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PROJECT GRANTS

FY27 PROGRAM GUIDELINES
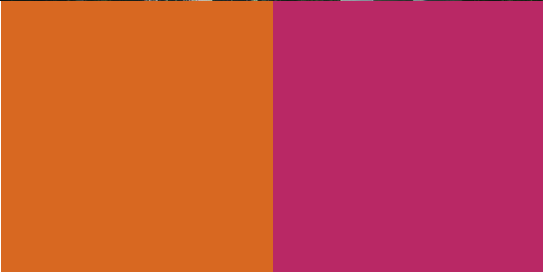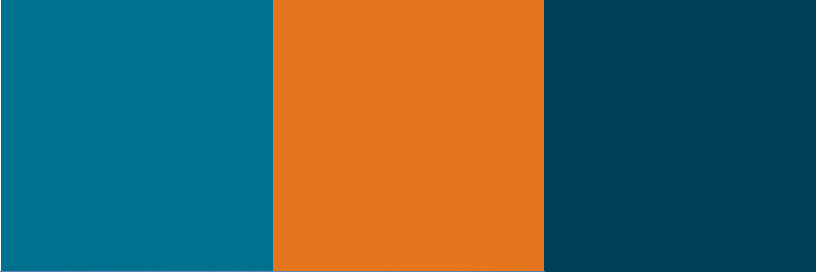
APPLICATION DEADLINE I **FEBRUARY 6, 2026**

WWW.VIRGINIABEACH.GOV/CULTURE

VB | CULTURAL AFFAIRS
Arts & Humanities Commission

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Pennant, Lin Emery

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Wings, Lin Emery

VIRGINIA BEACH ARTS AND HUMANITIES COMMISSION

The Virginia Beach Arts & Humanities Commission is dedicated to fostering a vibrant cultural community by supporting and promoting excellence in the arts and humanities. The Commission plays a vital role in enriching the lives of Virginia Beach residents by ensuring access to diverse and meaningful cultural experiences.

Key Objectives

• Advocacy: Championing the value of the arts and humanities to strengthen community engagement and public support.
• Leadership Support: Empowering arts organizations with resources, guidance, and leadership development to ensure their long-term sustainability and growth.
• Program Development: Providing funding and assistance to expand arts and humanities programs that serve all Virginia Beach residents.

By enhancing Virginia Beach's cultural identity, the Commission celebrates the city's diversity and fosters creativity that inspires pride, unity, and community connection.

VIRGINIA BEACH CULTURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

As Virginia Beach continues to grow in population and visitation, having a vibrant, thriving cultural scene is a necessity and provides well-rounded and diverse options for tourists and residents.

The Virginia Beach Cultural Affairs Department is making a more vibrant Virginia Beach - using art and culture as tools for revitalization, to cultivate community pride and create new landmarks through creativity.

Arts-based, community-led transformation is happening throughout Virginia Beach thanks to the strong partnerships developed between Cultural Affairs, the Arts and Humanities Commission and area non-profit organizations, as well as the department-led initiatives that engage residents and visitors in meaningful arts, heritage, and cultural experiences.

The Cultural Affairs Department supports various initiatives, including public art, cultural programs, and neighborhood-based art projects, to ensure that art remains accessible and engaging for everyone. Its efforts are aligned with the goals of Virginia Beach's Arts Plan 2030, which envisions a city where arts and culture thrive as essential components of everyday life.

One by one Cultural Affairs' exciting projects are changing the face of our city and establishing Virginia Beach as the leader in the arts and culture in Virginia.

Skate Park, Jeff L.Hall

Sandler Center for the Performing Arts

PROJECT GRANT OVERVIEW

The Virginia Beach Arts & Humanities Commission offers project grants to support artistic and cultural initiatives that benefit the citizens of Virginia Beach. These grants are funded primarily through taxpayer revenues allocated annually by City Council, with additional support from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

This grant program seeks to increase community access to high-quality cultural programs while fostering a vibrant and diverse cultural landscape in Virginia Beach.

Funding Guidelines

- **Project-Based Support Only:** Grants fund specific projects and do not provide general operating support for organizations.
- **Cost-Sharing Requirement:** Funding will not exceed 50% of the total project cost.
- **No Guarantee of Funding**: Receiving a grant one year does not guarantee funding in subsequent years, and award amounts may vary annually.

The Commission prioritizes organizations that deliver high-quality programs and services that enrich the cultural landscape and engage the citizens of Virginia Beach.

Funding Priorities

Organizations must demonstrate:

- **Community Impact:** Projects should directly engage and benefit the citizens of Virginia Beach.
- **Quality and Excellence**: Programs must meet high artistic and cultural standards.
- **Diverse Funding Sources:** A variety of financial support, including private and community contributions, reflects strong public interest and investment in the project.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. **Mission Alignment**
To qualify, organizations must have a mission statement that explicitly supports the advancement of the arts and humanities through programming or services.

2. **Organizational Status**
Applicants must meet one of the following criteria:
- Be a nonprofit organization exempt from federal income tax under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code, including 501(c)(3) entities.
- Be a unit of government.
- Be an educational institution.
- Be a local chapter of a tax-exempt national organization.

3. **Proof of Nonprofit Status**
Organizations must submit proof of their nonprofit, tax-exempt status (if not previously submitted). If the tax-exempt status is pending, documentation of the application must be provided.

4. **Legal Compliance**
Applicants must comply with all relevant local, state, and federal laws, including but not limited to:

- Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin).
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (prohibiting age-based employment discrimination).
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (prohibiting discrimination based on disability in federally funded programs).
- The Immigration and Control Act of 1986 (prohibiting unlawful employment of individuals).

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Eligible activities include projects, programs, and/or performances:

- In the arts or humanities;

- Taking place within the City of Virginia Beach (for programs that extend beyond the city limits, only those portions that take place within the City will be eligible for funding);

- That are open to the public and publicized as such, to the greatest extent possible.

GRANT WORKSHOPS

Cultural Affairs will offer Grants Preparation Workshops that provide an overview of the FY 2027 Project Grants Program and include step-by-step directions for completing the application. All organizations applying for a grant are encouraged to attend.

Workshops will be held virtually via MS Teams and should last no more than one hour.

Contact artsinfo@vbgov.com for more information on workshops.

MAXIMUM GRANT AWARD

Funding will not exceed 50% of the total cost of the project.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

Applications must be submitted through the Cultural Affairs' grant software, Foundant. Applicants must create an account and follow the directions provided on the website.

TIMELINE

Application Deadline:
5:00 pm, February 6, 2026

Notification of Award:
By end of June 2026

Project Start Date:
July 1, 2026

Project End Date:
June 30, 2027

GRANT RESTRICTIONS/INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Virginia Beach Arts & Humanities Commission project grants cannot be used to fund the following:

1. **General Operating Costs**
Annual budgets, endowments, or capital expenditures.

2. **Projects Outside Virginia Beach**
Funding is restricted to projects within the City of Virginia Beach.

3. **Individuals**
Funding is not provided directly to individuals. However, individuals may apply through an eligible sponsoring organization.

4. **Pass-Through Grants**
Grants given to other organizations without a clear and specific project proposal.

5. **Non-Artistic Festival Elements**
Non-artistic portions of festivals or community celebration events.

6. **Academic Programs**
Programs that are primarily academic and not public service-oriented.

7. **Membership-Only Programs**
Programs restricted to an organization's members.

8. **Fee-Based Performances**
Programs where participation is limited to students or individuals who pay a fee.

9. **Social Events**
Costs associated with parties, receptions, fundraising benefits, or other social activities.

10. **Prizes and Awards**
Cash or non-cash prizes and awards.

11. **Permanent Acquisitions**
Purchases of buildings, land, or other permanent property.

12. **Capital Projects**
Capital improvements, new construction, renovations, or restorations.

13. **Non-Expendable Supplies and Equipment**
Purchases such as copy machines, building materials, or musical instruments. (Expendable items such as props, costumes, and rented equipment are eligible.)

14. **Investments or Contingency Funds**
Accounts generating interest or funds held as reserves.

15. **Deficits**
Payments to cover an organization's financial shortfalls.

16. **Basic Operating Expenses**
Costs like rent and utilities, unless directly related to the specific arts project being presented.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Completeness of Application (5%)
- Has all the requested information been provided including all supporting documents?
- Does the information clearly summarize the scope of work?

Significance (25%)
- Is this project significant for the City?
- Does the project align with AHC mission to create meaningful shared artistic experiences and contribute to an environment where the arts and humanities are essential to life?
- Does the project serve a substantial number of residents, visitors, potentially including those historically underserved?
- Is there economic impact to the City?
- Does it address a demonstrated cultural, creative, or community need in the City? Notable artistic advance/ innovation in the project?
- Is the project of quality production value/material/skill?

Goals (20%)
- Does the project statement provide a clear and concise explanation of the project?
- Are the goals of the project clear?
- Are desirable outcomes identified?
- Do they appear to be achievable?

Implementation (25%)
- Does the application provide a clear method for executing the project?
- Does the application describe how the project will achieve the stated goals?
- Is the implementation plan/production plan realistic, clear, and attainable?
- Are the goals/outcomes measurable?
- Does the application provide evidence that the organization is capable of implementing the project including prior experience?
- Does the project embrace collaboration with other organizations?
- Does the documentation provide evidence of ongoing fiscal and managerial competence?
- Does the application list other available public and private support?

Project Budget & Organizational Financial Stability (15%)
- Does the budget appear to be realistic for achieving the desired goal?
- Does the budget demonstrate cost-effectiveness?
- Does the budget require any further clarification?
- Are there multiple sources of funding?
- Does the documentation provide evidence of ongoing fiscal and managerial competence?

Presentation Scoring (10%)
- Did the organization provide clear and organized information?
- Did the information provided improve your understanding of the project?

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

1. Online Grant Application

The online grant application is available at www.virginiabeach.gov/culture. Staff is available to assist with consultations and to review draft applications before the deadline. For assistance, contact the Cultural Affairs Department at least three weeks before the application deadline.

2. Mailing List Requirement

Organizations planning to apply for grants should add Commissioners and staff to their mailing lists to ensure they stay informed about your programs and activities.

3. Application Quality

Keep in mind that your organization is competing with others for limited funding. Applications must be clear, complete, and well-written. Include reasonable funding requests and realistic budgets, as these are critical to a strong proposal.

4. Submission Requirements

Completed applications must be submitted by the deadline. No exceptions.

The Commission will not accept application materials via fax or electronic transmission (e.g., email).

5. Applicant Records

Retain a copy of your completed application for your records.

6. Application Review

Staff will review all applications for completeness and eligibility.

Incomplete or ineligible applications will be returned to the applicant with a brief explanation.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

1. **Application Deadline**
The deadline is final and not based on postmark date.

Late applications will not be accepted or considered under any circumstances.

2. **How to Submit**

Online Submission: Complete and submit your application through Foundant.

Hard Copies are no longer required.

3. **Eligibility Requirements**

Organizations with outstanding Final Reports from previous grants are ineligible to apply unless:

4. **Formatting Guidelines**
Attachments must use 8 ½ x 11" white paper (except for preprinted materials like brochures).

Secure documents with a staple in the upper-left corner only.

Do not include: Binders, report covers, folders, table of contents, tabs, dividers, or title pages. These items will be removed from your application.

5. **Complete Submission**
Ensure all required materials are included in one single package.

Do not send materials separately.

- An extension has been requested in writing.

- The extension has been approved in writing by the Commission.

GRANT COMPLIANCE AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1**. Use of Grant Funds**
Grant awards may only be used for the programs or purposes outlined in the approved application and specified in the grant contract with the Commission.

Any proposed changes to the grant contract must be submitted in writing to the Commission for prior approval.

Changes will only be effective once approved by the Commission and confirmed through written notification.

2. **Change Requests**
The Commission will review and decide on any requested changes during its next regularly scheduled meeting. Grantees are encouraged to plan accordingly to accommodate this timeline.

3. **Final Report Submission**
Grantees are required to submit a final report within 30 days of completing the project or no later than July 15th, whichever comes first.

The final report will be evaluated against the terms outlined in the Contract for Services to ensure compliance.

4. **Periodic Reporting Requirements**
The Commission may require periodic reports during the project to monitor progress, track attendance, document services provided, and gather audience feedback.

The Commission will provide the necessary forms and instructions for submitting these interim reports.

5. **Financial Recordkeeping**
Grantees must maintain accurate financial records for all activities funded by Commission grants.

Financial statements are a required component of the final report.

The Commission or its authorized representative may request additional documentation to verify the financial information provided.

6. **Program Income**
Any income generated or received by the project must be properly documented and reflected in the project budget.

7. **Audit and Record Retention**
The Commission reserves the right to conduct periodic audits of project budgets to ensure compliance and accuracy.

Audits may occur up to three years following the close of the fiscal year in which funds were awarded.

Grantee organizations are required to retain all records related to Commission-funded activities for at least three years in anticipation of potential audits.

Sandler Center for the Performing Arts

APPEAL PROCESS

Applicants may request an appeal; however, incomplete applications are not eligible for appeal. Additionally, dissatisfaction with the amount of a grant award is not considered valid grounds for an appeal.

How to Submit an Appeal
Appeals must be submitted in writing the Commission office within 30 days of receiving notification of the funding decision.

The Commission will review and respond to the appeal during its next regularly scheduled meeting.

Limitations on Appeals
The Commission typically does not review appeals for increased funding due to changes in the project after the application was submitted.

AWARD NOTIFICATION, GRANT AGREEMENT & PAYMENT PROCESS

1. **Notification of Award**
- Applicants will be notified of their grant award via email.
- Grant recipients will receive a grant agreement (Contract for Services) that must be completed and signed by an officer of the organization listed on the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) before the grant can be processed.

2. **Processing and Payment**
- Once the signed grant agreement is reviewed and executed, it will be forwarded to the Finance Department for payment processing.
- Vendor Registration: To receive payment, organizations must register as a vendor with the City of Virginia Beach, which enables them to do business with the City and receive payments.
- To complete vendor registration, organizations must submit a completed W-9 form.
- Please allow up to 8 weeks for payment processing after submission of the signed contract.
- Exclusion from grant eligibility for a period of five (5) years.

3. **Changes to Activities or Budget**
- Any major changes to the proposed activities or budget must be submitted to the Cultural Affairs Department (CAD) in writing at least 30 days prior to the effective date of the change.
- Changes must be approved by CAD to avoid disruption to the grant agreement.

4. **Contract Termination and Reporting Requirements**
- If a grant recipient fails to meet the requirements outlined in the grant agreement, the City of Virginia Beach reserves the right to terminate the contract without further obligation.
- Failure to submit a final report will result in:
- Forfeiture of the final payment.

REPORTING & ACCOUNTABILITY

Final Report: Submit a comprehensive final report within 30 days of completion of the project OR no later than July 15, 2027, including a narrative of the project's impact, financial accounting, and visual documentation (photos, videos).

SITE MONITORING

The CAD monitors AHC-funded projects during the course of the contract cycle. Grantees must give CAD three-week advance notification of the dates, times, and venues of AHC-supported activities. Failure to provide notification will result in the withdrawal of funds.

GENERAL POLICIES

PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In all published materials (inclusive of electronic media) and announcements, regarding the particular activity supported, acknowledgment must be made that "(organization or activity) is funded in part by the citizens of Virginia Beach through a grant from the City of Virginia Beach Arts and Humanities Commission."

All applicant organizations agree to these conditions upon accepting the grant award. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in forfeiture of the grant award, or a less favorable response to future grant requests.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUIREMENT

Please be aware that City documents are public documents subject to the Freedom of Information Act. As such, your application and all of its contents may be subject to disclosure and public review. Should you be awarded a grant, the grant agreement will also be subject to the same regulations.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ADA COMPLIANCE

Contractors are required to hold their activities in physically accessible spaces, and all funded organizations must provide written statements describing their adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Office of Accessibility assists individuals and organizations in making arts activities accessible to older adults, people with disabilities, and those in institutions.

You may contact the NEA at 202-682-5532 or https://www.arts.gov/impact/accessibility/publications-checklists-and-resources.

Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook, is designed to help organizations comply with Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Copies of the book can be downloaded here: https://www.arts.gov.

SUGGESTIONS TO APPLICANTS

1. Review Policies Thoroughly
Applicants should carefully read and understand all information provided in these policies to ensure compliance and a strong application.

2. Keep the Commission Informed
• Include the names of Commission members and staff on your organization's mailing lists to keep them informed of your activities and events.
• Addresses for Commission members and staff can be obtained from the Cultural Affairs Department or found on the Commission's website: www.virginiabeach.gov/culture.

3. Attend Commission Meetings
• All Commission meetings are open to the public.
• Grantee organizations are encouraged to assign at least one delegate to attend these meetings.
• Meeting dates and locations are available on the Commission's website: www.virginiabeach.gov/culture.

4. Provide Feedback
The Commission welcomes comments on its programs and services.

Feedback can be provided by:
• Emailing the Cultural Affairs Department at artsinfo@vbgov.com.

5. Understand Grant Evaluation Criteria
Each question in the grant application is rated on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the following criteria:
• Completeness of the application
• Significance of the project
• Clearly defined goals
• Implementation plan
• Budget clarity and feasibility
• Sustainability of the project

Ratings are combined with other factors, including:
• Eligibility criteria
• Presentation/interview feedback
• Evidence of fiscal responsibility
• Additional information requested by the Commission

6. Emphasize Application Merit
• While the application is not the sole determinant of a project's merit or funding potential, it plays a significant role in the overall evaluation process.
• Ensure your application is detailed, complete, and supported by facts, figures, and demonstrated experience to strengthen its impact during the evaluation.

7. Craft a Strong Application
Provide comprehensive and factual answers to all questions, using specific data and examples where possible. A robust and well-supported application improves your chances of success.