FREE GUIDE

Arts and Culture Grant Planning Guide (Free PDF)

A planning guide for individual artists and arts organizations with a fill-in project planner, a work sample log and a final checklist.

Angel Reyes, DrPH(c), MPH, MCHES, PMP, PMI-ACP | grantwritingconsultant.com | Updated November 18, 2026

> This guide helps individual artists and arts organizations plan an arts or culture grant application: who funds the arts, whether to apply as an individual or an organization, the parts most applications ask for, and worksheets to fill in. Each funder sets its own rules, so its current guidelines always come first.

Checked November 2026. Programs and rules change, so confirm on the official site.

Who funds the arts

These are kinds of funder, not a list of open opportunities. Read each funder's own guidelines to see who can apply and for what.

Kind of funder	What it usually is	Where to look
National arts agency	The federal arts funder. Arts.gov, the website of the National Endowment for the Arts, describes project-based funding for organizations and says the agency awards grants to state and jurisdictional arts agencies and to regional arts organizations	The agency's own website
State arts agency	A state government office or council that funds arts activity in that state	Your state government's website
Local arts agency	A city or county arts office, council or commission	Your city or county website
Private foundation	A foundation with arts, culture, education or community interests	The foundation's own guidelines and list of past grants
Corporate giving	A company giving program or sponsorship, often tied to places where the company operates	The company's community or giving page
Community sources	Community foundations, local service clubs and neighborhood funds	Their own websites, and people in your local arts community

Kinds of funder that fit our work:

Individual or organization

Educational resource. Following this guide does not guarantee an award. Always follow your funder's official instructions. Free to use and share with attribution. (c) Angel Reyes Consulting LLC.

Read the eligibility section first. It decides which path is open to you.

Path	When it fits	What to check
Apply as an individual artist	The funder states that individuals may apply	Residency, career stage and discipline rules, and how the award is paid
Apply as an organization	You are, or work within, an organization of a type the funder accepts	The documents the funder asks for to confirm that status
Apply through a fiscal sponsor	You are an individual or an informal group, the funder requires an organization, and the funder allows fiscal sponsorship	Whether the funder accepts sponsored projects, and the sponsor's fee, terms and timeline

A fiscal sponsor is an established organization that agrees to receive and manage grant money for your project. The sponsor is legally responsible for the funds, so expect a written agreement, a fee and reporting duties. This guide is not legal or tax advice. Ask a qualified advisor before you sign an agreement.

The path we will use:

If a fiscal sponsor, its name and contact:

The usual parts of an arts application

Funders name and order these differently. Use their headings and limits.

Part	What it does	A common mistake
Artist statement or organization background	Says what you make, why, and what shapes the work	Abstract language that could describe any artist
Project description	Says what you will do, when, where, with whom and for whom	Describing the idea but not the activities
Work samples	Shows the quality of your work and your ability to do this project	Samples that do not relate to the project, or that ignore the format rules
Budget	Shows what the project costs and where the money comes from	Leaving out artist fees, or totals that do not match the form
Community benefit	Says who will experience the work and how they will take part	Claiming a wide audience with no plan to reach it

Educational resource. Following this guide does not guarantee an award. Always follow your funder's official instructions. Free to use and share with attribution. (c) Angel Reyes Consulting LLC.

Project planner

Project title:

One-sentence description of the project:

What we will make or present:

Why this project, and why now:

Main activities and dates:

Where it will happen:

Artists and partners involved, and each one's role:

Who will experience the work, and how many people we can realistically reach:

How people will find out about it and take part:

How we will make it accessible (cost, location, language, disability access):

How we will know it went well:

Budget outline

Educational resource. Following this guide does not guarantee an award. Always follow your funder's official instructions. Free to use and share with attribution. (c) Angel Reyes Consulting LLC.

Pay artists, including yourself, unless the funder says otherwise. Move the final numbers to the funder's budget form.

Cost	How it was calculated	Amount requested	Other sources
Artist fees			
Other personnel			
Materials and supplies			
Space or venue			
Equipment rental			
Marketing and outreach			
Documentation			
Access costs			
Total			

Other income for this project, confirmed and pending:

Work sample log

List every sample you might send, then choose the strongest ones that fit this project and this funder's format rules.

Sample title	Year	Medium or format	Length, size or page count	Your role	Why it supports this project	Meets funder format rules

Funder's work sample rules, copied from the guidelines:

Educational resource. Following this guide does not guarantee an award. Always follow your funder's official instructions. Free to use and share with attribution. (c) Angel Reyes Consulting LLC.

Example entry

This example is fictional.

Sample title	Year	Medium or format	Length, size or page count	Your role	Why it supports this project	Meets funder format rules
River Stories, Example Community Mural	Last year	3 photographs	3 images	Lead artist	Shows a finished mural made with residents, like the one proposed	Yes

Before you submit

- [ ] We read the full guidelines and we are eligible on the path we chose
- [ ] The artist statement uses plain language and sounds like us
- [ ] The project description names activities, dates, places and people
- [ ] Work samples are recent, relevant and in the required format, and every link and file opens
- [ ] Each sample has the label or description the funder asks for
- [ ] The budget pays the artists, adds up and matches the description
- [ ] The community benefit section names who will take part and how we will reach them
- [ ] We have permission to use every image, recording and collaborator name
- [ ] If we use a fiscal sponsor, the agreement is signed and the sponsor has reviewed the application
- [ ] Someone outside the project has read it for clarity

> **Want help with this?** The Complete Grant Architect is a free 16-week grant writing course, and you can hire a grant writer for your next proposal. Both are at subthesis.com.

Educational resource. Following this guide does not guarantee an award. Always follow your funder's official instructions. Free to use and share with attribution. (c) Angel Reyes Consulting LLC.