Tennessee Arts Commission Arts Build Communities Tutorial Part 1

Grant Overview

Arts Build Communities Grant Program

▶ The Arts Build Communities (ABC) grant program is designed to provide support for arts projects that broaden access to arts experiences, address community quality of life issues through the arts, or enhance the sustainability of asset-based cultural enterprises.

ABC Objectives

ABC funds may be used for projects that:

- Provide new or innovative arts experiences
  - Examples: Arts Festivals, Theater Performances, Concerts, Visual Arts Exhibits, and Crafts Shows

- Affect positive change in community social issues
  - Examples: Providing arts opportunities to cancer patients, veterans, seniors, and other community members with limited access to the arts. Projects that contribute positively to community wide issues such as conservation, health, literacy, etc.

ABC Objectives, cont.

- Strengthen social networks through community engagement
  - Examples: Services that are not normally a part of an organization's work, such as lectures, demos, tours, festivals, conferences, and symposia

- Enhance a community's identity and development
  - Examples: Community revitalization efforts through the arts, creative placemaking, development of natural resources using the arts, and public art

- Offer training for artists or arts administrators
  - Examples: Training offered through a masterclass program, a makerspace, or arts incubator

ABC – A Decentralized Program

▶ ABC is administered through a statewide network of Designated Agencies. Consult the guidelines to find the designated agency for your county.

- ▶ ArtsBuild
- ▶ Arts and Culture Alliance of Greater Knoxville
- ▶ ARTSmemphis
- ▶ Clarksville Arts & Heritage Development Council
- ▶ First Tennessee Development District
- ▶ Greater Nashville Regional Council
- ▶ Jackson Arts Council
- ▶ Northwest Tennessee Development District
- ▶ Rose Center
- ▶ South Central Tennessee Development District
- ▶ Southeast Tennessee Development District
- ▶ Upper Cumberland Development District

Application Deadlines & Submission Process

▶ Applications can be accessed beginning at 8:00 am (CT) on April 1, 2026, through the Commission's Online Grants System. Applications must be submitted online by 11:59 pm (CT) on July 1, 2026.

▶ Applicants accessing the Online Grants System for the first time must register their organizations and create an organization profile.

▶ Review Tutorial #2 for more information on the application process.

Eligibility Requirements

An organization is eligible to apply for funding support of its arts activities if the organization meets one of the following qualifications:

- ▶ Nonprofit 501(c)(3) legally chartered in Tennessee

-OR-

- ▶ Local entity of government (government departments, public libraries, public schools, etc.)

- ▶ New for FY27: Operating Support Grantees are not eligible to apply for ABC. This includes MCI, Partnership Support, Small Urban Partnership Support and Small Rural Partnership Support.

Funding Amounts

▶ Maximum Request of $5,000

▶ Funds requested may be listed in up to **4** Expense Categories in the PROJECTED PROJECT EXPENSES section of the application.

▶ ABC is a non-matching grant

Timeline

The proposed project must take place and grants funds must be used between August 16, 2026, and June 15, 2027. The proposed project must engage the public.

Applications that propose arts activities that extend between June 15th-20th due to event-specific required dates (Example: Juneteenth) may request an exception to policy to be eligible for Arts Build Communities grants as long as proposed projects conclude with all project expenses disbursed by June 20th, 2027.

Funding Restrictions

ABC funds may NOT be used:

▶ To support a project already funded by the Commission

▶ For capital improvements (construction expenses or equipment purchases)

▶ For the elimination of an accumulated deficit

▶ For in-school, curriculum-based projects

▶ For endowments

▶ For out-of-state travel expenses

Appropriate Activities

▶ The majority of projects are requests for artist fees or outside fees for production, curation, and presentation of the arts.

▶ Other expenses may be covered as well, such as:

  ▶ Supplies, Shipping & Equipment Rental

  ▶ Salaries, Benefits & Taxes

Review the Budget Line Item Definitions on our Tips & Hints page to see what expenses are included under each line item.

Inappropriate Activities

The following are examples of activities and expenditures **not** fundable through ABC:

- ▶ Private Fundraisers
- ▶ Cash Awards
- ▶ Capital Improvements
- ▶ Food & Hospitality
- ▶ Insurance

Arts Education Restriction

For FY27, arts education-based projects should be submitted in one of the three Tennessee Arts Commission Arts Education grant categories:

▶ **Arts Education Project Support**

▶ **Arts Education Community Impact**

▶ **Student Ticket Subsidy**

The Budget

▶ **Expenses Table:** In FY27, ABC will not require a match, however applicants should use the Other Project Expenses column when project costs exceed the ABC request.

▶ **Explanation Text Box:** Explanations help to determine if expenses are eligible, and if the applicant has put expenses in the correct line item.

▶ **Income Table:** Applicants will be required to identify the sources used to pay for project costs which exceed the ABC request.

Required Support Materials

You will be prompted to upload Supporting Materials in the REQUIRED DOCUMENTS section of the application.
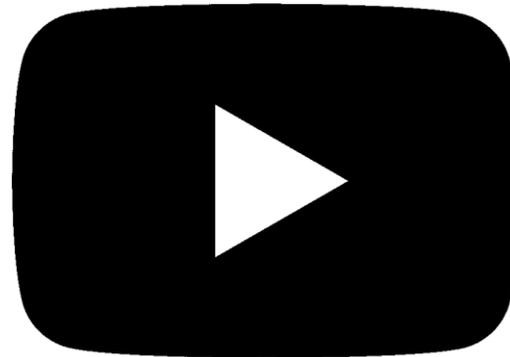
Government Applicants:

▶ No Supporting Materials are required.

Non-Profit Applicants:

▶ List of Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, Commission/Council Members, or Governing Body

▶ Corporation Annual Report, as filed annually with the Secretary of State's Office

▶ For new non-profit applicants: A Copy of By-laws, uploaded into the Organization Profile

Optional Support Material

► Applicants may upload documents

► Applicants may supply a web link to media for panels to review.

► The documents or links should be directly related to the application proposal.

Coming Up in Part 2...

How to Apply for an Arts Build Communities Grant