

OPERATING ASSISTANCE: ARTS & CULTURAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Program Guidelines 2026/27

Grant Program Summary

Grant program purpose: To support the general operations of established professional non-profit arts and culture service organizations that provide quality services to an established membership base and demonstrate ongoing local, regional, provincial or national activity with provincial impact.

Minimum grant amount: \$20,000

Applications: **Open:** July 22 | **Close:** October 8 | **Results expected:** late February 2027

Who can apply: Arts & Cultural Service Organizations that meet eligibility criteria in the [Who can apply](#) section below and have received at least three grants from the BC Arts Council since April 1, 2022, one of which was an Operating Assistance or a discipline specific Project Assistance grant.

New applicants: Discuss your eligibility and readiness with a Program Advisor before applying. You should also review the [Important considerations before you apply](#) section below.

Contact us. We are here to help.

Review these program guidelines and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the BC Arts Council website before applying. If you have any questions, contact the Program Advisor for your organization's specific discipline.

The list of program advisors for this grant is available [on the program landing page](#).

For general information, contact:
250-356-1718 | BCArtsCouncil@gov.bc.ca

BC Arts Council office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Pacific Time), Monday to Friday.

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Guidelines are reviewed and updated before every intake.

Be sure you are working with the most current version.

Any updates to guidelines made after the grant program opens will be highlighted.

Acknowledgement

The BC Arts Council acknowledges it carries out its work on the land of First Nations throughout British Columbia. We pay our respects to the Elders and Knowledge Keepers, past and present, descendants and custodians of these lands and waters. We are grateful for the continuing relationships with Indigenous people that develop through our work together. We acknowledge and raise our hands to the ɫəkwəŋən (Lekwungen) people, known today as the Songhees and Xwsepsum (Kosapsum) Esquimalt Nations, on whose lands we operate our main offices.

About Operating Assistance: Arts & Cultural Service Organizations

Operating Assistance: Arts & Cultural Service Organizations provides funding to assist the general operations of established professional non-profit arts and cultural organizations that provide quality services to an established membership base and demonstrate ongoing local, regional, provincial or national activity with provincial impact.

This intake of the Operating Assistance program will provide one year of funding, with the possibility of renewal for a second year, pending program and budget review.

Eligible organizations may submit only one application to the Operating Assistance grant program, per intake.

Grant amounts

The minimum grant amount is \$20,000 for new entrants into the Operating Assistance program. There is no maximum grant amount.

Increases to previous Operating Assistance grant amounts will be based on the outcome of the assessment process. Organizations ranking high may receive small increases while organizations ranking poorly may see decreases.

New this year: Operating Assistance recipients are no longer eligible for the [Accelerate program](#). Determination of the grant amount, including any increases, will take into consideration the previous combined total of the Operating Assistance and Accelerate grants. Applicants that are not successful in Operating Assistance and that are eligible for the Accelerate program may be recommended to receive an Accelerate grant based on this application. Do not submit a separate Accelerate application.

Organizations that are placed on Concerned Status under Council's [Fair Notice Policy](#) may be subject to grant reductions of up to 20%.

Who can apply

Organizations not currently receiving Operating Assistance must talk with a Program Advisor to discuss your eligibility and intention to apply. Applications from organizations that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be forwarded for assessment.

Important considerations before you apply to Operating Assistance

In addition to the eligibility criteria outlined below, organizations should have stability in current operations, both administratively and financially before they consider applying. Stability would be demonstrated through:

- Having at least one staff person (part-time or full-time) that maintains consistency in operations and programming
- Ongoing and diverse sources of revenues outside of BC Arts Council funding.
- Ability to plan programming and activities up to two years into the future. For example, in the application, you will be expected to report out on this current fiscal year's activities as well as your next two projected fiscal years.

and

- The capacity to compile annual financial and statistical information and enter and update this information in the CADAC system as outlined below.

BC Arts Council Operating Assistance recipients are not eligible to apply to any of the discipline specific Project Assistance grant programs or the Accelerate program.

To be eligible, an Arts & Culture Service Organizations must:

- Have received at least three grants from the BC Arts Council since April 1, 2022, one of which was an Operating Assistance or a discipline specific Project Assistance grant. (Project Assistance: Community Arts Festivals are excluded from the list of grants that meet the three-grant requirement).
- Provide service to the arts and culture sector in B.C. as a primary activity and have done so for a minimum of one year before the application closing date.
- Provide programs that demonstrate ongoing local, regional, provincial or national activity with provincial impact, and benefit or are of interest to the arts and culture sector and not solely the interests of its non-profit society or community service co-op members.
- Engage skilled artistic, curatorial, editorial and administrative leadership for program or service delivery.
- Fairly compensate artists, arts and culture practitioners, technicians, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers. Compensation must align with community contexts or relevant industry standards within the field of practice.
- Follow international intellectual property rights standards and cultural ownership protocols.
- Follow the [Criminal Records Review Act](#) which requires that people who work with or may have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults must undergo a criminal record check by the [Criminal Records Review Program](#).
- Not have any overdue final reports on previous BC Arts Council grants.

AND

- Be registered and in good standing as a non-profit society or community service co-op for at least one fiscal year prior to application with:

- The majority of key staff and board members based in B.C.
 - Creative control and decision making for service and engagement primarily maintained within the organization and by leadership based in B.C.
 - A purpose dedicated to arts and culture programming and activities
- or
- A purpose to provide services to the arts and culture sector in B.C.
 - Operations and activities that reflect this dedicated purpose or mandate.

Ineligible applicants

Operating assistance is not available to support the following types of organizations:

- Private or for-profit entities
- Member-funded societies
- Social service organizations
- Industrial sites, archaeological sites, heritage sites or historic places
- Organizations dedicated to archives
- Arts Activators
- Non arts focused, Indigenous Community Organizations
- Indigenous governments unless they operate a museum or Indigenous Cultural Centre
- Arts or curatorial collectives
- Organizations that solely operate venues or facilities without the primary purpose of artistic production or presentation

Exclusions – What will not be funded

Operating assistance is not available to support:

- Budget deficits
- [Capital expenses](#) (for example, construction, renovation, or purchases of property or equipment over \$2,500)
- Start-up costs or seed money
- Feasibility studies

When and how to apply

Applications: **Open:** July 22 | **Close:** October 8 | **Results expected:** late February 2027

Submit your application through the [online grant system](#).

Applications will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. (Pacific Time) on Thursday, October 8, 2026.

Applicants not currently receiving Operating Assistance

- Closely review these guidelines to make sure your organization is eligible.
 - Talk with a Program Advisor to discuss if your organization meets the eligibility criteria and understands the correct discipline-specific Operating Assistance program stream to apply to.
 - Talk with a Program Advisor by the end of the day on September 24 to get set up in the CADAC system so you can complete the required Financial and Statistical forms.
 - Update your Organization Profile in the online grant system before starting the application. See the list of [online profile updates required from organizations](#) below.

Returning Operating Assistance recipients

- Closely review these guidelines to make sure your organization is still eligible.
- Update your Organization Profile in the online grant system before starting the application. See list of [online profile updates required from organizations](#) below.

Online profile update questions? Contact BCArtsCouncil@gov.bc.ca or 250-356-1718 for registration assistance. The BC Arts Council office hours are 8:30 am to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Accessibility support

Organizations with a primary purpose to serve D/deaf or disability arts practices may be eligible for the BC Arts Council's accessibility programs.

Application Assistance pays for support services for creating and submitting grant applications.

For more information or to request assistance, contact:

Clayton Baraniuk, Accessibility Coordinator - 250-978-9839 - BCACaccess@gov.bc.ca

Find out more about accessibility supports online at BCArtsCouncil.ca/accessibility.

What is needed for the application

You are responsible for submitting a complete application. We will not contact you to address errors or missing information or documents, other than as required to determine eligibility. Eligible applications are assessed as submitted.

As part of our commitment to accessibility, the BC Arts Council accepts specific parts of applications in audio and sign language formats. See instructions within the application.

All applicants: Update your online Organization Profile. See details below for updates and uploads that are required when you apply.

An **application checklist** is included at the end of these guidelines.

See the **Application Preview** document to review all application questions and requirements.

A complete application must include:

- Your organization information, including history, mission, values, main activity(ies), organizational capacity, governance, and facilities;
- A programming overview addressing questions based on this program's assessment criteria;
- All required financial and statistical information, to be submitted and uploaded to CADAC by the application deadline date;
- An updated Organization Profile in the online grant system before the application deadline date; and
- All required support material as per the list below.

Required support material

Review and follow the [Upload Requirements for Support Material](#) before uploading support material to your online application.

- **Only submit support material that is described below** and related to your activities.
- **Do not submit any additional material.** Excess support material, including multiple links to materials within a single uploaded document, will not be reviewed.
- **Test your materials before submitting your application.** Make sure all support materials open properly and can be read or viewed clearly.
- **Complete the inventory form in the application.** Use this form to provide additional context or information for the assessors about the image, video, audio or text files you are uploading.
- **Name your files** beginning with your Last Name, First Name, Support Material Type, followed by any additional info such as Image Title, Viewing Order, or Project Partner name. For example:
 - XYZGalleryCalendar.doc
 - XYZGallery_Image title 1.jpeg
 - XYZPolicy.pdf

Required support material includes:

- Up to 5 current planning and policy documents, such as:
 - Strategic plans, human resource policies, anti-racism policies, collections management policies, or cultural safety policies.
 - This should include documents detailing the current approach to equity across your organization, if available; if stand-alone policy documents are not available, you will be provided with an opportunity to describe.
- Up to 5 links to electronic materials, such as: (if applicable)
 - Brochure of seasonal programs, links to online materials, current publications, or program from recent event.
- Facility description/floor plan of current location(s) (if applicable);
- Up to 5 images illustrating your programming or presentations. For example:
 - a sample image of the exterior of your facility;

- a sample image of permanent exhibitions;
- a sample image of a temporary exhibition; or
- a sample image of a public programming activity.

Required CADAC updates

The BC Arts Council collects financial and statistical information through a national online database called [CADAC \(Canadian Arts Data/Données sur les arts au Canada\)](#). This system enables arts organizations to submit their financial and statistical information in the same format when applying for operating funding from other public funders who are members of CADAC.

New Organizations must confirm their intention to apply with a BC Arts Council Program Advisor before the end of the day on September 24th to get set up in the CADAC system.

Required updates to the Financial and Statistical CADAC forms include:

- Financial information from your organization, including:
 - Two most recent completed fiscal years. Your completed, signed financial statements for each year must also be uploaded in CADAC. Your financial statements need be uploaded in CADAC so your previous year actuals can be reviewed, reconciled and locked by CADAC staff prior to assessment.)
 - One current year of budgeting and projections
 - Two projected years of budgeting and projections
- Statistical information from your organization for the years listed above

Accurate assessment of your organization's request to the BC Arts Council depends upon you providing this financial and statistical information to CADAC in sufficient time for reconciliation and validation.

Online profile updates required from organizations

Before you apply, you must update your online organization profile in BC Arts Council's grant management system with the following:

- **Contact information:** Mailing address and other leadership contact information.
- **Board member list:** The organization's current board of directors, editorial advisory board, trustees, or board of management, including their board position, occupation/expertise, start date, and place of residence.
- **Staff member list:** Administrative, artistic, and editorial staff and significant contractors, including name, position, place of residence, and employment status (for example, permanent or part-time).
- **Constitution or statement of purpose:** Required upload(s):
 - **For non-profit societies:** PDF copy of the organization's certified constitution.
 - **For extraprovincial non-share corporations:** PDF copies of the organization's official Certificate of Incorporation under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, Form 4001 Articles of Incorporation, and bylaws.

- **For community service cooperative associations:** PDF copy of the organization's certified Memorandum of Association and Rules.
- **For all other applicants:** Statement of the primary purpose of the organization.
- Completed **Designated Priority Groups** information section (required for funding prioritization).
- Answers in the **Equity Data Tool** that are relevant to your organization (required for funding prioritization). You are not required to answer every question.
- **Financial statements:** Upload signed financial statements for your two most recent completed fiscal years. See details below.

Financial statement requirements

All organizations must upload to their online profile signed financial statements for their two most recent completed fiscal years.

Following standard accounting formatting, financial statements should include comparative information for the prior fiscal year. If a comparative year is not included within a single set of statements, a set of financial statements for each year must be uploaded.

Balance sheets or ledgers alone are not considered complete financial statements.

RESOURCE: Samples of a Balance Sheet and Revenue and Expense Statement (Income Statement) are available through [Community Gaming Grants application resources](#), under Example Documents.

Not-for-profit organization financial statements, including those internally prepared, must include:

- A balance sheet, income statement, and notes following standard accounting formatting.
- An **itemized list of grants identified by funder**, included either in the income statement or in an attached schedule.
- A breakdown of operating net assets, distinguishing between unrestricted net and capital assets.
- Signatures of the preparer and **two** board members (three signatures in total) affirming board approval.

The type of financial statements required is based on the single largest BC Arts Council grant received in the organization's previous two fiscal years, not including Arts Impact grants, Accelerate grants or Arts Infrastructure Program grants. Refer to the chart below.

If you did not receive an applicable grant in the previous two fiscal years, internally prepared financial statements are acceptable. The statements must include all information listed above.

BC Arts Council reserves the right to request audited financial statements, regardless of the amount of the applicant's previous funding.

Previous BC Arts Council Grant Received (as per above)	Type of Financial Statements Required
\$0 to \$15,000	Internally prepared financial statements
\$15,001 - \$40,000	Independently prepared financial statements: Notice to Reader/Compilation Engagement Report
\$40,001 - \$100,000	Independently prepared financial statements: Review Engagement
Greater than \$100,000	Independently prepared financial statements: Audit

For applicants currently receiving Operating Assistance, Financial Statements required are based on the previous Operating Assistance grant received, as per the table above.

For applicants not currently receiving Operating Assistance, Financial Statements requested are based on the single largest grant received in the organization's previous two fiscal years, excluding Arts Infrastructure Program grants. If you did not receive any applicable grants in your previous two fiscal years, internally prepared financial statements are acceptable. Applicants not currently receiving Operating Assistance will not be required to restate already completed previous year Financial Statements into higher level reporting types.

How funding decisions are made

Peer assessment

The following process is used to evaluate applications to this grant program:

- The BC Arts Council staff reviews each application for eligibility.
- Eligible applications are forwarded to an independent peer assessment panel. Assessment panels include individuals (assessors) with broad artistic knowledge, experience, geographical representation, and diverse aesthetic, institutional, and cultural viewpoints, including those from Indigenous perspectives as possible.
- Assessors read and score the applications using the assessment criteria below.
- The assessment panel discusses, then ranks the applications, which forms the recommendations for funding increases or decreases, and opportunity for new entrants.
- Recommendations are provided to BC Arts Council staff to calculate final funding amounts.
- Concerned Status or a potential funding reduction may also be applied to any organization based on their assessment and ranking.
- Funding priority may be given to applicants considered part of a designated priority group.
- The BC Arts Council informs each applicant of the peer assessment results approximately 16 weeks after the application closing date.

- Applicants may check the status of their application at any time through the online system.
- All results are final.

Fair Notice Policy

Organizations funded through the Operating Assistance Program are subject to the BC Arts Council's [Fair Notice Policy](#). The Fair Notice Policy warns poorly performing organizations of the possibility of a phased loss of all operating funding, unless significant improvements are achieved, through the designation and application of Concerned Status criteria.

Organizations that are placed on Concerned Status under Council's Fair Notice Policy will:

- Be required to submit a complete application on an annual basis; and
- Be subject to annual adjustments to grant amounts, including reductions.

Assessment criteria

The assessment panel will read and evaluate your application based on the following criteria.

Each criteria category is assigned a percentage of your application's total score (out of 100). For example, a category weighted at 30% means you can score between 0 and 30 in that area. Compelling, detailed, and specific answers with strong evidence and clear alignment with the assessment criteria will score higher.

Assessment criteria are designed to speak to the diversity of ways organizations across the province are achieving and contributing. The areas of assessment are described below along with their relative weight. While your submission should address how your activities fulfil each area of assessment, you should expect to be stronger in some areas than in others.

Keep these criteria in mind as you complete your application.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH AND READINESS (30%)

Assessors will consider your ability to deliver your work successfully and sustainably, including:

- The strength of your planning, budget, and use of funds.
- Your organization's financial health and stability.
- Your governance, leadership, and organizational structure.
- Your experience and capacity to carry out your activities.
- Your partnerships and community support.
- Your workplace practices, including fair pay, equity, and safety.
- Your ability to adapt, manage change, and take appropriate risks.

COMMUNITY RELEVANCE AND INCLUSION (30%)

Assessors will consider how your organization aligns with BC Arts Council's priorities of reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, including:

- How your work engages with and connects to the communities you serve.
- How you support truth and reconciliation and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples.
- How you support equity-deserving or under-represented artists or groups.

- Contributions to communities outside major urban centres (if applicable).
- How your leadership, staff, and board are representative of the communities you serve.
- Your policies and practices for accessibility, cultural safety, and ethical work.

ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL IMPACT (40%)

Assessors will consider the value and impact of your artistic and cultural work, including:

- The quality, creativity, and relevance of your programming or services.
- Your contribution to artists, cultural practitioners, and art forms in B.C.
- How your work engages and impacts your audience, participants, and the broader sector.
- How your work supports meaningful representation and avoids cultural appropriation.
- The clarity and importance of the outcomes you are trying to achieve.

Designated Priority Groups

The BC Arts Council is committed to targeted investment in underserved and equity-deserving organizations. These [designated priority groups](#) are the focus of strategic measures, dedicated programs, funding prioritization processes, and other equity support initiatives.

Designated priority groups include applicants and arts and culture practitioners who are:

- Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) Peoples
- Deaf or experience disability
- Black or people of colour
- Located in areas outside [greater Vancouver or the capital region](#)

If the majority of your activities, programming, and resources are dedicated to one of the groups listed above, and if your organization or collective would like to be considered for equity support measures including priority funding, you must complete the Designated Priority Groups and Equity Data Tool sections in your online Organization Profile.

Notification of results and feedback

The BC Arts Council intends to inform applicants of the assessment results approximately **16 weeks** after the application closing date.

Notification is sent by email to the primary contact linked to the application and to the organizational and governance leadership contacts provided in the organization profile (as applicable). Emails are sent through the online system. Be sure the email address **NoReply@BCArtsCouncil.ca** is on your safe sender list.

Results will not be shared before official notification emails are sent.

Feedback

Contact a Program Advisor for feedback on your application after you have received notification of the results.

Payment of grants and reporting requirements

Grant payments are subject to an authorizing appropriation under the *Financial Administration Act*.

The BC Arts Council reserves the right to redistribute, delay, or suspend payments if the recipient:

- Does not carry out its planned program of activities.
- Makes major changes in artistic or administrative direction.
- Does not meet its obligations as a grant recipient, including submission of final reports.
- Fails to comply with legal obligations.
- Fails to respect the commitment to provide a safe and respectful workplace free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct.

Grants will be paid by cheque and sent to the mailing address listed in the individual or organization profile in the online system unless the applicant is registered for [direct deposit](#).

Grants are taxable income and must be reported. Individuals receiving grants on their own behalf or on behalf of a collective are issued T4As for the year the grant payment is processed.

Recognition of grants

In recognition of grant funding, BC Arts Council and the Province of British Columbia's support should be acknowledged in all promotional materials, both print and online. The approved BC Arts Council and Province of British Columbia logos and guidelines for use are available [online](#).

Grant recipients with a website are encouraged to add a link to the [BC Arts Council](#) website.

Confidentiality of information

The collection, use, and disclosure of personal information are subject to the privacy provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The applicant's information will be shared in confidence with members of the assessment panel. The names and locations of successful grant recipients may be published, along with the amount of the grant, in the BC Arts Council's Annual Report as well as in various communications and promotional vehicles of the BC Arts Council and Province of British Columbia. Social Insurance Numbers are provided to Canada Revenue Agency through the issuance of T4As.

About the BC Arts Council

The BC Arts Council is an agency of the Province of British Columbia under the Arts Council Act, nurturing and supporting arts and culture activity in communities across British Columbia. The BC Arts Council is actively committed to reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access through our programs and processes.

The BC Arts Council conducts its operations and funding activities in accordance with legislation and other guiding documents such as the [BC Human Rights Code](#), [Accessible BC Act](#), [Accessible Canada Act](#), the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) and [Action Plan](#), and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), as well as the [Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#).

For more information about the BC Arts Council's mandate, vision, values, and strategic directions, visit the [About](#) and [Priorities](#) sections on our website. The [What is the BC Arts Council?](#) video on our website includes ASL interpretation with voice over and captions.

Operating Assistance: Arts & Cultural Service Organizations – Application Checklist

Be sure you have included or completed the following before you submit your application.

Before you start:

- ☐ Review the application preview and program guidelines for specific requirements.
- ☐ Call the Program Advisor to discuss eligibility or if you have questions.
- ☐ New applicants: Talk with the Program Advisor before you apply to discuss if you are eligible. You will also need to be registered in CADAC.
- ☐ Plan to submit your complete application at least two days before the deadline to avoid last-minute technological issues.
- ☐ Ensure you have completed and submitted any overdue final reports on previous BC Arts Council grants.

In your Organization Profile on the BC Arts Council online grant system:

- ☐ Update your mailing address and other contact information.
- ☐ Upload your most recent signed financial statements. See Financial Statement Requirements section of guidelines.
- ☐ Update your Board list and Staff list.
- ☐ Upload your organization's certified constitution (for not-for-profits) or statement of purpose (for all other organizations). Do not include by-laws.
- ☐ Complete the Designated Priority Group section (required for funding prioritization).
- ☐ Complete the Equity Data Tool (required for funding prioritization).

Required CADAC updates:

- ☐ Financial Form:
 - Update your two most recently completed fiscal year actuals.
 - Upload your completed and signed financial statements for your most recent completed fiscal years so CADAC staff can review, reconcile and lock your completed financial forms.
 - Update your current year financial projections.
 - Update two projected fiscal year financial projections.
- ☐ Statistical Form:
 - Update your two most recently completed statistical data, your current year projections as well as your two projected fiscal year statistical projections.

In your application:

- ☐ Organization information tab, including history, mission, values, operating expenses (current and projected year), organizational strength, governance, and facilities questions(s) and, if applicable, facilities pop out table and upload field.
- ☐ Programming overview addressing questions based on this program's assessment criteria;
- ☐ Activities Summary of the previous fiscal year, the current fiscal, and two projected fiscal years.
- ☐ Proofread your application before you submit it.

Support Material to Upload:

- ☐ At least one and up to 5 current planning and policy documents, such as:

- Strategic plans, human resource policies, anti-racism policies, collections management policies, or cultural safety policies.
- This should include documents detailing the current approach to equity across your organization, if available; if stand-alone policy documents are not available, you will be provided with an opportunity to describe.
- ❑ Up to 5 links to electronic materials, such as: (if applicable)
 - Brochure of seasonal programs, links to online materials, current publications, or program from recent event.
- ❑ Up to 5 images illustrating your programming or presentations. For example:
 - a sample image of the exterior of your facility;
 - a sample image of permanent exhibitions;
 - a sample image of a temporary exhibition; or
 - a sample image of a public programming activity.

After you submit your application:

- ❑ Add NoReply@BCArtsCouncil.ca to your safe senders list if you haven't already done so. Notification of results will come from this system email roughly 16 weeks after the submission deadline.
- ❑ Keep your mailing address up to date in your online Organization Profile.
- ❑ Grant payments will be mailed to this address or processed via ETF (as noted in the grant system).
- ❑ Contact a Program Advisor for feedback on the assessment of your application after you have received notification of the results.