

BC Arts Council Operating Assistance: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated: July 22, 2026

Overview

BC Arts Council's Operating Assistance program provides funding to help established arts and culture organizations sustain their operations and deliver ongoing programming and services. These are some of the most frequently asked questions about the BC Arts Council's Operating Assistance Program. The program guidelines are posted on the [program page](#) on the BC Arts Council website.

If you have questions after you have reviewed the Program Guidelines and the Frequently Asked Questions, contact a program advisor.

1. What is Operating Assistance?

Operating Assistance is a core BC Arts Council funding program that supports the ongoing operations and long-term sustainability of established arts and culture organizations across British Columbia.

2. When can organizations apply?

Application intake is open from July 22 until October 8, 2026. Funding decisions are expected in late February or early March 2027. New applicants must speak with a Program Advisor and be set up in CADAC by September 24, 2026.

3. Why is funding being offered for one year?

Given continued provincial fiscal constraints and the development of the BC Arts Council's forthcoming strategic vision, the current intake is designed as a one-year funding cycle. This approach provides flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and sector needs. Grants may be renewed for a second year, pending program and budget review.

4. Will organizations need to reapply next year?

Decisions about the 2027/28 intake have not yet been made. Pending a program and budget review, Council may launch a new intake in fall 2027, use a streamlined process, or rollover grants for a second year without requiring a new application.

5. Who is eligible to apply?

Eligible applicants include established non-profit arts and culture organizations and book publishers that meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the program guidelines.

6. What are the eligibility requirements for new applicants?

New applicants must have received at least three BC Arts Council grants since April 1, 2022, including one Project Assistance grant in the same program stream. Project Assistance: Community Arts Festivals grants do not count toward this requirement. These criteria help ensure applicants have the organizational stability and experience needed for operating funding.

7. How are funding decisions made?

Applications are assessed through the BC Arts Council's established peer assessment process. Assessors review, discuss, score, and rank applications before making funding recommendations.

8. Will funding amounts increase this year?

Funding recommendations are based on assessment results and available resources. Some organizations may receive modest increases, while others may receive the same amount or a decrease. Within a status quo budget, opportunities for increases and new entrants are limited.

9. Can organizations apply to both Operating Assistance and Accelerate?

No. Organizations may apply to either Operating Assistance or Accelerate, but not both. Applicants who are unsuccessful in Operating Assistance may be recommended for Accelerate through the assessment process where appropriate. Current Operating Assistance recipients are not eligible for Accelerate funding. Funding amount decisions for Operating Assistance recipients will consider previous combined totals of the Operating Assistance grant and last year's Accelerate grant.

10. How can an organization determine whether it is ready for Operating Assistance?

Organizations should demonstrate stable operations, ongoing arts and culture programming, staff capacity, diverse revenue sources, long-term planning, and the ability to maintain financial and statistical reporting. Organizations considering their first application are encouraged to discuss readiness with a Program Advisor.

11. Can organizations still apply for Project Assistance?

Yes. Organizations that do not currently receive Operating Assistance are encouraged to continue applying for Project Assistance grants. Because Operating Assistance is highly competitive, Project Assistance remains an important funding opportunity. Organizations may still receive a Project Assistance grant this fiscal year even if they are later admitted to Operating Assistance.

12. How much funding should an organization request?

New entrants typically begin with grants of approximately \$20,000. Requests in the range of \$20,000 to \$40,000 are generally reasonable. Existing recipients seeking an increase should typically request an increase of no more than 20% of their current grant, up to a maximum increase of \$10,000.

13. Why are Arts Activator organizations not eligible?

Operating Assistance is intended for organizations whose primary mandate is arts and culture. While Arts Activator organizations may offer arts programming, they remain eligible for other BC Arts Council project-based funding opportunities.

14. Why does the application ask about plans for the next two years?

The Council considers an organization's future planning and sustainability when assessing applications. Information about longer-term plans also supports future funding decisions, including any potential extension of the program into a second year.