CREATIVE GROWTH GRANTS

APPLICATION INFORMATION

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CITY OF CHARLOTTE
2025 CREATIVE GROWTH GRANTS

Overview

The City of Charlotte's 2025 Creative Growth Grants, administered by Charlotte Is Creative, are designed to strengthen Charlotte's creative ecosystem by providing financial support to individual artists, grassroots arts organizations, collaborative projects, and other activities that support the Arts and Culture Plan.

The Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan, accepted by the Charlotte City Council in 2023, is available in both English and Spanish. Please find the respective versions linked below for your convenience:

- English Version
- Versión en Español

Funding is intended to support artistic and cultural initiatives that foster community engagement, promote diversity, and create lasting impact.

Timeline

The application portal will open for submission on Thursday, June 19 and will close at 5 pm ET on Monday, August 4. Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.

In-person and virtual information sessions, in addition to grant writing workshops, will be held to applicants to assist with development of strong proposals. This schedule will be posted on the grant website.

Applicants are encouraged to attend or watch the recording(s) of at least one information session prior to submitting an application. **To register or view recordings of 2025 Creative Growth Grants Info Sessions, CLICK HERE.**

- June 19, 2025 (12pm ET) — Application Opens & Virtual Info Session (90 min)
- June 27, (12-12:30pm ET) — Virtual Q&A Opportunity (30 min)
- July 8, (12-12:30pm ET) — Virtual Q&A Opportunity (30 min)
- July 14, (6-9pm ET) — In-person Grant Writing Workshop (3 hours)
- July 16, (6-8pm ET) — Virtual Grant Writing Workshop (2 hours)
- August 4, 2025 (5 pm ET) — Application Deadline
- August - September — Application Review Period with Community Panels
- Late September — Applicants Notified
- November 14, 2025 — Creative Growth Grant recipient funds dispersed

Grant Notification

Organizations and individuals selected for a grant will be notified in late September 2025, and grant contracting and payment of funds will be dispersed in November 2025 after grantees sign a letter of agreement.

Project Timeline And Final Report

All grant recipients must complete their projects or use awarded funds by **November 14, 2026**, as outlined below:

- **Project Support Grant recipients** must complete all proposed activities by this date.
- **Professional Development Grant recipients** must complete their funded opportunity or experience by this date.
- **Operational Support Grant recipients** must fully expend their awarded funds by this date.

Final reports from all grantees are due by January 31, 2027.

Eligibility & Grant Opportunities

The City of Charlotte's 2025 Creative Growth Grants will support **Projects**, **Professional Development**, and **Operational Support** for individual artists, grassroots arts organizations, collaborative projects, and other activities that support the Arts and Culture Plan.

The grant program is divided into three funding streams, each designed to address a different need within the creative community. By structuring the program in this way, both individuals and nonprofit organizations will have access to funding that aligns with their specific goals and the Arts and Culture Plan.

Only one application per applicant will be accepted. Grantees are not guaranteed the full amount of funding they request. Grant recipients will have up to one (1) year to complete their grant-funded project or program.

To qualify, **ALL** applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Lead applicant must reside in Mecklenburg County and the project must take place in Mecklenburg County. (Professional Development opportunities may take place outside of Mecklenburg County)
- All applicants must demonstrate that they are a certified non-profit or have obtained a fiscal sponsor by the application deadline of August 4, 2025.
    - Individual artists and creative groups that are not non-profit organizations recognized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) must apply with a fiscal sponsor (who must provide a letter of support by August 4)

- Grassroots nonprofit arts and culture organizations must provide proof of 501(c)(3) certification

- **Ineligible Applicants**:
  - Organizations that received operating funds through the Foundation For The Carolinas in the City of Charlotte's 2025-2026 fiscal year (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026), unless applying as part of a collaboration with an artist or grassroots organization (with the latter serving as the lead applicant)
    - For a list of organizations receiving operating funds through the Foundation For The Carolinas in the City of Charlotte's 2025-2026 fiscal year, CLICK HERE.
  - For-profit companies, organizations or groups
  - Individuals without a fiscal sponsor

I. Project Support Grant (Up to $20,000)

These grants support artistic and cultural initiatives that directly advance priorities in the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan. Projects may be new or existing/ongoing, provided they align with one or more specific priorities within the Plan.

- **Eligibility:** Open to individual artists, creatives, and grassroots arts and culture nonprofits. All applicants must demonstrate that they are a certified non-profit or have obtained a fiscal sponsor by the time of application deadline on August 4, 2025..
- **Location:** All projects must take place within Mecklenburg County.
- **Collaboration Requirement:** If an organization received operating funds through the Foundation For The Carolinas in the City of Charlotte's 2025 - 2026 fiscal year, that organization can only receive funds from this pool as a part of a collaboration with an individual artist or grassroots arts organization (and that artist or grassroots organization must also be the main applicant).
- **Funding Limits:** Applicants can request up to $20,000, with up to 15% of the project budget allowable for administrative/salary costs from the applicant. Payment to subcontractors or artists helping to execute this plan will not be calculated as part of the up-to 15% admin fee.

II. Professional Development Grant (Up to $2,500)

Recognizing the importance of continued learning and career development, this category funds participation in capacity-building and career-enhancing opportunities such as classes, workshops, conferences, juried exhibitions, and other knowledge-building efforts.

- **Eligibility:** Open to individual artists, creatives, and grassroots arts and culture nonprofits who did not receive operating funds through the Foundation For The Carolinas in the current fiscal year. All applicants must demonstrate that they are a certified non-profit or have obtained a fiscal sponsor.
- **Location:** While lead applicant must reside in Mecklenburg County, Professional Development opportunities may take place outside of Mecklenburg County.

- **Funding Limits:** Applicants can request up to $2,500 for participation in professional development activities (e.g., classes, workshops, conferences, juried exhibitions, and other knowledge-building efforts).

III. Operational Support Grant (Up to $25,000)

These grants provide operational funding to grassroots arts and culture organizations, ensuring sustainability and long-term impact in the creative ecosystem.

- **Eligibility:** Open to grassroots arts and culture nonprofits who did not receive operating funds through the Foundation For The Carolinas in the 2025-2026 fiscal year. All applicants must demonstrate that they are a certified non-profit.
- **Location**: Certified grassroots arts and culture organizations must be located in Mecklenburg County.
- **Funding Limits:** Applicants can request up to 25% of their organization's annual budget, with a maximum award of $25,000.

Application Components and Evaluation

A strong grant application requires:

- Compelling storytelling that illuminates a clearly stated goal
- A clear plan to measure impact and success
- A clear and strong budget that underscores the story, goals and plan
- Complete answers to grant application questions

Applicants will be asked to provide such information as:

- Applicant Contact Information
- Project Details
- Alignment with the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan
- Project Impact and Goals
- Project Timeline and Approach
- Audience & Engagement
- Evaluation & Sustainability
- Team & Collaboration
- Proposed Budget and/or Financial Information
- Nonprofit or Fiscal Sponsor Verification
- Supporting Materials

Once submitted, applications undergo a thorough evaluation by a diverse community panel of reviewers assembled by Charlotte Is Creative. NOTE: Members of the Charlotte Is Creative team and Board of Directors will not be voting members of the review panel.

Proposals are assessed based on:

- Clear goal & storytelling
- Alignment with the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan (Project & Operating Grants only)
- Audience engagement strategy (Project Grants only)
- Feasibility and clarity of fund usage execution

- Potential impact
- Sustainability beyond the grant period, if applicable (Project & Operating Grants only)
- Strength of financial planning and budget justification

Charlotte Is Creative will provide free coaching and resources to strengthen proposals and build grantwriting skills throughout the creative sector. These include:

- Virtual information sessions about grantwriting best practices
- In-person information sessions and grantwriting workshops
- Limited opportunities for one-on-one grant coaching consultations
- This process will run June 1 - July 31, 2025.

To register or view recordings of 2025 Creative Growth Grants Info Sessions, CLICK HERE.

Reporting

At the end of the one-year grant period, grantees will be required to submit a brief report to Charlotte Is Creative. Reports will include:

- A breakdown of how the funds were used
- Key successes and challenges that link to the recordable metrics proposed in the grantee's original application
- Future plans for the project, if applicable

Contact Charlotte Is Creative Staff

For any questions about the City of Charlotte's 2025 Creative Growth Grants application, please email: applications@charlotteiscreative.com.

Charlotte Is Creative is the City of Charlotte's administrative partner in managing the application process and review panels for the 2025 Arts and Culture Grant.

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PROJECT SUPPORT GRANT: Application Form Questions

APPLICANT INFORMATION

- Name and contact information for Individual Artist, Creative Group or Nonprofit Organization and primary contact person.
- Individual or Creative Group: Name & Letter of Support from Fiscal Sponsor, IRS Determination Letter from Fiscal Sponsor
- Non-Profit Organization: Employer Identification Number (EIN) & IRS Determination Letter Reflecting 501(c)(3) Status

PROJECT INFORMATION

- Name, location, start and end date of Project. Projects must be completed by November 14, 2026)
- **Priority Alignment (200 words):** Select ONE Priority from the Charlotte Arts and Culture plan that aligns most closely with your project and describe how this project aligns with your selected Priority from the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan.
- **Project Narrative (500 words):** In your narrative, please address each of the following areas. You may use section headers or bullet points to organize your response if helpful.

  1. Project Description

  Describe your project or program. Why is this work important at this moment? What community need, opportunity, or gap does it address? What are your goals or intended outcomes? What specific challenges or conditions will this grant help you address? If applicable, how will you sustain this project or your work beyond this grant period?

  2. Project Implementation

  How will you carry out your project or program? What are the key steps and activities, and what is the general timeline for completing them? We encourage the use of bullet points or short paragraphs to outline your implementation plan clearly.

  3. Audience & Target Constituencies

  Who is your intended audience or who will benefit from this project? Are you serving a specific community, group, or population? Is this project open to the public, and/or does it expand access for artists or audiences in a meaningful way?

  4. Evaluating Success

  What does success look like for your project? How will you assess the impact of your work or know whether you've met your goals? Please describe any methods, tools, or feedback you'll use to evaluate success.

PROJECT SUPPORT GRANT: Application Form Questions (continued)

- **Project Team Description (350 words):** Please describe the team implementing the project. Who is leading it and who are your collaborators or partners? If this project is in collaboration with another artist or organization, please describe the role of each collaborator. What makes this team well-equipped to do this project?

- **Is this project a collaboration with another artist or organization?** (yes/no)
  - (If yes) For collaborative projects, please upload a brief letter of support from at least one (1) key collaborator confirming their participation.
  - If your project relies on a physical location, please include a letter from that location stating that they have agreed to partner with you.

PROJECT BUDGET

- Total cost of Project, Total amount of funding that you are requesting from the 2025 Arts and Culture Grant (up to $20,000)
- What other funding or in-kind resources, if any, do you already have for this project? What other funding or support are you still seeking (and from whom)? NOTE: Please also reflect this in the budget you submit.
- Please upload your completed project budget (in Excel format using the provided template) that details how the 2025 Arts and Culture Grant will be spent, as well as overall projected revenue and expenses for your proposed project. For projects with collaborators, please be sure to include in your budget compensation details (or in-kind partners) for participants and collaborators. Up to 15% of the project budget is allowable for administrative/salary costs from the applicant. Payment to subcontractors or artists helping to execute this plan will not be calculated as part of the up-to 15% admin fee.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT: Application Form Questions

APPLICANT INFORMATION

- Name and contact information for Individual Artist, Creative Group or Nonprofit Organization and primary contact person.
- Individual or Creative Group:
    - Name & Letter of Support from Fiscal Sponsor, IRS Determination Letter from Fiscal Sponsor
    - Artist Bio or Creative Group description/mission statement, Link to portfolio
- Non-Profit Organization: Employer Identification Number (EIN) & IRS Determination Letter Reflecting 501(c)(3) Status
    - Non-Profit mission statement and link to Website

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY INFORMATION

- **Name, Organizer, Website, Location, and Dates of Professional Development Opportunity**
- **Description (250 words)** Briefly describe the professional development opportunity. What is it? Who is offering it? What format does it take (in-person, online, hybrid)?
- **Opportunity Goals, Desired Outcomes, Impact (300 words)** In your answer, please describe each of the following questions. You may use section headers or bullet points to organize your answers if helpful.

  1. Goals: Why do you want to pursue this opportunity now? How does it align with your artistic or professional goals?

  2. Desired Outcomes: What do you hope to gain or apply as a result of this opportunity? How will this opportunity help you grow your creative practice or organizational capacity?

  3. Impact: How will you use what you learn in your work or community?

BUDGET & FUNDING INFORMATION

- Total cost required for participation in professional development opportunity and amount requested from this grant (up to $2,500)
- Budget (using the provided template) to show how the grant funds will be used (registration, travel, lodging, materials, etc.)
    - Please list any other funding or in-kind support you have already secured for this opportunity, if any.

OPERATING SUPPORT GRANT: Application Form Questions

APPLICANT INFORMATION

- Name and contact information for Nonprofit Organization and primary contact person.
- Non-Profit Organization:
    - Employer Identification Number (EIN) & IRS Determination Letter Reflecting 501(c)(3) Status
    - Non-Profit mission statement and link to Website

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

- **Non-Profit Mission Statement, Year Founded, Number of full-time and/or part-time staff (if applicable), Number of Key Volunteers and/or Board Members**

- **Organizational Summary (300 words max)**
  Tell us about your organization. What do you do? Who do you serve? What role do you play in Charlotte or Mecklenburg County's arts and culture ecosystem?

- **Total Amount You Are Requesting:** (Applicants can request up to 25% of their organization's annual budget, with a maximum award of $25,000.)

- **How will you use this funding to support your organization's operations? What will it enable you to do? (300 words)**
  Be specific. For example: Will this help support staff, rent, utilities, administrative costs, or other core operational needs? If so, how do these things support your mission or serve the public?

- **Why is this funding important for your organization at this time? (250 words)**
  Describe any challenges or opportunities your organization is facing, and how this support will make a meaningful difference. How will you sustain it past the grant period?

- **Evaluating Success: (200 words)** What does success look like for your organization? How do you assess the impact of your work or know whether you've met your goals? Please describe any methods, tools, or feedback you use to evaluate success. How will you evaluate success related to this grant?

OPERATING SUPPORT: Application Form Questions (continued)

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- What is your organization's current annual operating budget and provide organization's 2024 990 form
- Projected budget showing how this grant will be used within your broader financial plan (please use the template provided) and list any other major sources of funding or in-kind support you anticipate during this fiscal year (200 words).

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

- Upload up to three supporting documents or materials that help illustrate your organization's work (e.g., annual report, event flyers, community testimonials, media coverage, video or photo samples).