2026-2027 COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT PROJECT GRANT GUIDELINES

Community Spotlight Project Grants support:

- Arts festivals, productions, or classes that highlight and are led by underrepresented communities
- Programs that utilize the arts to engage with or address important community issues
- Programs that commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence

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Direct questions to:
Ragen Carlile, Vice President of Programming
(919) 839-1498 x209 or rcarlile@unitedarts.org

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Organizations

To be eligible for funding, applicants must:
- be a non-profit organization with 501c3 state and federal tax-exempt status
- have produced at least three years of programming
- have a history of working with historically marginalized, underfunded, or underrepresented communities
- have nondiscrimination, conflict of interest, and accessibility policies

Collaborative projects are welcome. Organizations working together should identify a single organization that will serve as the grant applicant.

An applicant that does not meet the above criteria may apply with a fiscal agent that does. See "Applying with a Fiscal Agent" for details.

Ineligible Organizations

The following organizations are not eligible to apply for Community Spotlight Project funding:
- Organizations that apply to United Arts for Mission Support Grant funding
- Organizations with budgets that exceeded $2M in the most recently completed fiscal year

Projects

To be eligible for funding, proposed projects must be either:
- an arts festival, production, or class that highlights and is led by an underrepresented community; or
- a program that utilizes the arts to engage with or address an important community issue
- a program that commemorates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, also called "America250"

In addition, proposed projects must:
- take place in Wake County
- take place between July 1, 2026 and June 30, 2027
- be compatible with the applicant's mission
- include an opportunity for public engagement

GRANT REQUEST AMOUNT

- Maximum grant request: $10,000
- Minimum grant request: $1,000
- No matching requirement

USE OF FUNDS

Community Spotlight Project Grant funds can be used for the following expenses incurred July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027:

- Project-related fees and contracts
- Marketing and advertising expenses
- Expendable supplies and materials
- Space rental
- Up to 25% of grant funds may be used for administrative expenses including salaries that are directly related to the project

Community Spotlight Project Grant funds cannot be used for:

- Art, music, and dance therapists
- Artifacts
- Purchases of artwork
- Capital expenditures
- Competition prizes
- Contributions to cash reserves and/or endowment funds
- Deficit reduction
- Fundraising Events
- Food or beverages for hospitality or entertainment functions
- Lobbying expenses
- Loan repayments, interest and/or penalties, fines or litigation costs
- Private events closed to the general public and activities restricted to an organization's membership
- Projects of a religious nature designed to promote or inhibit religious belief and/or practice and which have no basic underlying secular theme or topics
- Scholarships and awards for use outside the applicant's programming

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application will be evaluated and scored according to the following criteria:

- Community Value 45%
- Artistic Quality 40%
- Ability to Complete Project 15%

Priority will be given to:

- Projects that feature diverse communities and/or art forms
- Organizations that have not been previously funded by United Arts
- America250 projects that reflect the broad range of communities, histories, and experiences that shape Wake County

APPLICATION PROCESS

Information Session

An information session will be held on Thursday, February 19 at 2:00 pm via Zoom. The session will include information about the updated guidelines/application and time for questions. Register for the session at https://forms.gle/34nme3BWpRn3fb9z7. Details about joining meeting will be automatically emailed to those registered. This session will be recorded.

Application Review Appointments

United Arts staff is available for individual applicant appointments to review drafts of application materials and to provide feedback. Email Ragen Carlile at rcarlile@unitedarts.org to schedule your appointment.

Application

The application for 2026-2027 Community Spotlight Grant funding is available online via Submittable at: https://unitedarts.submittable.com/submit/e4a1356d-c0e1-4ad9-b3db-bd99ba6fcd9f/2026-27-community-spotlight-project-grant-application.

A preview of the application is available in the appendix.

Deadline: Friday, April 3, 2026 before midnight

APPLYING WITH A FISCAL AGENT

Applicants that do not meet the eligibility requirements may apply with a fiscal agent that does. Fiscal agents do not have creative authority over a funded project, rather agree to accept financial and legal responsibility for the funded project.

Grant correspondence will be directed to the Applicant contact, not the Fiscal Agent contact.

How to Complete Application with a Fiscal Agent

There are special questions in the application for applicants using a fiscal agent that require the following:
- Fiscal Agent contact information
- Fiscal Agent Employer Identification Number (EIN) and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
- Fiscal Agent letter of federal tax exemption
- Letter of Agreement – signed by both applicant and fiscal agent that outlies the fiscal agreement if the proposed project is funded.
- Fiscal Agent Board of Directors List
- Fiscal Agent Financial Statements
- Fiscal Agent IRS Form 990

The remainder of the application, including narrative prompts, bios of lead personnel, project budget, and support materials, should be completed by the applicant.

The Fiscal Agent may charge a small administrative fee not to exceed 10%, which should be included in the project budget.

If Awarded with a Fiscal Agent

If the applicant's project is funded,
- the applicant must use the same fiscal agent throughout the duration of the grant period
- both the applicant and the fiscal agent will be required to sign the grant award agreement
- grant funds will be sent directly to the fiscal agent
- it will be the applicant's responsibility to complete the final report
- the fiscal agent will be responsible for returning grant funds to United Arts if the applicant's project does not come to fruition

REVIEW PROCESS

Staff Review

Applications are first reviewed by United Arts staff for completeness. Only complete applications are forwarded to grant panel members for review. Staff do not score applications during the review or vote on grant awards.

Grant Panels

Each grant application will be carefully reviewed and scored based on established criteria by a panel. The panel will be composed of artists, arts professionals, and community members from a variety of disciplines and nonprofit/business expertise who reflect the diversity of the region.

Grant Award Decisions

Grant awards will be based on panel evaluation and available funds. Not all requests will be funded. Some requests may receive partial funding.

Board of Directors

The grant panel will recommend grant award amounts based on scores, panel notes, and available funds. These recommendations are submitted to United Arts' Board of Directors for final approval. The role of the grant panel is advisory to the Board; the power to make decisions on both policy and funding rests with the Board, whose decisions are final.

TIMELINE

January 12, 2026	Guidelines and application published
February 19, 2026	Information Session/Application Workshop
April 3, 2026	Application deadline
May - June 2026	Application review/Panel meetings
June 2026	United Arts Board of Directors final approval of grant awards
June 2026	Grant notifications emailed
July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027	Project Period

APPENDIX: PREVIEW OF COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT PROJECT GRANT APPLICATION

Below is a preview of the Community Spotlight Project Grant application to familiarize yourself with the format and questions. Applications must be submitted online via https://unitedarts.submittable.com/submit/e4a1356d-c0e1-4ad9-b3db-bd99ba6fcd9f/2026-27-community-spotlight-project-grant-application.

2026-27 Community Spotlight Project Grant Application

Applicant Name (required)

Limit: 300 characters

Applicant must be a non-profit organization with 501c3 state and federal tax-exempt status and have had at least three years of programming.

Are you using a Fiscal Agent to apply? (required)

○ Yes

◉ No

An applicant that does not meet the eligibility criteria may apply with a fiscal agent that does. If select "Yes" additional questions will appear that each begin with "Fiscal Agent." Questions that do not begin with "Fiscal Agent" should be about the applicant.

Mailing Address (required)

City (required)

Zip Code (required)

[   ]

Website (required)

[example.com   ]

Contact Name (required)

[   ]

Contact Title (required)

[   ]

Telephone (required)

[   ]

Email Address (required)

[   ]

Employer Identification Number (EIN) (required)

[   ]

Also called Federal Tax Identification number

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) (required)

[   ]

The federal government now uses a number called a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) to uniquely identify business entities. To find or request your UEI, please visit SAM.gov.

Letter of Federal Tax Exemption (required)

<div style="border:1px dashed #000; text-align:center; padding:2em;">

Choose File

</div>

Upload a file. No files have been attached yet.

Acceptable file types: .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg

Grant Amount Request (required)

Applicants may request between $1,000 and $10,000. There is no matching requirement.

Complete the following sentence, "We are seeking funding to support . . ." (required)

Limit: 25 words

In one sentence, succinctly describe your proposed project. Do not describe your organization or explain why this project is important.

NARRATIVE PROMPTS

Please respond to the following narrative prompts about your organization and your proposed project.

1. Mission Statement (required)

[text entry box]

2. History/Programming (required)

[text entry box]

Limit: 500 words

Briefly describe the history of your organization and its core programs. Include your history of working with historically marginalized, underfunded, or underrepresented communities and how that work informs your proposed project.

3. Project Description (required)

[text entry box]

Limit: 500 words

Describe your proposed project, including details of the public engagement component. Include relevant collaborations and partnerships. Identify which specific community this project will spotlight.

4. Artist Selection (required)

[text entry box]

Limit: 500 words

Who are the artists that will participate in this project and how were they selected? How will they implement the project in a thoughtful way? What experience do they have with this community?

5. Community Value (required)

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Limit: 1000 words

Describe how the proposed project fulfills a community need by spotlighting a historically marginalized, underfunded, or underrepresented community. What will this project's impact be on the community it will serve? What community issue will this project address?

6. Project Timeline (required)

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Provide a timeline of project activities.

7. Location of Grant Activities (required)

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What is the address of the physical location where your grant-funded activities would take place? Is this a historic property older than 50 years or located in a historic district? Is the location included on the National Register of Historic Places? If yes to any of these, please explain.

8. Project Evaluation (required)

[text area]

Limit: 500 words

How will you evaluate the success of the project? What does success look like?

Bios of Lead Personnel (required)

[Choose File]

Upload a file. No files have been attached yet.

Acceptable file types: .pdf, .doc, .docx

Upload brief bios or resumes of key staff as relevant to your proposed project and include relevant experience and qualifications.

PROPOSED PROJECT BUDGET

	A	B
1	INCOME	AMOUNT
2	Earned	
3	Grants - NC Arts Council	
4	Grants - Federal	
5	Grants - Other	

6	Donations	
7	United Arts Spotlight Grant - should match grant amount request	
8	Applicant Cash	
9	Other	

Provide income and expenses for the proposed project. This should not be last year's budget. Include relevant expenditures to implement the project, including fees, contracts, marketing and advertising expenses, supplies, materials, space rental, etc. Up to 25% of grant funds may be used for administrative expenses including salaries that are directly related to the project. If project expenses exceed your grant request, identify sources of additional funding.

Budget Narrative (required)

[ ]

Please provide any non-numerical information needed to clarify your budget. If income or expenses are included under "Other", please describe.

SUPPORT MATERIALS

You have the option of uploading support materials that highlight your organization's recent activity and are relevant to your proposed project. Examples include videos, photos, marketing materials, reviews, letters of support, etc. If providing links to videos on YouTube, make sure that the video remains viewable through June 2026.

Link to Support Materials #1

example.com

Link to Support Materials #2

example.com

Upload Support Materials

Choose File

Select up to 3 files to attach. No files have been attached yet. You may add 3 more files.

Acceptable file types: .pdf, .doc, .docx, .jpg, .jpeg, .tif, .tiff, .mp3, .mp4, .mov, .zip, .xls, .xlsx

Board List (required)

Choose File

Select up to 3 files to attach. No files have been attached yet. You may add 3 more files.

Acceptable file types: .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx

Upload a current list of Board of Directors. A list of Advisory Board members, if relevant to your program, may also be uploaded.

Financial Statements (required)

Choose File

Select up to 3 files to attach. No files have been attached yet. You may add 3 more files.

Acceptable file types: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .png

Upload an audit of your most recently completed fiscal year. If an audit is not available, then upload the following three items:
1. Profit and Loss Statement
2. Balance Sheet
3. Letter, signed by three board members (including the treasurer), stating that they have reviewed the organization's financial records.

IRS Form 990 (required)

Choose File

Select up to 2 files to attach. No files have been attached yet. You may add 2 more files.

Acceptable file types: .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg

Upload a copy of the applicant's IRS Form 990 that was filed for the most recently completed fiscal year.

If the applicant's financial statements or 990 from the most recently completed fiscal year are not uploaded, please explain.

CERTIFICATION

We certify that:

- The information contained in this application, including all attachments, is true and correct to the best of our knowledge.

- The organization has nondiscrimination, conflict of interest, and accessibility policies.

- There has been no change to the organization's federal or state tax-free status.

- The organization is not disbarred, suspended, or has any other exclusions or disqualifications from doing business with the federal government.

☐ **We certify that the above statements are true.** (required)

Signature/Title of Authorizing Official

[   ]

Person legally able to obligate the applicant. Type in full name; this will qualify as a signature.

Signature/Title of Contact Person (if different from above)

[   ]

Person submitting this application. Type in full name; this will quality as a signature.

[Save Draft]   [**Submit Form**]

Drafts may be visible to the administrators of this program.