



State Cultural Facilities Grants

Guidelines and Instructions 2025

Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA)

One Capitol Hill, 3rd Floor

Providence, RI 02908

401-222-3880 phone; 401-222-3018 fax

www.arts.ri.gov

State Cultural Facilities Grants Guidelines

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Eligible Applicants.....	4
Ownership status.....	4
What we fund.....	4
What we will NOT fund:	5
What we encourage	5
The Application Process	5
Number of applications per deadline	6
Number of applications per project	6
Matching dollar requirements	6
Request and award amounts.....	6
Submitting an Application	6
Registering for an account on RISCA’s online application system	6
Letter of Intent.....	7
Online application	7
Support material	7
The Review of Applications	7
Review panel	8
Panel meeting.....	8
Evaluation criteria.....	8
Selection of grants and grant announcement	9
Considerations for the Successful Applicant	9
Historic Preservation review.....	9
State regulations regarding Minority and Women Owned Businesses.....	9
Prevailing Wage.....	10
Changes in Project Scope or Budget	10
Reporting Requirements.....	10
Acknowledgment of Funding.....	10

Introduction:

In 2014, Rhode Island voters approved bond issues to fund a “Creative and Cultural Economy Bond” initiative that provided \$5 million for an historic preservation grant program operated by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission and a \$30 million cultural facilities bond initiative operated by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (“RISCA” or “the Council”). In March of 2021, Rhode Island voters again approved a bond issue that provided \$1 million for an historic preservation grant program, and a \$6 million cultural facilities program. In 2024, Rhode Island voters approved another \$10 million in bond for the continuation of the Cultural Facilities program. Of this, \$6 million goes to three named arts and cultural organizations, while \$4 million goes to support ongoing grants and administration of the Cultural Facilities Grant Program. These guidelines and instructions are based on regulations adopted by the Council and provide information on the review, evaluation, award, and administration of these grants. The text of the regulations is available at: [Rules and Regulations for Cultural Facilities Grant Program \(665-RICR-20-00-1\) - Rhode Island Department of State](#).

The State Cultural Facilities Grant Program (SCFG) was created because state lawmakers and voters recognized that many significant cultural properties in our state need extensive repairs or restoration, and that these organizations contribute significantly to the state and local economy. These facilities and the organizations that enliven them contribute to the quality of life in Rhode Island and ensure that our arts and cultural activities continue to inspire new generations. Moreover, the arts and cultural sector creates jobs, stimulates tourism, and builds and revitalizes our downtowns, neighborhoods and communities throughout the state.

The State Cultural Facilities Grant Program is a matching grant program. It promotes careful planning for capital improvement, preservation, renovation and new construction projects for public and nonprofit artistic, performance centers, historic sites, museums and cultural art centers located around the state. Through its matching requirements, the program stimulates broader support and participation in cultural facility projects statewide. Applications for the 2025 grant round (approximately \$3.5 million) will be accepted through Oct. 1, 2025, 11:59 p.m. Applicants will be notified of grant decisions by Dec. 31, 2025.

The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts is a state agency supported by appropriations from the Rhode Island General Assembly and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. RISCA provides grants, technical assistance and staff support to arts organizations and artists, schools, community centers, social service organizations and local governments to bring the arts into the lives of Rhode Islanders. Created in 1967, the agency is governed by a thirteen- member Council appointed by the Governor and

confirmed by the Senate, and its programs are managed by a professional staff, which includes artists and arts administrators.

[Past State Cultural Facilities Grantees](#)

Please read and follow all instructions closely.

Eligible Applicants

You are eligible to apply for a State Cultural Facilities Grant if you are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts and culture or culturally specific organization, which leases or owns your own performance or exhibition space. Arts and culture organizations are defined as a not-for-profit based group that provide as their primary mission regular cultural programs or services, which may include producing or presenting a series or regular program of performances, educational related, exhibitions, media presentations, festivals, readings, or literary publications.

Producing is a primary focus on direct creation, production, performance, or exhibition of arts; presenting is a primary focus on organizing, selecting or curating and contracting a series, season or festival of performances or events created by other artists and producing groups. A culturally specific organization is defined as an organization with a significant arts and cultural program that engages an explicit cultural community but might not have arts and culture as their primary mission.

City or state facilities cannot apply directly for support, but nonprofit entities operating in city-owned structures are eligible to apply for identified areas within these structures specifically designated for the production, presentation, and exhibition of the arts.

If you are one of the three “named recipients” of Creative and Cultural Economy Bonds funds identified by law, you are not eligible to apply for additional support through this grant offering. If the applicant received a previous State Cultural Facilities Grant, the applicant must have completed and closed out the project to be eligible for an additional grant.

Applications will not be accepted from private individuals, for-profit organizations, or corporations. Applicants may submit one application in each grant round.

Ownership status

- Applicants must own or operate the property for which the grant is sought.
- Applicants who lease space will be required to provide a document, signed by lessor and lessee, indicating they have in place or will enter into a lease or written agreement of at least 20 years from the date of the award or a 5-year lease with

options that comprise a full 20-year period, in the event a grant is awarded. No application will be considered without such written assurance, and no grant will be awarded without a signed lease or written agreement as described above.

Funding Rules and Restrictions

The law establishing this program authorizes the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts to administer a matching grant program "for capital improvement, preservation and renovation projects for public and nonprofit artistic, performance centers, museums and cultural art centers located throughout the State of Rhode Island."

In accordance with the law, the SCFG program will support projects designed "for capital improvement, preservation and renovation projects for public and nonprofit artistic, performance centers and cultural art centers located throughout the State of Rhode Island." In doing so, RISCA defines a "cultural facility" as "a building or a specific space within a building which shall be used primarily to provide support for the programming, production, presentation, or exhibition of any of the arts and cultural disciplines. These disciplines include music, dance, theatre, creative writing, literature, architecture, painting, sculpture, folk arts, photography, crafts, media arts, visual arts, and programs of art museums. Civic buildings and libraries are not considered cultural facilities but identified areas within these structures specifically designated for the production, presentation and exhibition of the arts may be eligible for support."

In accordance with advice provided by the State Bond Counsel, "new construction" can be supported through this grant opportunity.

What we will NOT fund

The following will not be eligible for support through the SCFG program:

- Projects whose entire scope of work consists solely of general maintenance.
- Projects that consist only of landscaping or sitework as part of improvements such as parking lots, sidewalks, etc.
- Projects that consist only of predevelopment or planning, such as historic structure reports, master plans, and architectural studies.
- Acquisition of collections.
- General operating support: Administrative costs for running the organization (including but not limited to salaries, travel, personnel, office supplies, mortgage or rent, operating overhead or indirect costs, etc.).
- Costs associated with representation, proposal, or grant application preparation.
- Costs for lobbying or attempting to influence federal, state or local legislation, the judicial branch, or any state agency.
- Costs associated with bad debts, contingencies (money set aside for possible

expenses), fines and penalties, taxes (of any kind), and other financial costs including bank fees and charges and credit card debts, except costs related to debt service for the designated project.

- Costs for travel, private entertainment, food, beverages, plaques, awards, or scholarships.
- Projects restricted to private or exclusive participation, including restriction of access to programs based on sex, race, creed, national origin, disability, age, or marital status.
- Re-granting, contributions, and donations.

What we encourage

- Projects that remove barriers to the attendance and participation of people with disabilities, such as projects that ensure greater wheelchair access to cultural facilities, as well as the acquisition of equipment for captioning, audio description and assistive listening.
- Projects from organizations that represent historically marginalized communities or constituencies in their mission, programming, staff leadership, and board (e.g., BIPOC-centered organizations, organizations that are led by and serve people with disabilities, etc.).
- Projects where applicants can demonstrate that the funded project will have a positive impact on employment and the local economy once the capital improvement, restoration or renovation is completed.
- Projects that increase energy efficiency or sustainability of the facility, or address code compliance issues.

The Application Process and Matching Requirements

An eligible applicant may only submit one application in each grant application round. Organizations that have previously received a State Cultural Facility Grant are eligible to apply for an additional grant once their first project has been completed and closed out.

Number of applications per project

Applications for grants in the later phases of capital projects are welcome. Organizations that have received a State Cultural Facility Grant may apply for additional phases of the project once their first phase has been completed and closed out. The term “closed out” means that the scope of the work, including state and matching funds, has been completed, a final reimbursement request has been submitted, and a final report has been submitted to and accepted by RISCA.

Matching Dollar requirements

In accordance with the law Chapter 117, Article 5, §1(4) of the 2024 Rhode Island Public Laws all funds are to be matched on a 1:1 basis. For the SCFG program a portion of that match may be the in-kind contribution of goods and services. To encourage small and meaningful applications for capital improvement projects, requests of \$100,000 or less may be matched entirely through in-kind contributions. For request over \$100,000, 25 percent of the match may be through in-kind contributions. No more than 10 percent of the matching funds may be used to pay a member of the grantee organization for time devoted to managing the project. Matching funds must be in cash or documented contributions and binding pledges or financing commitments [such as construction funding from tax credit programs] or loan documents. Funds appropriated by the State of Rhode Island or previously awarded through either the State Cultural Facilities Grant Program or State Preservation Grants may not be counted as part of the Match. Matching funds may not include operating funds.

Matching funds may be expended in advance; however, State funds may only be expended on activity occurring after a Grant Award Agreement is fully executed.

Request and Award Amounts

Applicants may request up to \$500,000 per application per deadline.

Applicants should be aware that it is RISCA's intention to award grants that maximize the economic and cultural development potential of SCFG grants, but some grants will not be awarded at the requested amount. It is also RISCA's intent to ensure the broadest possible geographic distribution of grants throughout the state.

Submitting an Application

RISCA accepts and evaluates grants through an online application system. To use the System, applicants must register and then login to complete the application form and upload supporting documents and material.

Registering for an account on RISCA's online application system visit:

<https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=artsri>. To register on RISCA's online application system, click on the "Create New Account" button and fill in the required information. Once you have registered you will be able to access and start working on your application.

Online application

The online application is designed to provide the information panelists need to fully evaluate the project and its impact on the community. Answers to the questions allow the panel to evaluate each application based on the criteria listed below (see Evaluation Criteria

section).

In addition, the law requires RISCA to take into account financial need, the availability or actual expenditure of matching funds for the projects, available gifts or grants for projects, the amount of square footage to be improved, the geographical location and characteristics of audiences benefitted.

Support Material

Support material will include the following items

- Copy of IRS 501 (c) 3 tax exemption letter.
- Documents of unrestricted use: Deed, title, or property tax statement to document unrestricted use, OR executed copy of lease and written explanation of any easements, covenants, or other conditions to document unrestricted use.
- Consent form signed by the property owner and applicant.
- Financial documents to include the most recent copy of the applicant's IRS 990 form, along with an audit, review, or compilation for the most recently completed fiscal year.
- Income statement and balance sheet or other financial report for the current year-to-date.
- Board list and affiliations.
- Resumes, CVs, or other summaries of qualifications for all key project personnel (e.g., project manager and/or general contractor, architect, fundraising consultant, key organizational staff).
- Architectural plans, if appropriate and available.
- Timeline for the project, including scope-of-work, cost, and anticipated construction dates on the form provided.

Optional Support material uploads

- Photographs.
- Supplemental or expanded budgets.
- Flyers and/or brochures.
- Newspaper articles.
- Plans for sustainable design, etc.

Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

The Review of Applications

Applications will first be reviewed by RISCA staff to ensure basic eligibility and completeness. Eligible applications will then be released to a review panel, which will evaluate each application based on the three review criteria. They will then assign a score

which will determine the funding recommendation. The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts will then review and approve the results of the panel meeting.

Review Panel

The Council shall appoint a five-member panel of experts to review applications. Members of the Review Panel may be selected from among artists, arts administrators, managers of cultural facilities, individuals with experience in construction and capital projects, or other experts. In making appointments to the Review Panel, the Council shall endeavor to include an architect or design professional and an economic development professional.

In addition, a representative of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission staff will serve to promote inter- agency cooperation and participation. The Council will ensure that members come from different parts of the state, represent diverse communities and have knowledge or experience with organizations of different sizes. RISCA will ensure that no panel member shall have a conflict of interest with any application under review. To represent the evaluations of the Council's professional staff, the RISCA Executive Director shall be a voting member of the Review Panel.

Panel Meeting

All Review Panel meetings and records shall be consistent with the Open Meetings Law (Chapter 42-46 of the Rhode Island General Laws of 1956, as amended) and the Public Records Act (Chapter 36-1 of the Rhode Island General Laws of 1956, as amended). Notices of meetings and agendas will be posted electronically on the Secretary of State's website not less than forty-eight (48) hours prior to each meeting.

Evaluation Criteria

Each eligible application will be evaluated on the following competitive criteria (100 points total):

(1) **NEED FOR PROJECT** (30 points): 1-30 points will rate the need for the proposed capital improvement, preservation or renovation based on a review of the scope of work, the project narrative and supporting documents. Applicants will be judged on the quality and completeness of their plans, and on the strength of the case they make for how the capital improvement, preservation or renovation are necessary to the work of the organization and their community.

(2) **PROJECT IMPACT** (40 points): 1-40 points will rate the completed project's ability to contribute to the cultural vitality of the applicant's community as well as the ability to engage current and potential audiences. The geographic location of the project will be a consideration. Impact on underserved parts of the applicant's community will also be a consideration (for example, projects that deal with accessibility issues to engage audiences

with disabilities, or the ability to develop new programs to connect with culturally diverse communities). Applicants will be judged on the strength of the case they make that their project will provide a significant and measurable benefit to the cultural vitality of the applicant's community.

(3) **CAPACITY TO SUCCEED** (30 points): 1-30 points will rate the applicant's ability to raise matching funds, plan and carry out a project within a 12-to-36-month period. The panel will also consider the long-term viability of the applicant organization. Projects that can demonstrate an ability to begin construction earlier than 12-months from the approval date will receive additional consideration. Applicants will be rated based on a review of project plans, budget details, income and matching funds statements. A review of the applicant's organizational strength and capacity to succeed will include an evaluation of past financial records and reports, as well as an evaluation of fund-raising capacity as demonstrated by a review of past earned and contributed income to the organization.

Selection of Grants and Grant Announcement

The Review Panel shall submit its recommendations to the Council. The Council will review the recommendations of the Review Panel and will vote to accept or reject the recommendations. The date of the Council's vote shall be the date of grant award.

Considerations for the Successful Applicant

Historic Preservation review

In accordance with the regulations of the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act, projects at historic properties must be reviewed by the RIHPHC. An "historic property" is defined as "any district, site, building, structure, or object listed in the State Register," a list compiled and maintained by RIHPHC. State regulations direct that the State shall not fund any activity "which will encroach upon, damage or destroy, physically, visually, or environmentally, any site, building, place, landmark, or area included in the state register without first obtaining the advice of the Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission."

Applications for projects that include historic properties will be shared with the RIHPHC for their review, and RISCA will be guided by their advisories. Applicants are encouraged to consult with RIHPHC prior to applying.

State regulations regarding Minority and Women Owned Businesses

Under Rhode Island General law 37-14., Minority and Women-Owned business enterprises are targeted for participation in all state-funded construction projects (including soft costs) and shall be awarded a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of all dollar value of the procurement or project. MBE/WBE participation is calculated on the entire dollar amount of your project, not simply the grant plus the match.

The Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program is a State of Rhode Island program that promotes the State's policy of supporting the fullest possible participation of firms owned and controlled by minorities and women in state funded and directed public construction programs and projects. The State of Rhode Island maintains a directory of vendors eligible for MBE participation at <http://odeo.ri.gov/offices/mbeco/mbe-wbe.php>, and will work with any SCFG recipient to ensure compliance with the law.

All State Cultural Facilities Grants must comply with Minority and Women Owned Business requirements and participation.

Prevailing Wage

In accordance with the law, any contracts for construction entered into for a project funded by the State Cultural Facilities Grant program shall be in compliance with the State of Rhode Island prevailing wage law (RIGL 37-13-1). For more information go to:

<https://dlt.ri.gov/wrs/prevailingwage/>

Prevailing wage commitments will be for the amount of the award plus the match, not for the entire project.

Changes in Project Scope or Budget

Any material changes in project scope or of a variance of 20 percent or more of total budget must receive approval by RISCA to receive further funding. Money that has been reimbursed cannot be used for a proposed change in scope or budget.

Reimbursements

If awarded, organizations must plan to be reimbursed after payments have been made to subcontractors. Proof of payment (cancelled checks front and back; PayPal or credit card statements, bank transfers, etc.) must be submitted with your invoices and subcontractor backup materials. Certified payroll records for expenditures subject to prevailing wage rules are required.

Project Period

The beginning date of a project period will normally be the date in which the Council votes to approve a grant for the project (date of approval). For Cultural Facilities Grant Program grants, funds spent on the project after the date of execution of the grant agreement shall be eligible for reimbursement, while prior expenses may be eligible to be considered matching funds. Project activities must begin within one year of the date of the signed grant agreement and must be completed within three years of the date of the signed grant agreement. At its discretion, the Council may grant an extension in one-year increments. No more than three extensions may be granted.

Reporting Requirements

All funded organizations are required to participate in economic impact surveys and reports. Information to be gathered will include, among other things, information on labor engaged because of construction activities, changes in organization staffing, income, programs and services as a result of the capital project, changes in program participation numbers, and other information as required that can be used to assess the impact of this program.

Acknowledgment of Funding

Grant recipients are required to credit the Rhode Island General Assembly and the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts in all print, audio, video, and internet materials, and all publicity materials (such as press releases, brochures, posters, advertisements, and web sites). Detailed information is provided in the contract package sent to grantees.

A project sign acknowledging funding by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts will be placed on site during the project. The sign will be provided by RISCA staff.

For more information, visit: [Acknowledging RISCA | RISCA](#).

Accommodations and Access Policy

It is the policy of RISCA that no qualified individual, based on a disability, shall be excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of services, programs, or activities of the agency or the agency's grantees, or be subjected to discrimination.

For questions on accommodations, contact Seamus Hames, Arts Education Program Director and 504 Accessibility Coordinator, at 401-222-6994 or seamus.hames@arts.ri.gov.