Rural Arts Project Support

Support for arts projects and activities across all disciplines that focus on community vitality and engagement in rural counties.

Funding will depend upon an organization's rating in the review process and upon the total amount of funds available to the Commission for grant allocation. This grant program is competitive, and most grant requests are not fully funded.

Funds awarded to a single organization in these categories range from **$1,000 to $25,000** for non-arts organizations, arts organizations, and entities of local government.

Tennessee Rural Counties

Bedford
Benton
Bledsoe
Campbell
Cannon
Carroll
Carter
Cheatham
Chester
Claiborne
Clay
Cocke
Coffee
Crockett
Cumberland

Decatur
DeKalb
Dickson
Dyer
Fayette
Fentress
Franklin
Gibson
Giles
Grainger
Greene
Grundy
Hamblen
Hancock
Hardeman

Hardin
Hawkins
Haywood
Henderson
Henry
Hickman
Houston
Humphreys
Jackson
Jefferson
Johnson
Lake
Lauderdale
Lawrence
Lewis

Lincoln
Loudon
Macon
Marion
Marshall
McMinn
McNairy
Meigs
Monroe
Moore
Morgan
Obion
Overton
Perry
Polk
Rhea

Roane
Robertson
Scott
Sequatchie
Stewart
Pickett
Smith
Tipton
Trousdale
Unicoi
Union
Van Buren
Warren
Wayne
Weakley
White

Description

These categories provide funds for diverse arts projects in rural counties.

An organization may submit only one Rural Arts Project Support application for any given fiscal year. Applicants may **not** apply for funds under the urban Arts Project Support grant. If eligible, an organization may also submit applications in the Arts Access, Arts Education, and Creative Placemaking categories. Organizations eligible to apply in more than one grant category in a single fiscal year must submit applications for unrelated, separate and distinct projects. Organizations may not apply in different categories to support different activities of the same project or event.

The Rural Arts Project Support Grants does not require a match during the FY26 RAPS Grant cycle.

Funds requested may be listed in up to four different expense categories in the Commission Funds Requested column in the budget. However, applicants are encouraged to request to spend the grant funding in as few expense categories as possible.

The budget section requires that you include your entire projected budget rather than just an exact grant request. **Applicants may list all other projected budget expenses under the Applicant Cash Participation column. These expenses may be listed in multiple expense categories.** Showing a match under the Applicant Cash Participation column is not required for the RAPS Grant applications but is encouraged if the applicant intends to spend other funds on the proposed project. Please itemize all income sources that support the proposed project under the appropriate categories. Note: these figures can be projected figures assuming the project is approved. **See Budget Line Item Definitions for guidance on how to fill out the application budget.**

Affirmative Duty to Report Major Organizational Change

Any grantee shall promptly notify the state in writing of any significant changes in the organization's structure, leadership or financial circumstances that could affect services provided under the grant contract resulting from this application. See other **Grantee Reporting Requirements**.

Eligibility

First time applicants to this category are encouraged to contact Commission's **program staff** prior to submitting an application to verify eligibility.

Unique Entity ID (UEI): All applicants are required to have a Unique Entity ID. Information and application instructions can be found **here**.

K-12 schools are not eligible under this category. Arts education-based projects, especially those primarily serving youth, must be submitted in one of the Arts Education grant categories.

Applicant organizations must be chartered in Tennessee. National or regional 501(c)3 organizations, chartered and headquartered in Tennessee, and serving as an umbrella organization applying for funds for another group are restricted to **one** application **only** per fiscal year (see below).

Arts organizations that receive revenue directly from a "New Specialty Earmarked Plate" under T.C.A 55-4-301 (a)(1) are ineligible for Commission grant funding.

Debarment and Suspension. Grantees are required to sign contracts certifying to the best of its knowledge and belief, that it, its current and future principals, its current and future subcontractors and their principals are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any federal or state department or agency.

Appropriate Activities

Proposed arts projects must involve one or more Commission recognized art forms, including: visual arts, craft, media, design, music, theater, dance, folk and ethnic, or literary arts. The following are example activities and expenditures that are consistent with the funding philosophy Rural Arts Project Support:

- **Projects that involve and promote professional artists, especially Tennessee artists**
- Visiting artists conducting master classes
- Specific aspects of workshops, festivals, and conferences
- Public performances, productions, and exhibitions produced by the applicant
- Exhibitions of art by professional and folk artists, especially Tennessee artists
- Projects involving and promoting folk and traditional artists
- Promotion, publicity, and newsletters
- Administrative and artistic staff support
- Research and documentation as part of an arts project or program development
- Consultancies and residencies for administrative and artistic activities
- The development of long-range planning documents
- Improved program accessibility for underserved constituencies, e.g. children, people living in rural communities or isolated settings, people with living with disabilities, people of color, and senior citizens
- Art in public places
- Extensions of literary projects, journals with continuing publication, or juried anthologies
- Apprenticeship programs
- Computer software/training
- Technical/production support
- Technical assistance projects
- Touring/presenting projects that bring professional and/or traditional folk performers to communities across the state

Inappropriate Activities

The Tennessee Arts Commission reserves the right to deny any application, if the proposed activity is outside of the scope or spirit of the agency's mission, purpose, or this grant program.

The following are examples of activities and expenditures **not** fundable for arts projects. For further information see Funding Restrictions on **Legal Requirements**.

- Insurance premiums
- Endowments
- Office space rental
- Janitorial service and general physical plant maintenance
- Food and hospitality
- Permanent equipment purchases
- Scholarships
- Payment of accumulated deficits
- Capital improvements
- Vanity publications
- Out-of-state travel
- Scholarly arts-related research and writing
- Cash awards
- Purchase of local public art
- Legal fees
- Planned fundraising activities
- Events to which the general public is not invited
- Payments to members of the organization's board
- Payments to an employee or official of the State of Tennessee (exceptions exist – contact TAC for details)

Additional eligibility requirements and funding restrictions may apply. Please see **Legal Requirements** for further details.

Evaluation Criteria

Commission staff will contact all applicants and inform them of the advisory panel review schedule. Advisory panels reviewing grant applications for this program use the following evaluation criteria citing evidence that the:

- proposed project demonstrates artistic, cultural and/or educational value to the community being served (10 points)
- proposed project advances the organization's mission to the community being served (10 points)
- organization understands and is responsive to the interests and needs of the community it serves (10 points)
- proposed project supports the work of artists through payment of fees, services or appropriate benefits (10 points)
- organization understands and acts as an advocate for the public value of the arts in the community (10 points)
- planning procedures are comprehensive and communicated (10 points)
- organization understands principles of documentation and evaluation and results are used to guide future planning and programming (10 points)
- organization understands and demonstrates the value of public and private partnerships (5 points)
- organization demonstrates financial stability and a broad base of financial support (5 points)
- organization's ability to carry out proposed project based on history of TAC funding (10 points)
- organization's application is well planned, addresses all questions, and is correct and complete in all information provided (10 points)

Additionally, panelists may ask applicants to address other topics, including but not exclusive to:

- how the organization meets the evaluation criteria
- specific information found in the grant application
- community outreach activities
- unique services offered by the organization
- evidence of local, state, regional, or national recognition and impact
- general arts advocacy efforts in Tennessee and nationally
- organizational long-range goals and objectives
- detailed information about major productions, presentations, or exhibitions in the recent past, the present, and the next two years
- preservation, conservation, or restoration activities
- the space(s) in which your organization conducts its artistic and administrative activities
- recent and anticipated major equipment acquisitions
- program evaluation process
- board and committee responsibilities
- board/staff relationships
- educational programming
- salary information for administrative and artistic personnel, if applicable
- hiring practices and personnel policies
- policy and procedures relevant to financial activities, such as planning and fund-raising

Accessibility

All Commission sponsored programs, services and facilities are fully accessible to all Tennessee artists and citizens. Organizations are urged to consider contracting with diverse artists, artists living with disabilities, and/or artists representing Tennessee's diverse artistic and cultural heritage. No person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, religion or sex shall be excluded from participation in, or be denied benefits of, or otherwise be subject to discrimination of services, programs and employment provided by the Commission and its contracting agencies. If an individual believes they have been subjected to discrimination, they should contact the Commission's Director of Arts Access, **Kim Johnson** (615) 532-9797.

Deadline & How to Apply

1. **Register** to use the Online Grants System as an individual or on behalf of an organization to receive a username and password. Individuals who represent organizations should get their own, individual accounts and not share or "pass down" the username or password among staff. **You are strongly advised to register well in advance to the application deadline.** Anyone registering close to the deadline date can expect delays in the processing of their grant application.
2. Those with a username and password should log into the **Online Grants System** to complete or update your "Organization" profile and begin an application for a Rural Arts Project Support grant.
3. Use the "Organizations" tab on the left-hand menu to ensure that the profile is complete, accurate and updated. This information is as important as the application itself. Incomplete or erroneous data will impact your chances for funding. To edit the profile, click the "Edit" button at the top of the Organization screen.
4. Use the "People" tab on the left-hand menu to ensure that your "People" profile is complete, accurate and updated. This information will also be used in the review of the application. To edit the profile, click the "Edit" button at the top of the screen.
5. When both your "Organization" and "People" profiles are complete, accurate and updated, select the "Apply for Grants" tab again and choose the Annual Grant application link.
6. Complete all of the application fields.
7. Create and upload required attachments.
8. Submit by **Monday, January 13, 2025, by 11:59 p.m. (CST).**

NOTE: The forms in this portal do not auto-save. Always click the "Save" button before navigating away from the form you are editing to save your work.

Beware that clicking the back navigation button on your web browser will exit you from the system and you will lose your work.

Association or Connection to Multiple Organizations: If you are associated with more than one organization, the organization that you were originally associated with will prepopulate in the organization name field on any newly opened application. To change to another associated organization, simply delete the prepopulated name and type in the correct organization.

Required Documents

You will be prompted to create and upload the following documents in the Required Documents section of your APS/RAPS Application in the Online Grants System.

1. **Proof of Arts Advocacy.** Advocacy is educating and communicating to the public, including public officials, the importance of the arts and how public support of the arts can and has impacted your community. Examples of arts advocacy proof may include membership in Tennesseans for the Arts, copies of **recent** letters or emails (within the last 12 months) to state legislators and other state/local elected officials, photos of state/local elected officials at the applicant's arts events, newspaper articles or social media posts that create awareness about public support for the arts through the organization's activities (news articles that primarily market events are not acceptable), promoting the Specialty License Plate program and other pertinent print materials. **Proof of advocacy must be demonstrated by the applicant organization.** Applicants may **not** submit advocacy efforts conducted by contracted personnel. Multiple examples of arts advocacy will strengthen the application, but only one example that proves advocacy is required.
2. **List of Board of Directors. Only nonprofit organizations with 501(c)3 status will be prompted to upload this document.** The board list (at the time of application) must include the following:
    - Full Name
    - Email address
    - Number of years on the board
    - Length of term(s)

    NOTE: Double check your board list to make sure it has all 4 pieces of the required information. If your organization's bylaws do not require term limits, include a statement on the Board List indicating this. **Legal requirements state that Commission funds granted to an organization may not be used as a payment of any kind, for any purpose, to members of an organization's board.**

3. **Corporation Annual Report: Only nonprofit organizations with 501(c)3 status will be prompted to upload this document** (as required to be filed annually with the Secretary of State's Office). In lieu of the report, you may also submit a copy of the email verification issued by the Secretary of State's office or a copy of the online verification sheet maintained by the Secretary of State's Office found **here**. Entities of government do NOT submit.

Additional Documents

You will **NOT** be prompted to upload these documents in the system, but these documents may be required based on your applicant type.

Optional Materials. These include proof of advocacy, project examples, artistic samples. These documents can be uploaded in the "**Documents**" section below the "**Required Documents**" section of your application.

Accepted file types include .pdf, .jpg, or .png. For video and audio samples, provides links to projects in the section labeled "Optional Material Link(s)" below the "Documents" section.

Recent Bylaws. All Nonprofit, 501(c)3 applicants must upload the most recent copy of their bylaws to their online organization profile during registration, prior to submitting their application.

For Projects Occurring

FY2026: July 1, 2025-June 1, 2026

NEW: Every effort should be made to complete project spending by June 1st. For exceptions, please contact program director.

Application Dates & Deadlines

Application Open as of 11/15/2024

Application Deadline 1/13/2025

Eligible Applicants

501(c)3 Nonprofit organizations legally chartered & headquartered in Tennessee

Entities of Local Government within Tennessee

Funding Requests

Arts Organizations & Non-Arts Organizations - up to $25,000 (non-matching). Note, if awarded, the organization will have to pay for expenses up front and get reimbursed after completing reporting requirements.

Grantee Reporting Requirements

Manage Annual Grants

Important Dates & Grant Management Instructions: As of FY25, Operating Support (MCI, PS, SUPS, SRPS) grantees are no longer required to upload examples of their Specialty License Plate Program promotion … Continue reading

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Archived FY25 RAPS Guidelines

Current grantees may need to reference the **FY25 RAPS grant guidelines**.

TN

Address: 401 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Nashville, TN 37243
Phone: 615-741-1701

For accessibility accommodation requests including alternate digital formats, captioning, ASL, and assistive technologies please contact Kim Johnson, Director of Arts Access, 615-532-9797.

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