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Project Grants for Organizations

Project Grant for Organizations (PGO) support arts and culture projects that are relevant and meaningful to Rhode Island communities. It is our entry-level grant program, and PGO funds the broadest range of cultural activities.

Award Amount: Up to \$3,000.

Who can apply:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations based in Rhode Island.
- Groups fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Rhode Island.

Timelines

April 1 Deadline

- Grants open for applications on Feb. 1.
- Deadline is April 1 at 11:59 p.m.
- Funding period supports project occurring between July 1 and June 30, the State's Fiscal Year.

Oct. 1 Deadline

- Grants open for applications Aug. 1.
- Deadline is Oct. 1 at 11:59 p.m.
- Funding period supports project occurring between Jan. 1 and June 30.

[Read more about deadlines, funding periods and decision-making process.](#)

[Click here to read Information for First-Time Applicants](#) or [download the pdf.](#)

Project Definition and Examples

A project is defined as a discrete set of connected activities with a distinct beginning and end. Projects can be one-time events such a festival, show, or exhibition, or a series such as a roster of classes, or thematically connected concerts, productions, or arts program.

For example: a music organization could apply for a PGO to support a three-performance series of free outdoor concerts at public parks. However, the same organization could not apply to support its entire nine-month season of programming since that reflects that totality of the organization's programming and falls outside RISCA's definition of a project.

The parameters for this program are intentionally broad to be responsive to a community's needs over time. In the past, this grant program has funded from large cultural festivals with thousands of people in attendance to small programs with less than a dozen people involved.

Hypothetical Examples:

- **Example One:** a free, day long summer cultural festival at a public park featuring live performances, including R.I. based performing artists.
- **Example Two:** a free series of art classes led by a teaching artist at a social service nonprofit for 12 adults with development disabilities.
- **Example Three:** a low-cost dance program for eight young people within a specific cultural community. Taught by artists or culture-bearers from that specific cultural tradition with the intention of preserving and perpetuating these cultural traditions among future generations.

Project Value to the Community

Core to all funded programs is a connection and value to the community being engaged with by the public, fulfilling RISCA's charge to facilitate a meaningful cultural life for all Rhode Island residents.

Per guidelines from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and our agency values around equity and access, programs that engage underserved communities as defined by the NEA are particularly suitable for Project Grants for Organizations.

[For additional examples review past grantees.](#)

Eligibility

You must be:

- A nonprofit organization.
 - Conducting business and be incorporated in the State of Rhode Island as a 501(c)(3) with tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.
 - Registered with the R.I. Secretary of State.
 - Governed by a revolving board of directors, trustees or advisory board drawn from the community at large and shown to be actively involved in the governance of the organization.
 - A non-exempt, Rhode Island-based organization using a Fiscal Sponsor that fits the above requirements.

To confirm nonprofit status with the state, visit [R.I. Secretary of State's online database](#).

Note: Divisions, branches, departments, programs, or other subunits of nonprofit corporations, colleges, or universities are ineligible to apply on their own. Applications may be submitted only by the parent corporation.

You still can be eligible if your organization is incorporated in a state outside of Rhode Island.

For out of state organizations to be eligible, they must:

- Show their principal place of business is in Rhode Island.
- Be registered with the R.I. Secretary of State's office.
- Produce programming predominantly in Rhode Island.
- Be governed by a revolving board of directors, trustees or advisory board drawn predominantly from the Rhode Island community.

Ineligible

If you are:

- Receiving General Operating Support for Organizations funding from RISCA in the same fiscal year.
- Applying for support for this project or aspects of this project through another RISCA grant program.
- Delinquent on any final reports for previous RISCA grants.

Applying with a Fiscal Sponsor

- Non-exempt, R.I.-based organizations can apply via a Fiscal Sponsor. A Fiscal Sponsor is an organization registered with R.I.'s Secretary of State Office and can accept a grant on your behalf. The Sponsor must be financially, administratively, and programmatically responsible for all conditions of the grant.
- Organizations interested in using a Fiscal Sponsor must contact the Deputy Director prior to beginning an application for approval and to request a grant profile that links the organization to the Fiscal Sponsor.
- Nonprofit organizations acting as Fiscal Sponsors can also apply for grants for their own programs or be awardees.

When submitting a grant via a Fiscal Sponsor, a letter of agreement between the applicant and the Fiscal Sponsor must be provided. [Download the fiscal sponsorship letter template](#). Typically, Fiscal Sponsor will charge an administrative fee ranging from 0-10 percent depending on the degree of administrative support and bookkeeping required. This fee can be factored into the budget.

Fiscal Sponsor Requirements

A Fiscal Sponsor:

- Must fit RISCA's definition of a nonprofit organization as stated above.
- Is responsible for signing any grant documents and ensuring that the sponsored organization follows the rules of the grant program and submits their final report.
- Cannot be a project partner in the sponsored organization's application.

Note: If there is an organization that fits RISCA's definition of an eligible nonprofit involved in the project, they can function as the lead applicant.

Funding Rules and Restrictions

All grant awards are contingent upon the availability of funds from the Rhode Island State General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

- The maximum grant award in this category is \$3,000 – but partial awards are common. Only 5-10 percent of applicants in this program receive a full award. Typically, the rest of the application pool receiving a grant award gets a percentage of the amount requested.
- Grant applications are considered on a competitive basis. Award amounts may vary cycle to cycle depending on available funds, number of applications, and the panel decision-making. [For more information on our Decision-Making Process, visit our Applicant Resources web page.](#)
- If you receive a partial award, you won't be expected to accomplish the project as initially outlined. You may reach out to the Deputy Director to discuss project modifications at any time.
- You also have the option of declining the grant award with no penalties.
- If you receive a grant, you must credit on all marketing materials. [See Acknowledging RISCA.](#)

Allowable

- Grants can be used for expenses related to your project and its production or presentation including marketing and accessibility efforts associated with the project.
 - If using an RFP or RFQ process to select artists for a project, funds can be used to pay artists. These are considered stipends and must be publicly communicated as such.
- Programs must occur in spaces that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. You are ineligible for a RISCA grant *if your facility does not meet ADA standards*. See the [NEA's Accessibility: Publications, Checklists, & Resources](#) for more information.
- All funded project activity must take place in Rhode Island.

See the [NEA's Accessibility: Publications, Checklists, & Resources](#) for more information.

Not Allowable

Grant funding cannot be used for the following:

- Capital projects, including the construction or renovation of buildings, or additions to buildings.
- Development efforts, such as social events or benefits or any fundraising expenses.
- Addressing, eliminating or reducing existing debt or for contributions to an endowment fund.
- Purchasing of alcohol, food, or beverage.
- Prizes and awards for an event, person, and/or organization.
- Regranting.
- Activities that are associated with a graduate or undergraduate degree program or for which academic credit is received.
- Applications for projects that proselytize or promote religious activities, or which take place as part of a religious service.
- Programming, performances, and exhibitions unavailable and/or inaccessible to the public.
- Expenses incurred or activity happening outside of the award period.

Evaluation Criteria

Per the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) enabling legislation, The NEA requires that state arts agencies include artistic merit and artistic excellence in their evaluative criteria. However, the NEA allows state arts agencies to define artistic merit and excellence for themselves and in conversation with their communities. For this grant program, artistic merit and artistic excellence is defined as "Artistic Vibrancy and Intention."

Community Impact and Engagement (60 percent): Is there evidence that this arts and culture project meaningfully engages and inspires its community while expanding opportunities and access for Rhode Island residents?

- Complete and thorough understanding of the project's intended community, supported by demographic details and other data and information.
- Project has a direct and deep relevance to the creative experience and/or cultural heritage of the identified community.
- Project engages Rhode Island residents in underserved communities, as defined by the NEA.
- Clear and specific actions indicate the project will be accessible and inclusive and reduce barriers to access for those who want to attend or participate in the project.
- Community support materials come from a varied array of community sectors, both arts and non-arts, and reflect a robust support for the project.

Feasibility/Likelihood of Success (40 percent): Is there evidence that the applicant has considered all the factors necessary for their project to be a success?

- Application clearly and thoroughly states specifically what will be done, when and where things will take place, and why the project should be supported with public funds.
- Budget is clear, detailed, and accurate, and the applicant has thoroughly explained how they arrived at the numbers, indicating where RISCA funds will be spent. Budget expenses and revenue are clearly related to project description and the goals of the project and are a direct translation of stated goals into numbers.
- What is proposed is achievable by the applicant, on their own or in partnership with others. In the absence of experience, information is provided that helps make a convincing case that this project will succeed.
- Applicant has a clear and thorough sense of what success looks like in the project. Applicant shares clear, thorough, and achievable steps they will take to ensure the project's success.

Artistic Vibrancy and Intention (for panel discussion): Does the project allow Rhode Island residents to actively participate in arts and culture with project leaders who have relevant experience to the community being engaged?

- Provides an excellent and intentional experience for the participants.
- Project leaders, artists, and/or culture bearers can provide relevant and respectful engagement with the identified community.
- Project leaders have substantial experience working with or are a part of the identified community they are engaging with.
- Project directly supports creation of art by, for, and with/of a specific community.

Support Materials

Required Documentation for Determining Applicant Eligibility

- 501(c)(3) Determination Letter.
- SAM-UEI, a 12-character Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) assigned by the federal System for Awards Management (SAM), must be submitted by any entity receiving federal funds. [Learn how to get a SAM-UEI for your organization by clicking here.](#) If you don't have a SAM-UEI by the application deadline, email the Deputy Director prior the grant deadline.
- Recent 990 from one of your past three fiscal years. A 990 is the type of annual tax return 501(c)(3) nonprofits file.
 - For nonprofits less than one-year-old who have yet to complete a 990 form, you will need to submit a Word document indicating that you have not completed a 990 form.
- If you are using a Fiscal Sponsor, you need your Fiscal Sponsor's 501(c)(3) Determination Letter, SAM-UEI, recent 990, and a Fiscal Sponsor letter. Use the [Fiscal Sponsor Template](#) for your letter.

Required Support Materials for Panel Review

- Up to four support materials, showing how this project is meaningful to your community.
- Up to four support materials, showing how the artist(s) or culture-bearer(s) involved in the project that have experience relevant to this project.

Note: If you are submitting video or audio, please link to YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud in the text box and on the support material list. File formats you can directly upload to the application include JPG, PDF, Word, Excel. Please do not submit files in Pages or Number format. Our grants system is unable to read files in these formats.

Glossary

ALAANA (African, Latin American, Asian, Arab, Native-American): This is an acronym for Asian, Latina/o/x/e, African, Arab, and Native American intended to be inclusive of any individual, culture, community, or arts organization from these racial/ethnic identity groups. The term intentionally names these broad racial and ethnic identities rather than grouping them under the more generic term "people of color." *Source: Grantmakers in the Arts.*

BIPOC: An acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous and people of color. The term is meant to unite all people of color while acknowledging that Black and Indigenous people face different and often more severe forms of racial oppression and cultural erasure as consequences of systemic white supremacy and colonialism. *Source: diversitystyleguide.com*

Fiscal Sponsorship: An organization that fits RISCAs' definition of a nonprofit organization that accepts a grant on behalf of the sponsored organization and is financially, administratively, and programmatically responsible for all conditions of the grant. The Fiscal Sponsor is also responsible for signing any grant documents and ensuring that the sponsored organization follows the rules of the grant program and submits its final report.

Nonprofit Organization: Is incorporated in and conducting business in the State of Rhode Island, with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service, registered with the Rhode Island

Secretary of State, governed by a revolving board of directors, trustees or advisory board drawn from the community at large and shown to be actively involved in the governance of the organization.

Underserved communities. The National Endowment for the Arts defines “underserved” communities as "ones in which individuals lack access to arts programs due to geography, economic conditions, ethnic background, or disability." This definition may include BIPOC/ALAANA communities, people with disabilities, immigrant groups, rural populations, aging populations, people living in poverty, people experiencing houselessness, incarcerated populations, communities recovering from trauma or disaster, and military service members and veterans.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a SAM-UEI?

The federal government requires all organization have a System of Award Management Unique Entity Identifier (SAM-UEI). Organizations applying for grants from us will need a SAM-UEI to submit your application. We recommend you request a SAM-UEI as soon as possible to ensure you have it by the application deadline.

To request your SAM-UEI, visit the sam.gov website for the latest information and instructions on how to obtain a SAM-UEI.

Note: the registration is free – but there are many scammers out there. Make sure you are doing this process through a .gov website and only trust communications that come from sam.gov regarding registration and annual renewals.