Click here for more information on HPI.](#)

## Application Support Materials

In addition to written responses, a complete application will include financial documents, as well as work samples and/or supporting documents. See the Review Criteria section above for more guidance on how support materials will be evaluated.

### Financial Documents

- Profit & Loss Statement (statement of activities) and Balance Sheet (statement of financial position) for the most recently completed fiscal year, or board-approved audit.
- Current fiscal year budget (with actuals to-date, if available).

### Work Samples and Supporting Documents

- Submit up to 5 items total (uploads or links) that best represent your work and support your proposal.
  - *Work samples* serve as the key indication of artistic excellence. Examples: photos, written samples, or audio/video links that are publicly accessible.
  - *Supporting documents* provide additional context and/or illustrate the quality and effectiveness of your community outreach. Examples: Reviews, letters of support, brochures, programs or flyers.
- Images and Documents:
  - Uploads are accepted in the following formats: jpg, pdf, doc, docx, png, jpeg.
- Video/Audio:
  - Video/audio clips cannot be uploaded. If you'd like to include video/audio work

samples, please provide publicly accessible URL links.

- If the video/audio is longer than 3 minutes, please provide start/finish times for a 3-minute segment.
- Video/audio links are included in the 5 total items allowed.

## Restrictions

- Grants are provided for direct use by the awarded applicant. These funds are not transferable to other organizations or individuals.
- Awarded funds must be used within the grant period of January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025. Any extensions must be approved by the Grants Program Manager.
- Unused funds or funds not used in accordance with the grant agreement must be returned to Arts Council Santa Cruz County.

## Grantee Responsibilities

- Include Arts Council Santa Cruz County's logo in the footer of your website.
- Report on your previous grant as part of the Support grant application each year. If you were awarded a multi-year grant, complete a brief report in lieu of an application in order to renew your grant.
- Retain and submit financial records in the event that they are required for an audit.

## Public Records

Arts Council Santa Cruz County keeps information submitted as part of a grant application confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

## Statement of Non-Discrimination

Arts Council Santa Cruz County is committed to providing services and making resources available to every resident of Santa Cruz County without regard to ethnicity, color, creed, religion, age, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, military status, marital status, political opinion, national origin, familial status, mental and physical disability, or source of income.