

# BCAC Guidelines

## FY 2027 Baltimore City Arts & Cultural Grant Program - GUIDELINES

### Application Calendar

- February 2026 Grant applications available online at [hcac.gosmart.org](http://hcac.gosmart.org)
- April 9, 2026 Deadline for applications. Applicants can submit up to 11:59 P.M.
- July 15, 2026 FY2026 Final Report Due
- September 2026 Earliest announcement of grant award or rejection
- January 30, 2027 FY2027 Interim Report Due
- July 15, 2027 FY2027 Final Report Due

### General Information

The Howard County Arts Council (HoCo Arts) is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to serve the citizens of Howard County by fostering the arts, artists and arts organizations. HoCo Arts is governed by a board of directors who are elected to two-year terms.. To carry out its mission, HoCo Arts awards operating and special project grants to eligible organizations. HoCo Arts is authorized by the Howard County Government to administer grant programs to Howard County arts organizations, artists-in-residence in Howard County schools, and certain key Baltimore City arts and cultural organizations. HoCo Arts is available to provide technical assistance in completing grant applications. Call 410-313-2787.

### HoCo Arts Responsibilities

- Develop and maintain a grant process in accordance with criteria established by the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) and set forth by Howard County Government.
- Develop procedures for submission and funding of proposals.
- Review and evaluate proposals for grants funds.
- Select recipients and award grants.

### Purpose of the Baltimore City Arts & Cultural Grants Program

- To foster excellence, diversity, and vitality in arts and cultural offerings for Howard County residents.
- To broaden opportunities for Howard County audiences, artists and arts organizations and to promote regionalism.
- To increase the availability of arts activities in Howard County.
- To promote countywide awareness of arts resources and opportunities.

### Qualifications of Applicant

- Applicant organization must be incorporated as nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, in good standing with both the State and Federal governments.

- Applicant organization must be incorporated as an arts or cultural organization as documented within your articles of incorporation, and whose primary purpose is producing or presenting through public programs and services.
- Applicant organization must provide significant services to the citizens of Howard County.
- Applicant organization must be soundly managed and financially accountable, and may be asked to provide proof thereof.
- Applicants' activities must be open to the general public.
- Applicant must comply with Title VI, Section 601, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that no persons on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination related to the arts.
- Applicant must comply with Title IV, Section 1681, of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Section 6101, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of age or sex.
- Applicant must comply with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which states that no otherwise qualified person shall, solely by reason of his or her handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination related to the arts.
- Applicant organizations must hold their activities in spaces accessible to the disabled. Also, activities must be altered to meet the needs of the visually and hearing impaired upon appropriate notification of need.

In addition to the above criteria, please be aware that the use of copyright material in programs or promotional materials is strictly prohibited. Copyright law protects a work, in whatever medium, unless it has been placed in the public domain. Owners of copyrights hold exclusive right to the reproduction and distribution of their work; therefore, unauthorized use and distribution of copyrighted works is illegal.

### **Applications**

- Applicants may submit one application only.
- Applications must be submitted by **April 9, 2026 at 11:59 P.M.**
- Applicants may be asked to clarify or revise application.
- Late or incomplete applications will be rejected.
- All required attachments and supplemental information must be included.
- Please direct all questions regarding preparation of these forms to HoCo Arts at 410-313-2787.

### **Deadlines**

The deadline to submit the application is **April 9, 2026 at 11:59 P.M.**

### **Review Process & Notification**

Applicant may be asked to clarify and/or revise their application. Applicant must meet all revision deadlines after submission, as specified in writing, or the application will be withdrawn. The Artistic Review Panel will review applications and make its recommendation to the HoCo Arts Committee on Grants. The Committee on Grants will present these recommendations to the HoCo Arts Board of Directors for approval. Organizations will be notified by mail as to the disposition of the application after a final vote by the Board of Directors. All decisions of the HoCo Arts Board of Directors are final. If approved for funding, the organization must submit the signed Letter of Agreement and any outstanding materials or final reports, if applicable, before grant funds are released.

### **Conflict of Interest**

To ensure that all HoCo Arts review panels are free from conflicts of interest and the appearance of such conflicts, panelists are required to disclose any current or prospective affiliations they or their immediate family members have with an actual or potential applicant. "Affiliations" applies to employment, board memberships, independent contractual relationships, substantial contributor relationships, or other relationships. In addition, panelists are required to disclose any past or current adversarial relationships with actual or potential applicants. HoCo Arts panel and board members are not permitted to participate in discussions or votes relating to any applicant with whom they have an affiliation.

### **Restrictions and Accountability**

Grants may not be applied to capital improvements, purchase of land or real property, tuition assistance, refreshment costs, travel, fundraising, or pre-existing expenses, debts, or obligations incurred by the organization. HoCo Arts and the Howard County Government may request to examine or audit all pertinent books, records, and accounts of grant recipients. In addition, grant funds may not be used to make contributions to any persons who hold, or are candidates for, elected office; to any political party, organization, or action committee; or in connection with any political campaign or referendum, or lobbying activities.

### **Fraud and Misrepresentation**

If awarded, the grant funds shall be used only for purposes outlined in grantee's grant application on file with HoCo Arts. Grantee certifies that all of the information and representations contained in the application are and remain true and complete in all material respects. Should it come to the attention of HoCo Arts that any materials submitted by the grantee are fraudulent or misrepresented in any manner, this agreement is null and void and the grantee acknowledges that any remaining grant funds not yet disbursed are forfeited and that the grantee is responsible for reimbursing HoCo Arts for funds already disbursed.

### **Reporting**

At the end of the granting period, a detailed final report on the use of the approved funds for the project must be filed with the HoCo Arts. A professional financial audit for the fiscal year in

which the grant was awarded must also be filed. Additionally, please attach publicity materials along with the final report and indicate where the Howard County Arts Council and Howard County are acknowledged in those materials. Future applications will not be considered unless a complete final report is submitted and approved by HoCo Arts.

### **Attribution**

If a grant is awarded, all programs and publicity related to the grant, including brochures, news releases, programs, and other materials must give credit to the Howard County Arts Council and the Howard County Government. When no printed information is used, oral credit must be given. Use HoCo Arts and Howard County Government logos when appropriate.

### **Changes**

Grant recipients must notify HoCo Arts in writing if a significant change is made in any HoCo Arts funded program. Unused funds must be returned to HoCo Arts.

### **Budget Size and Matching Requirements**

HoCo Art's grant program is a competitive process. Receipt of a grant award does not imply or guarantee the amount of future awards or whether future awards will be made. No grant may exceed half of the total cash budget of the applicant's proposal or 25% of the total available HoCo Arts Baltimore City Arts & Cultural grant funds. **Grant applicants are eligible to apply for up to a 25% increase from the prior year's grant award if the prior grant award is \$9,999 or below; grant applicants whose prior grant award is \$10,000 or above are eligible to apply for a 10% increase.** Capital funds may not be used as matching funds in the budget. HoCo Arts does not fund budget deficits, capital expenditures, purchases of permanent equipment, travel, or fundraising activities.

In determining the amount of the grant request and the required match:

- General Operating Grants must be based on total cash expenses.
- A financial statement from the most recent completed fiscal or calendar year, signed by the organization's fiscal officer or certified public accountant, must accompany the application.
- In-kind donations may not be used by any organization in meeting the required match, although in-kind donations should be detailed in the appropriate section of the application.
- Grant request must be calculated on the actual cash expenses and actual grant award for previous year, NOT the current year.

### **Grant Award      Match required for each grant dollar**

\$0 - \$10,000      1:1

\$10,000 - \$20,000      2:1

\$20,001 - \$30,000      3:1

\$30,001 - \$40,000      4:1

\$40,001 - \$50,000 5:1  
\$50,001 - \$60,000 6:1  
\$60,001 - \$70,000 7:1  
\$70,001 - \$80,000 8:1  
\$80,001 and above 9:1

## **Artistic Review Panel**

To assist HoCo Arts in its decision-making, a peer group made up of artists and academics, is appointed. Its function is to review applications, make funding recommendations to the HCAC Board of Directors, and offer policy recommendations.

## **Review Criteria**

The review of grants is based on the following criteria:

- Artistic or Cultural Merit.
- Service to Howard County Residents.
- Ability of applicant to carry out the activities based on evidence of sound fiscal and administrative management.

At a minimum, each of the following questions will be addressed by the Artistic Review Panel when the application is reviewed. This information is included to assist the applicant organizations in preparing the application.

### **I. Artistic or Cultural Merit**

1. What is the artistic or cultural product?
2. What are the long-range artistic or cultural objectives of the applicant organization?
3. What are the stated goals to be achieved?
4. What indications are there that the project will have a quality level appropriate to the objectives of the organization?
5. What indications are there that the funding will further the artistic or cultural objectives of the organization?
6. Are the activities appropriate to the purpose of the Howard County Arts Council grant program?

### **II. Service to Howard County Residents**

#### **1. Expand Opportunities in the arts**

- Do the applicant organization's programs and activities broaden opportunities for Howard County residents in the arts and culture?

## 2. Audience Development

- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the projected size of the audience? How did the applicant organization arrive at this number?
- What will be done to attract a Howard County audience?
- How many Howard County residents attended similar efforts by the applicant organization in the past?
- How does the organization serve a Howard County audience and, if applicable, indicate what proportion of the endeavor will be carried out in Howard County.

## 3. Diversity

- What attempt has the applicant organization made to encourage organizational diversity in all areas, including audience development, board participation, artists, programs, and administrative management? By diversity, we mean the inclusion of people of different ages, gender, race, culture, abilities and economic status.

## III. Ability of the applicant to carry out the activities

### 1. Technical Merit of Proposal

- Is the application complete?
- Does the narrative clarify goals?
- Is the budget correct?
- Is the writing clear, concise and grammatically correct?
- Is the application appropriate to one of the categories?

### 2. Organizational Strength/Implementation

- Does the organization have a clearly stated mission statement?
- To what degree do regular programs and services meet the mission?
- Does the actual performance of the organization over the past year, as described in the grant application, reflect well-thought out and well-executed programs?
- Does the record of the applicant demonstrate that the proposed activities will be completed during the grant period with the funds requested?
- Does the record of the applicant demonstrate that the grant funds will be managed successfully?
- Who comprises the administrative staff and what are their skills and qualifications?
- Could the applicant organization continue the endeavor should it lose an administrative principal?

- Does the organization have an effective, efficient and resourceful strategy for implementing upcoming arts programs?
- Does the applicant have a budget that reflects a stable organization? Does the budget clearly allocate resources efficiently and effectively to accomplish the proposed project and that specifically demonstrates how HCAC monies will contribute to the project?

### 3. Finance

- Are costs realistic?
- Is the addition/subtraction correct?
- Is the requested financing within the guidelines for the percentage of total budget?
- Although donated in-kind goods and services do not qualify towards matching funds, are they specified in the grant application?
- Does the applicant's previous grant record demonstrate that the requested funds will be used as intended?
- Are the financial records of the applicant organization complete and understandable for the last two years?
- Does the application indicate sound financial planning and management?
- Has the application adequately documented the estimated costs of the project?
- If appropriate, was the applicant organization realistic in projecting costs and revenues in the preceding two years?
- What proportion of the organization's total expenses is to be met from HCAC funding?
- Does the applicant maintain diverse funding sources?
- During the preceding two years, what total funds were obtained from other sources?
- What other sources of funding are being solicited to support this application?
- Is the previous year's final report to HoCo Arts filed and complete?

### **Disclosure**

As a private 501(c)3 that receives public funding, HoCo Arts is committed to provide equal opportunity in all facets of its operation without regard to race, sex, creed, religion, national origin, age, occupation, personal appearance, political opinion, sexual orientation, marital status, physical or mental disability, familial status, source of income, or gender identity. HoCo Arts complies with all county, state, and federal equal protection statutes and regulations, including Title VI, Section 601, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX, Section 1681, of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 6101 of the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990.

### **Appeals Process**

The Howard County Arts Council takes care during the entire grants review process to be as thorough as possible to ensure fair and equitable distribution of grant monies. Therefore, simple dissatisfaction with the denial of an award or with the amount of the award is not sufficient

reason for appeal. Reconsideration of a grant award will take place only if there has been a procedural impropriety or error. This means one of the following:

- A decision based on review criteria other than those stated in the guidelines.
- A decision based on a recommendation of a panelist with undisclosed conflict of interest.
- A decision based on material provided to panelists and/or HoCo Arts Board members that was substantially incorrect, inaccurate, or incomplete despite the applicant having provided the staff with correct, accurate, and complete application information by the application due date.
- Dissatisfaction with the denial of an award or with the amount of the award is not sufficient reason for appeal.

Given this information, should an applicant feel there is legitimate reason for appeal, the applicant must write a letter to the HoCo Arts Executive Director stating the grounds for appeal within fifteen (15) days of the postmark date of the grant award notification. The Committee on Grants will review the appeal and make a recommendation. Based on that recommendation, the Board of Directors will make a final decision. The applicant will receive written notification on the determination of the appeal within 45 days of the receipt of the letter of appeal.