



VlBe Creative District Community Painting Event

# CREATIVE NEIGHBORHOODS GRANTS

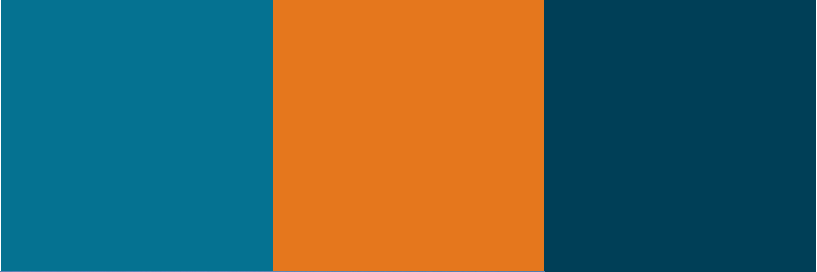
## FY26 PROGRAM GUIDELINES

APPLICATION DEADLINE | **JANUARY 16, 2026**

[WWW.VIRGINIABEACH.GOV/CULTURE](http://WWW.VIRGINIABEACH.GOV/CULTURE)



CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH  
**Cultural  
Affairs**



*Pennant, Lin Emery*

# Table of Contents

A New Era .....	2
Virginia Beach Cultural Affairs .....	3
Grant Overview & Objectives .....	4
Eligibility Criteria .....	5
Eligible Expenses & Grant Restrictions.....	6
Evaluation Criteria .....	7
Grant Award & Reporting .....	9
General Policies .....	10



## A NEW ERA FOR THE ARTS IN VIRGINIA BEACH

The arts have long been a vital part of Virginia Beach's cultural identity. Virginia Beach has played a pivotal role in the history of music and the arts, making significant contributions to hip hop and music production, fostering a vibrant visual arts community, hosting impactful cultural events and festivals, providing comprehensive art education, and maintaining a strong commitment to cultural diversity and inclusion.

In 2015, Virginia Beach took a bold step forward by launching Arts Plan 2030, a visionary roadmap designed to shape the future of the arts in the city. The plan laid out an ambitious agenda to expand access, support artists and arts organizations, and elevate the visibility of the arts as an integral part of Virginia Beach's community fabric.

A key milestone in realizing the vision of Arts Plan 2030 came in July 2024, when the Virginia Beach City Council took a monumental step of approving a dedicated revenue source to support arts and culture. By allocating 20% of admission taxes to arts funding, the Council ensured a sustainable financial foundation for the City's artistic growth. This pivotal decision brings the aspirations of Arts Plan 2030 into reality, marking a transformative moment in the history of the arts in Virginia Beach. The newly secured funding not only underscores the city's commitment to fostering creativity but also ensures that future generations will continue to benefit from a thriving, dynamic arts ecosystem.

This funding builds on these foundational steps, further supporting local artists and community-based projects, and bringing the vision of a more vibrant, inclusive, and creative Virginia Beach to life.

Through this new funding, City Council approved two new pilot grant programs to support individual artists and neighborhood arts initiatives.

## 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 and area non-profit organizations, as well as the department-led initiatives that engage residents and visitors in meaningful arts, heritage, and cultural experiences.

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.



Photo by David A. Beloff © ~ PhotoBloggingBeloff.com

## CREATIVE NEIGHBORHOODS GRANT OVERVIEW

The Creative Neighborhoods Grant Program is designed to empower and inspire communities by providing financial support for neighborhood-based art projects. This pilot program aims to foster a sense of pride, unity, and creativity within neighborhoods and districts by funding projects that beautify public spaces, celebrate local culture, and engage residents in the artistic process.

The Creative Neighborhoods Grant Program seeks to bring art to the heart of neighborhoods, making them more vibrant, welcoming, and reflective of the people who live there.

### GRANT OBJECTIVES

#### 1. Foster Community Engagement:

- Encourage active participation and collaboration among residents, artists, and local organizations in the creation and implementation of art projects.
- Strengthen the sense of community by bringing together diverse groups to work towards a common goal.

#### 2. Enhance Neighborhood Identity:

- Support projects that reflect the unique cultural, historical, and social characteristics of the neighborhood.
- Promote local pride by celebrating the stories, heritage, and voices of the community through art.

#### 3. Beautify and Revitalize Public Spaces:

- Transform underutilized or neglected areas into vibrant, welcoming spaces through the power of art.
- Enhance the aesthetic appeal of neighborhoods, contributing to a positive and inviting environment for residents and visitors alike.

#### 4. Support Local Artists:

- Provide opportunities for local artists to engage with their communities, showcase their work, and contribute to the cultural landscape of their neighborhoods.
- Promote artistic growth and development by offering financial support and visibility for community-driven art projects.

#### 5. Encourage Cultural Awareness and Inclusion:

- Support projects that highlight the diverse cultures, traditions, and experiences within the community.
- Foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural richness present in the neighborhood through inclusive and accessible art initiatives.

#### 6. Inspire Civic Pride and Responsibility:

- Encourage residents to take pride in their neighborhood and foster a sense of ownership and stewardship through their involvement in the arts.
- Inspire ongoing community-driven initiatives that contribute to the overall well-being and vibrancy of the neighborhood.

#### 7. Measure and Share Impact:

- Establish clear metrics for assessing the impact of funded projects on the community, including levels of engagement, public reception, and visual transformation.
- Share success stories and best practices with other neighborhoods and communities to inspire further art-based community development.

These objectives guide the program's mission to not only fund art projects but to also create lasting, meaningful connections between people and their surroundings, ultimately contributing to stronger, more vibrant communities.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Creative Neighborhoods Grants support arts organizations, civic/neighborhood associations, individual artists, groups of artists, non-arts nonprofits, and community-based organizations and businesses with project expenses associated with presenting multi-generational, free gatherings with arts components or short-term art projects in communities. These activities should bring the community together, enhance the neighborhood, and reflect its unique character.

To be eligible, applicants can be the following:

- Civic leagues/non-profit neighborhood associations
- Non-profit organizations
- Artists
- Businesses

Community-based applicants are strongly encouraged to apply with an artist or arts organization as a Partner. Virginia Beach Public Schools and Virginia Beach City Departments are ineligible to apply, but can be listed as partners with other eligible applicants listed above.

Artists and arts organizations are strongly encouraged to apply with a community-based individual or group as a Partner.

Individuals, groups, or organizations that are both community-based and arts-based are welcome to apply with additional partners, but this is not required if the applicant represents both the community connection and arts elements for the application.

- Event must contain an element that is artistic in nature, including either performance, exhibit, culinary arts, or creation and engagement in artistic exercise.
- Event should include a physical, in-person event to happen in a specific neighborhood in Virginia Beach.
- Event budget should be reasonable and sufficient to execute the project within the project period.
- Event must be free and open to the public.
- Projects must be implemented within the Virginia Beach.

### **Potential projects could include but are not limited to:**

1. Musical Events: Outdoor concerts, live music performances, or neighborhood music festivals.
2. Community Art Projects: Group art activities like painting a mural together or creating a community quilt.
3. Short-Term Art Projects: Temporary art displays, pop-up galleries, or art projects tied to local events.
4. Cultural Events and Festivals: Neighborhood art festivals, art walks, or cultural celebrations with performances and displays.
5. Public Performances: Theater shows, dance performances, or storytelling events in public areas.
6. Art Workshops: Art classes or workshops open to the community, teaching new skills and encouraging creativity.
7. Small-scale projects that encourage volunteerism and community building (e.g., beautification, community gardens)

## ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

### Planning & Personnel:

- Project management, administrative support, hired contractors, volunteer coordinator, community organizer, etc

### Professional Services:

- Permits
- Professional consultants (designer, engineer, artist, etc.)
- Insurance
- Material, Supplies & Maintenance
- Art supplies (paint, printing, etc.)
- Building materials
- Equipment rental (audio/visual, tents, tables, etc.)
- Installation / De-installation

**All grantees are responsible for contacting and obtaining City services for proper permitting for the project. Please include this information in grant documents.**

**Timeline: Projects must be completed within 12 months following grant award.**

## MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENT

It is important to outline the plan for maintenance for any public art or signage. Take into consideration normal aging and weather damage as well as plans for vandalism.

## GRANT RESTRICTIONS

Funding may NOT be used for:

Organization or related administrative fees (Lead artist of an organization must distinguish expenses of proposed scope of work from their organization's work and expenses).

Purchase of equipment or food

Fundraising

Funding from this program may not be used toward activities funded by other City of Virginia Beach funding programs within the fiscal year.

## MAXIMUM GRANT AWARD

Up to \$10,000. Applicant is expected to match at least 15 percent of the project expenses.

A match can be a combination of volunteer labor, in-kind contributions, fundraising and other types of donations, including material, professional services, and cash.

Applications demonstrating a larger matching contribution may receive higher scores during the evaluation process.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The applications for the Creative Neighborhoods Grant will be evaluated based on the following criteria, with each criterion weighted as indicated:

### Neighborhood Participation & Community Partnerships (25 points)

- Proposal should clearly define how the project will enhance the neighborhood.
- Proposal should demonstrate community support and collaboration, and how the project will create strong partnerships in the neighborhood.

### Creativity, Artistic Scope (25 points)

- Proposals should be innovative, well-defined, goal-oriented, original, visually compelling, and involve interaction around the arts.

### Planning, Feasibility & Maintenance (25 points)

- Proposals should demonstrate how feasible the project is in terms of timeline, budget and available resources.
- Proposals should also clearly explain how the project will be safely installed, maintained, and removed (if applicable).

### Community Benefit & Social Impact (25 points)

- Proposals should demonstrate how the project represents and boasts community identity, heritage, engagement, and sense of place.

Any funds not expended for the purposes of the grant as applied for must be returned to the City of Virginia Beach.

Funding from this program may not be used toward activities already funded by the City of Virginia Beach within the fiscal year of grant award.

Scope of work and final event details will be determined after awards are official and during the contracting phase.

## GRANT WORKSHOPS

Cultural Affairs will offer multiple Grants Preparation Workshops that provide an overview of the FY 2026 Creative Neighborhoods Grant Program and include step-by-step directions for completing the application. Workshops for grants will be held virtually via MS Teams and should last no more than one hour.

## 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

Completed applications will be accepted throughout the year, on an on-going basis. Deadline for applications is January 16, 2026.

Applications will be reviewed starting February 3, 2026. If funds are not expended, then applications will be accepted ongoing after March 1, 2026.

Your applications must be received at least six weeks before the start of a project. Funding is not provided for completed projects or for projects that have already begun once the application has been submitted.

**Project Start Date:** Once grant agreement has been signed.

**Project End Date:** Within twelve months after grant award.

## SELECTION PROCESS

**Initial Screening:** Applications will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility.

### ADVISORY PANELS

Advisory Panels consisting of arts and community leaders assist the Cultural Affairs Department in awarding grants. Panel members are selected on the basis of resumes and recommendations, with respect to their expertise in the arts, knowledge of relevant community issues, ability to work with others in a panel situation, and their willingness to devote the time required to review applications and attend project activities. Cultural Affairs Department solicits qualified panelists annually.

**Final Decision:** The highest-scoring applications will be recommended for funding, subject to final approval by the Cultural Affairs Director.

Please note that there may not be enough resources to meet applicant demand. Additional variables may come into factor, i.e. the available funding, the number of applications submitted, the applicant's score and the number of applicants awarded funding. Cultural Affairs reserves the right not to award an artist if the Advisory Panel determines that a standard of excellence is not demonstrated by the applications received.

## **AWARD NOTIFICATION, GRANT AGREEMENT & PAYMENTS**

Applicants will be notified of award by email and/or mail. Grant recipients will receive a grant agreement to be completed and signed before the grant award can be processed.

Once reviewed and executed, grant agreement will be sent to the Finance Department for processing and payment. In order to receive a grant payment from the City of Virginia Beach, recipients must sign a grant agreement and become a City of Virginia Beach vendor, meaning you are able to do business with the City of Virginia Beach and can receive payment.

To become a vendor of the City, an individual will submit a completed W-9. Please note that payments can take up to 8 weeks.

Major changes in the proposed activities or budget must be submitted to Cultural Affairs Department (CAD) in writing and approved at least 30 days in advance of the effective date of the change. After submitting the signed contract, the grant recipient should be aware that it takes approximately 8 weeks to receive initial payment.

Grant payments will be dispersed incrementally throughout grant period.

If a grant recipient fails to adequately satisfy contract requirements, the City has the right to terminate the contract without further obligation. Failure to submit the final report will result in forfeiture of final payment and exclusion from eligibility for five (5) years.

## **REPORTING & ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Final Report:** Submit a comprehensive final report within one month of project completion, including a narrative of the project's impact, financial accounting, and visual documentation (photos, videos).

**Public Presentation:** Recipients may be asked to present their completed projects to the community in a public forum, exhibition, or performance.

## **SITE MONITORING**

The CAD monitors funded projects during the course of the contract cycle.

Grantees must give CAD three-week advance notification of the dates, times, and venues of CAD-supported activities. Failure to provide notification will result in the withdrawal of funds. Annual site visits can be conducted for all applicants, including individual artists.

## GENERAL POLICIES

Both the application and the guidelines should be reviewed together, as they collectively represent the official policies for the Creative Neighborhood Grant.

## PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For all projects funded by the Cultural Affairs Department, a credit line and the City of Virginia Beach Cultural Affairs logo must be included in all advertising, promotions, and other publicity, or presented verbally at events at which no printed program is used.

Materials and/or photos citing CAD must be submitted with the final report and the City logo must be clearly reproduced and legible.

## ACCESSIBILITY AND ADA COMPLIANCE

Awardees 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/about/publications/design-accessibility-cultural-administrators-handbook>

## 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.