



FY27 Community Festivals Grant

City of Berkeley | Civic Arts Grant Guidelines

[APPLY HERE](#)

Important Dates (Subject to change)

Applications Open	January 5, 2025
Apply Before	March 11, 2026, 11:59 pm
Grant Review Panel Meeting	April - May 2026
Grants Subcommittee Meeting – Funding Recommendations	June 5, 2026
Civic Arts Commission Meeting – Grant Awards Approval	June 24, 2026, 6:00 pm
Grant Activity Period	July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027
Final Report Due	July 30, 2027

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose – Why these grants are offered.

The Civic Arts program supports a culturally vibrant and diverse arts ecosystem within the City of Berkeley by funding grants to artists, arts organizations, and festivals.

Community Festival grants fund community festivals and special events that:

- celebrate and preserve a rich variety of cultural opportunities for Berkeley's residents;
- bolster Berkeley's vitality;
- increase Berkeley's reputation as a vibrant destination for visitors;
- create meaningful experiences that build community.

Community Festival grants support a range of events throughout the City, from small-scale and first-time events to large-scale and established festivals. Funded events must be open to the entire public and have a free component.

Please note: This grant is for festivals that are one- or multi-day events, but generally events that occur one time per year. **This grant is not intended to fund ongoing programming.**

1.2 Land Acknowledgment

The City of Berkeley recognizes that the community we live in was built on the territory of xučyun (Huchiun), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people, the ancestors and descendants of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to all of the Ohlone Tribes and descendants of the Verona Band. We acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of Berkeley, the documented 5,000-year history of a vibrant community at the West Berkeley Shellmound, and the Ohlone people who continue to reside in the East Bay. We recognize that Berkeley's residents have and continue to benefit from the use and

occupation of this unceded stolen land since the City of Berkeley's incorporation in 1878. As stewards of the laws regulating the City of Berkeley, it is not only vital that we recognize the history of this land, but also recognize that the Ohlone people are present members of Berkeley and other East Bay communities today. The City of Berkeley will continue to build relationships with the Lisjan Tribe and to create meaningful actions that uphold the intention of this land acknowledgement.

1.3 Cultural Equity Statement

The City of Berkeley Civic Arts program commits to equity within the arts and culture sector by consistently evaluating its programs and practices. The City recognizes the multiple benefits the arts provide, regardless of race, color, religion, age, disability, national origin, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

Beyond ensuring access to the arts, the City of Berkeley commits to supporting artists and arts organizations that represent diverse cultures, life experiences, and socio-economic backgrounds. The City supports the empowerment of perspectives and identities that have been historically and systemically underrepresented.

1.4 Festival Definition

A festival is defined as a public event that celebrates a community, neighborhood, historically significant day, or shared cultural interest. It must have a broad intended audience that is accessible and engaging for a wide range of attendees. This may include arts fairs, celebrations of cultural heritage, and other events that occur over a limited time period.

1.5 Eligibility – Who can apply?

Applicants must meet one of the following eligibility requirements:

- Nonprofit 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), or 501(c)(6) organization
- Applicant is an organizational entity that is nonprofit in nature (for example, artist collectives and guilds) and using a Fiscal Sponsor to apply. Fiscal Sponsors must be a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.
 - See additional requirements regarding the use of Fiscal Sponsors in section 1.12 Fiscal Sponsors

1.6 Eligibility – Who can't apply?

- City of Berkeley government departments or units
- For-profit businesses and sole proprietorships
- Individuals
- Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)

1.7 Who is encouraged to apply?

Organizations representing systemically marginalized identities, including but not limited to: Arab, MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian); Asian; Black, African American; California Native American, Indigenous, Tribal; Disabled; Elders, Seniors; Latinx, Chicanx; LGBTQIA2S+; Low Income; Neuro-Divergent; Pacific Islander; People of Color; Trans and/or Non-Binary People; Immigrants (Documented and/or Undocumented), Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants; Unhoused; Unsheltered; Veterans; or Youth 18 years of age or older are strongly encouraged to apply.

1.8 Grant Amount

All applicants may request up to **\$7,000** for festival-related expenses.

A projected total of \$156,315 is allocated for this grant category. Award amounts and the number of awards be determined by the amount of applications received, request amounts, and final scores.

Final award amounts are contingent upon City Council's adoption of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget and Civic Arts Grants allocation; amounts are subject to change.

1.9 Funding Use – Grant money can be used for these things.

A project budget is required for this application. Examples of eligible expenses for this funding include, but are not limited to:

- Artist and performer stipends
- Equipment rentals
- Production or technical staff contractors
- Supplies and materials needed for the festival
- Venue and permit fees

1.10 Funding Use Restrictions – Grant money can't be used for these things.

Grant funds may not be used for the items or events in the following list. Applications that include expenses related to the following will be deemed ineligible.

- Activities not available to the general public
- Activities occurring outside the City of Berkeley
- Administrative or other organizational costs unrelated to production of the event
- Capital improvement projects
- Conferences and symposia
- Events in schools during school hours
- Events on university campuses that are primarily for enrolled students
- Events where fundraising is the primary purpose
- Events where sporting is the primary purpose (for example, tournaments, marathons, etc.)
- Open houses and recruitment events
- Ongoing programming (for example, regular programs or events that occur throughout the year and would not be considered a festival or special event)
- Political advocacy or lobbying

1.11 Festival Requirements

- Festival must have a free component
- Festival must be open and accessible to the public
- Festival must take place in the City of Berkeley
- Festival must take place within the Grant Activity Period

1.12 Fiscal Sponsors

For the purposes of Civic Arts grants, a Fiscal Sponsor is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit organization that receives awarded funds on behalf of an organizational entity that does not have Federal Tax-Exempt status. Fiscal sponsorship is unique to each circumstance and may take the form of processing a single check, providing complex accounting services, and/or project oversight. Fiscal Sponsors may have an official business address anywhere in the United States.

Organizational entities applying with a Fiscal Sponsor must be nonprofit in nature and have their own accounting documentation. These organizational entities must also be comprised of more than one staff member or volunteer.

Fiscally sponsored applicants and Fiscal Sponsors should note the following:

- Proof of the Fiscal Sponsor's nonprofit status is due at the time of application
- A Letter of Agreement between the applicant organization and the Fiscal Sponsor outlining the conditions of the fiscal sponsorship is due at the time of application
 - The Letter of Agreement must be valid through the end of the Grant Activity Period
- Grant application questions and materials—including all budget information—apply to the applicant organization, not the Fiscal Sponsor
- The primary point of contact between Civic Arts and the fiscal sponsorship is the applicant organization, not the Fiscal Sponsor
- Fiscal Sponsors are responsible for all fiscal obligations of the applicant's awarded funds

2. APPLICATION PROCESS

2.1 Grant Application Materials

All application materials must be submitted electronically before the deadline. The Community Festivals grant application consists of the following components:

- Proof of nonprofit status for applicant or Fiscal Sponsor
- Narrative questions
- Key staff and/or event personnel qualifications
- Board of directors or festival committee biographies
- Event budget form and budget notes
- Work samples and support materials
- If fiscally sponsored: Letter of Agreement between the applicant and Fiscal Sponsor

2.2 Grants Management System

All application materials must be submitted electronically using the Office of Economic Development's grants management system, [Submittable](#). Technical assistance creating a Submittable account is available through [Submittable's Customer Support](#).

Please note: Paper or physical applications are not accepted at this time.

2.3 Technical Assistance

Technical assistance for grant program-specific inquiries is available from Civic Arts staff by email, phone or virtual appointment. Technical assistance can provide guidance around eligibility, application requirements, or review criteria.

Application resources available on the [Civic Arts website](#) are a FAQs (frequently asked questions) page and a recording of the Grant Program Webinar.

Staff contact: Hilary Amnah, Grants Program Lead

hamnah@berkeleyca.gov

510-981-7539

[Schedule a virtual appointment](#)

2.4 Accommodations for Disabilities

Individuals with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations to apply should make their requests to the Civic Arts staff at civicsarts@berkeleyca.gov. Staff works with the Disability Compliance Program (ada@berkeleyca.gov) to review and fulfill the request. **Disability-related accommodation requests should be made at least 72 hours in advance of deadlines or meetings.** TTY users can dial 7-1-1 to be connected to a specially trained communications assistant from a [state relay provider](#).

2.5 Translation Services

Translation services for the grant guidelines are available upon request. Requests can be emailed to Civic Arts staff at civicsarts@berkeleyca.gov. If the application is submitted in a language other than English, a third-party translation service will be used to translate application answers into English for Grant Review Panelists.

3. EVALUATION AND SCORING

3.1 Review Criteria

Applications will be evaluated by Grant Review Panelists using the following criteria:

Festival Narrative and Community Significance (25%)

- Festival celebrates Berkeley's cultural richness, historical significance, or community/neighborhood identity
- Festival goals are clearly defined
- Festival planning and activity timeline demonstrate clarity and feasibility
- Festival activities and programming are clear and directly relate to the defined goals

Festival Management and Production (30%)

- Key personnel have a history of producing similar festivals or events to the one proposed
- Applicant demonstrates ability to acquire necessary permits and insurance
- Applicant demonstrates financial responsibility through receiving diversified sources of funding relative to the budget-size and expenses
- Effectiveness of marketing and outreach strategies
- Effectiveness of festival's evaluation strategies

Community Engagement and Impact (25%)

- Extent to which the festival and festival activities are free
- Extent to which community members, local businesses, and local nonprofit organizations in the neighborhood are involved in the planning and implementation of the festival
- Community and/or neighborhood benefit is clearly demonstrated
- Extent to which the festival and festival activities are accessible to people with mobility-related disabilities

Cultural Equity (20%)

- Extent to which the festival supports diverse event personnel and performers through paid opportunities
- Extent to which the festival's content is rooted in historically marginalized communities and geographically underserved areas of the city
- Extent to which the festival engages economically-disadvantaged individuals

3.2 Scoring Scale

Grant Review Panelists use the following scale to assess how well the application meets the review criteria. Numerical values are calculated to the appropriate weight for each criterion.

5	Exceptional	meets review criteria to the highest degree
4	Strong	strongly meets review criteria
3	Good	adequately meets review criteria; average
2	Fair	moderately meets some of the review criteria; needs some improvement
1	Underdeveloped	minimally meets the review criteria; greatly needs improvement
0	Weak	does not meet any elements of the review criteria

4. REVIEW PROCESS

4.1 Eligibility Screening

Civic Arts staff reviews each application submitted before the deadline for eligibility. Eligible applications are evaluated by a Grant Review Panel in accordance with the review criteria.

4.2 Grant Review Panel

The Grant Review Panel is comprised of individuals located in the greater Bay Area with diverse backgrounds in the cultural sector. Individuals apply to be included in the panelist pool through an open call. The Civic Arts Commission approves the pool of individuals that can be selected to serve as a panelist.

Any Panelist who has a conflict of interest with an application(s) must recuse themselves from reviewing that application(s). **A 'conflict of interest' is defined as a situation in which a Panelist has a competing professional, financial, or personal interest that could impair their ability to perform their evaluation responsibilities objectively.**

The Grant Review Panel meeting is public and facilitated through a Zoom Webinar. All applicants receive information regarding the panel meeting's date, time, and order in which applications will be reviewed. Applicants are encouraged to attend the panel meeting.

Applicants are permitted three (3) minutes at the end of the panel's discussion of their application to clarify any aspects that may have been misunderstood by the panelists. The allotted three minutes may not be used to communicate additional information not included in the application.

Applicants may request their panel comments after they receive official notice of award or decline.

4.3 Civic Arts Commission Approval

After the Grant Review Panel meets to review all applications, the Civic Arts Commission's Grants Subcommittee meets to develop funding recommendations based on scores, number of applications, and availability of funds. The Subcommittee ensures proposed grant awards are aligned with granting policies and guidelines before sending the recommendations to the full Civic Arts Commission.

Funding recommendations by the Grants Subcommittee are made public at least five (5) business days prior to the Civic Arts Commission approval. The Civic Arts Commission reviews the funding recommendations and votes on final approval.

4.4 Appeal Process

Applicants who have evidence of misconduct or technical error in the panel review process may appeal the Grant Subcommittee's proposed funding scenario by completing an appeal form. Appeal forms must be received at least 10 days in advance of the June 24, 2026 Civic Arts Commission meeting. Applicants can email appeal forms to civicarts@berkeleyca.gov.

Once an appeal form is received, Civic Arts staff reviews the appeal form for evidence of misconduct or technical error. If misconduct or technical error is evident, the appeal is reviewed by the Grants Subcommittee, and forwarded to the Civic Arts Commission for final appeal decision.

Please note: Dissatisfaction with a final score or award amount is not grounds for appeal.

5. GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

5.1 Invoicing

Grantees must complete a Demographics Survey to receive their grant award invoice from Civic Arts. Staff will provide an invoice for 100% of the grant amount following City Council's approval of the Fiscal Year's budget and after July 1.

5.2 Final Report

All grantees must submit a completed Final Report form within 30 days after the Grant Activity Period ends. **Final Reports are due by July 30** unless otherwise noted. The Final Report should demonstrate how the grant-funded project was developed and implemented. The Final Report also includes evaluation questions for self-reflection and for Civic Arts staff to make improvements to the program. Grantees who do not submit a Final Report are ineligible from applying for any future Civic Arts grants.

5.3 Grant Activity Period Extension Requests

Grantees who experience circumstances that prevent them from producing their festival before the end of the Grant Activity Period (June 30) may request a Grant Activity Period Extension. A Grant Activity Period Extension may be requested for up to one (1) year beyond the original end-date. **Extension requests must be received before June 30 and approved by Civic Arts staff.**

5.4 Business License

Awarded organizations or Fiscal Sponsors must have a current [City of Berkeley Business License](#).

5.5 Acknowledging City Support

Grant recipients must acknowledge the City's financial support by using the phrase "Supported in part by a Civic Arts Grant from the City of Berkeley" or including the "City of Berkeley" in lists of supporters. Grantees must display the [City's logo](#) in all promotional materials and media.

5.6 City Permits and Permissions

Receiving a grant does not imply that Civic Arts or any other City department will produce, exhibit, or promote artwork(s) created with grant funds. It is the responsibility of the grantee to secure a venue and appropriate insurance for public presentations.

The grantee is solely responsible for securing the necessary [City permits](#) or approvals for project elements such as publicly installed art, street closures, sound amplification in public space, or murals. Planning for this should be reflected in the application narrative.

All proposed artwork installed on or within City-owned property must be temporary and not permanently installed. These public art projects must be reviewed and approved by the Civic Arts Commission and its Public Art Subcommittee. This proposal review process, found in the [Community Initiated Public Art Proposals Guidelines](#), must be completed before the project starts. This review and approval process applies to murals, sculptures, displays, and similar projects.

5.7 Incomplete Projects

Failure to complete the grant-funded festival or Final Report will result in a forfeiture of grant funds. Grantees with incomplete projects must return their awarded funds to the City of Berkeley.