ArtsNEXT

Funding for Bold, Ground-Breaking Projects

The ArtsNEXT program provides competitive funding for innovative and experimental projects. Awards support big ideas that push boundaries, engage participants in unexpected ways, pilot new solutions to challenging problems, improve program design with calculated risk-taking, or result in the creation of new work. These forward-looking projects help define Ohio as an exciting, cutting-edge place to make, consume, and experience the arts.

GRANT AWARDS: Applicants may request up to $25,000. All awards require a 1:1 cash match. ArtsNEXT grantees generally receive a portion of their request relative to their application score.

ELIGIBILITY: All applicants must possess nonprofit status or nonprofit intent but need not be registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Applicants may be: 1) nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in any arts discipline (literature, performing arts, visual arts, traditional arts, multidisciplinary arts, etc.); 2) other nonprofit organizations that provide arts programming (government entities, social service agencies, etc.); or 3) educational organizations (public, private, charter, and parochial schools from pre-kindergarten through university level) that demonstrate a commitment to arts programming in a larger community setting.

Organizations receiving operating support as a Sustainability-Large organization or Statewide Arts Service Organization are ineligible.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS: ArtsNEXT grants are one-year awards for organizational project support. This program supports projects that allow an organization's programming to evolve creatively. Priority is given to projects designed to improve the community's access to arts experiences, as well as those demonstrating risk appropriate to the organization. Funds may be used for a wide variety of expenses, including artist fees, production expenses, marketing, planning, education, and program evaluation. The budget section of the ArtsNEXT application provides a full list of allowable expense areas.

Note: *ArtsNEXT is not designed to fund routine updates or minor embellishments of long-running programs. Organizations considering applying should be fully invested in the hard work of innovating through research, experimentation, and focus, with the goal of breaking patterns, testing ideas, and arriving at new results. The most successful ArtsNEXT projects, whether big or small in scope, will be those that address a specific challenge in a novel way, turn an existing idea or practice on its head, and achieve benefits impossible under the prior approach.*

ArtsNEXT applicants must identify which *one* of these three types of innovation best describes their proposed project. When possible, panels will review applications from each type of innovation together. Types include:

1. **Incremental Innovation.** Projects exhibiting incremental innovation make small changes or improvements over time that nonetheless go above and beyond the routine course corrections

required of all successful programs and can be thought of as "variations on a theme." Examples might include trying a new marketing strategy, hosting an event in a new type of venue, or building on existing programming in a sequential, logical way. Incremental innovations involve minimal risk.

Sample activities might include:

- expanding a longtime activity to include an entirely new creative element
- revamping how a successful arts activity is marketed to attract new and more diverse participants
- establishing a new long-term partnership with a senior center to build arts programming with older adults

2. **Transferable Innovation.** Projects that borrow, replicate, or adapt a proven practice from another industry, organization, or community are employing transferable innovation. Projects improve the design of an existing program or service by applying ideas that have been successful in another setting. Examples include producing a new activity that has been well-received elsewhere, modifying an idea from the private sector for use in a nonprofit setting, or experimenting with programming that has flourished in a different arts genre. Transferable innovation typically involves moderate risk.

Sample activities might include:

- exploring the intersection of the arts and healing with activities produced in partnership with a healthcare institution
- implementing a pilot program or activity based on a promising practice from another industry
- adapting an arts event successful in a suburban setting to a new urban or rural community or region

3. **Disruptive Innovation.** These are the big ideas that often come to mind when the concept of innovation is discussed. Disruptive innovation interrupts current behavior rendering existing practices obsolete. These projects are rare, unproven, and revolutionary. Examples might include radically changing the delivery of an arts experience, upending expectations about participation in a particular genre or type of arts activity or creating something entirely new in the arts and cultural field. Disruptive innovation is inherently an unusual and high-risk proposition.

Sample activities might include:

- developing a technology to deliver arts experiences in new and more accessible ways
- researching and developing environmentally conscious artmaking materials and processes

An ArtsNEXT award may not be used to fund activities described in and already being supported through another OAC grant. Please also refer to the Introduction and Overview for a list of activities the OAC cannot fund.

HOW TO APPLY: All applications to the ArtsNEXT program must be submitted via the ARTIE system. Please refer to ARTIE: Organizational Grant Applications for a description of the process. New applicants are encouraged to contact the OAC prior to applying.

EVALUATION AND SCORING: A panel of arts and cultural professionals, educators, innovators, artists, and other community members evaluate and score ArtsNEXT grant applications. Panel meetings are open to the public through a free video conferencing platform.   Representatives of applying organizations are strongly encouraged to listen online. For details on panel meeting dates, times, and instructions for participating, visit the OAC online grants calendar (oac.ohio.gov/Grants/Grants-Calendar).

During the panel meeting, panelists discuss how well each application satisfies the program's evaluation criteria which are aligned to the questions in the application. Panelists highlight strengths and weaknesses, discussing all aspects of the application and its support materials. Following the public discussion, each panelist enters a final score for each application. Later, OAC staff use averages of these scores to determine funding award recommendations. The OAC Board is the only body authorized to make final funding decisions and must approve funding recommendations. The review process is competitive, and not all applications are funded.

REVIEW CRITERIA: Criteria are divided into four categories: Program Quality, Community Engagement, Defining and Measuring Success, and Resource Management. Criteria evidence may be found in any portion of an application or associated support materials. Each criterion is worth up to five points, for a maximum of 60 points.

Program Quality (20 points)
☐ Project will reflect incremental, transferable, or disruptive innovation relative to past programming
☐ Project will apply innovation to minimizing barriers to participation, including building upon current affordability and accessibility practices
☐ Project will be groundbreaking and innovative for the community(s) being served
☐ Artists, educators, and project staff/contractors are qualified and reflect the demographic diversity of the community(s) being served

Community Engagement (10 points)
☐ Promotional methods to engage the community will be appropriate and effective
☐ Intentional efforts will be made to engage with historically underrepresented populations

Defining and Measuring Success (20 points)
☐ Planning is inclusive of a diverse range of perspectives including members of the community(s) being served
☐ Project goals are defined, and plans are in place to determine level of success
☐ Project has a level of risk in line with the size and capacity of the organization
☐ Project will have significant impact on the organization and community

Resource Management (10 points)
☐ Income and/or in-kind contributions will come from a mix of sources appropriate to the community
☐ Planned spending is aligned to proposal narrative

TIMELINE: The following timeline outlines the ArtsNEXT grant lifecycle. Any deadline falling on a Saturday, Sunday, or state holiday is extended until the next business day.

Task/Deadline	FY 2024 Applications	FY 2025 Applications
Application Available in ARTIE	November 2022	November 2023
Application Deadline at 5 p.m.	April 1, 2023	April 1, 2024
Grant Award Announcement	July 2023	July 2024
Grant Agreement Deadline	August 30, 2023	August 30, 2024
Final Report Deadline	July 30, 2024	July 30, 2025