ARTS COUNCIL
for Monterey County

COMMUNITY ARTS GRANTS GUIDELINES

Fall Cycle Applications are due on Monday, November 2, 2026 by 5pm.
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

Grants Webpage: Download the grant guidelines and application question list, read the FAQ, check important dates, and register for the grant orientation.

Grants Portal: Apply for a grant, complete your final report, and download copies of your previous applications.

QUESTIONS? Email klara@arts4mc.org: Klara Hickmanova, Programs Manager

Timeline

Fall Cycle 2026:

Monday, October 5th	Application opens here
October 7th - October 28th	Zoom online hours every Wednesday 2-3pm here
Monday, November 2nd, 5pm	Application Deadline (no late applications accepted)
Monday, November 23rd	Grant decision notifications sent to all applicants
Monday, November 30th	Grantee Agreements Due
Wednesday, December 9th - TBD	Grantee Reception – TBD
Jan 1, 2027 – Dec 31, 2027	Grant Period (when all grant funds must be used)

Grant Program Overview

The Community Arts Grants are available to nonprofits providing arts programs/events, seeking support for public arts and culture projects/programs up to $7,500 per year. Organizations may only receive one grant per year and must have completed their previous grant's final report when submitting a new application.

The Arts Council of Monterey County (Arts4MC)'s policies and practices prioritize racial equity and have a broad geographic reach into communities of all sizes and needs, and this includes providing critical services to artists and to the community at large. Arts4MC is committed to funding opportunities that support all of Monterey County's creative ecosystem.

Grant Program Objectives

We provide funding for nonprofits providing art programs/events in Monterey 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.

Funding Priorities

- **Underserved Communities:** Programs that address the needs of underserved or marginalized communities;
- **Artistic Innovation:** Projects that push boundaries and introduce new ideas in the arts;
- **Capacity Building:** Initiatives that help build organizational capacity and sustainability;
- **Collaboration and Partnership:** Programs that foster collaboration among artists, organizations, and communities.

Awards

This grant cycle will be competitive with an estimated 75% of applications funded. Grants up to $7,500 will be awarded to arts organizations of all budget sizes. Grant award size will be based on results of the review process and scoring.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicant eligibility is based on the following criteria. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact klara@arts4mc.org.

Organizations with total revenues **at or above $3 million are not eligible to apply**.

1. **Applicant must:**
2. Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or have a fiscal sponsor that is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization;
3. Have as its primary mission the development and delivery of arts and/or cultural programming to the public;
4. Be based in and produce the majority of its work in Monterey County for at least two years and able to provide proof of occupancy;
5. Have completed required reports for previous Arts Council grants;
6. Submit only one application per cycle.

2. **What We Do Not Fund:**
   - Government departments, boards, or programs;
   - Organizations that do not produce arts programming;
   - Social services, political or religious advocacy, or for-profit organizations;
   - School programs, universities and colleges, unless they are providing fiscal sponsorship for one arts program only;
   - Nonprofit organizations not in “good standing” with California Secretary of State;
   - Former grantee organizations not in compliance with Arts4MC grant requirements, such as failing to submit a final report (as stipulated in grant agreement);
   - Expenses incurred before the start date or after the ending date of the Grant Activity Period;
   - Fundraising activities or services such as grant writing, annual campaigns, or fundraising events;
   - Programs or services intended for private use, or for use by restricted membership (including programs that require college or university enrollment for participation);
   - Trusts, endowment funds, or investments;
   - Construction projects, purchase of land and buildings, or capital expenditures used to maintain, upgrade, acquire, or repair capital assets.

Arts4MC is committed to equitable distribution of funds throughout Monterey County.

Review Criteria

- Applications will be reviewed by an independent panel of diverse evaluators from each of the five supervisorial districts in the county;
- The following three criteria are used to evaluate grant applications; we highly recommend you review them carefully as you work on your application.
- Each bulleted item 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 vision of artistic excellence articulated?
    - ✓ Does the organization's programming align with their vision of artistic excellence?
    - ✓ Does the applicant demonstrate a strong understanding of the audience and/ or participants they engage?
    - ✓ Does the applicant clearly explain how their programming and engagement strategies are relevant and responsive to their community?
    - ✓ Do support materials (work samples, supporting documents) also support the descriptions of artistic excellence, programming, and community engagement?
- **Impact, Strategy & Sustainability (50 of 150 points):**
    - ✓ Is the organization's ability to fulfill its mission evident throughout the application?
    - ✓ Are the organization's goals clearly described, with short-term goals for 2027 aligning well with their long-term goals/strategy?
    - ✓ 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?
- **Equity & Accessibility (50 of 150 points):**
    - ✓ Does the applicant communicate a strong understanding of equity?
    - ✓ Does the organization provide accessible opportunities for diverse community participation by audience, participants, collaborators, and/or supporters?
    - ✓ Does the applicant specify which marginalized communities will have improved access to the organization's programming through those strategies? Examples 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.
    - ✓ Is the organization's commitment to equity and accessibility evident throughout the application, including the support materials?

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.

1. **Financial Documents**
    - Profit & Loss Statement (statement of activities) and Balance Sheet (statement of financial position) for most recently completed fiscal year, or most recent review/audit;
    - Current fiscal year organization budget (with actuals to-date, if available);
    - Project budget.
2. **Work Samples and Supporting Documents**
    - Submit up to 3 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.
3. **Images and Documents:**
    - Uploads are accepted in the following formats: jpg, pdf, doc, docx, png, jpeg.
4. **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:

- Cycle 1: January 1, 2027 - December 31, 2027
- Cycle 2: July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028

Any extensions must be approved by the Arts4MC Executive Director.

Unused funds or funds not used in accordance with the grant agreement must be returned to Arts Council for Monterey County.

Grantee Responsibilities

- Include Arts Council for Monterey County's logo on your website;
- Recognize funding from the Arts Council in social media posts, newsletters, annual reports, etc.;
- Report on your previous grant as part of the grant application each year; and
- Retain and submit financial records in the event that they are required for an audit.

Public Records

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

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Arts Council for Monterey County is committed to providing services and making resources available to every resident of Monterey 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.

Conclusion

The grant-making policy aims to strategically invest in arts programs that align with our mission and have the potential for significant impact. By focusing on high-potential organizations and providing targeted support, we seek to foster a vibrant and inclusive arts community that enriches the cultural landscape for all.

Approval and Review

These guidelines will be reviewed annually by the Arts Council Grant Committee to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with our organizational goals and priorities.