

Boston Cultural Council Grant and Application Guidelines

Fall 2023, Fiscal Year 2024

About the Boston Cultural Council and the Grant

The Boston Cultural Council annually (BCC) distributes general operating grants through the [BCC Organizational Grant](#). Funds are allocated from both the City of Boston and the Mass Cultural Council (MCC), a state agency, to support small and mid sized nonprofit and fiscally sponsored organizations, as well as unincorporated entities and artist collectives, providing innovative arts, cultural, and creative programming that 1.) advances a vibrant, creative and just Boston and 2.) enhances the quality of life in our city. The BCC aims to work in tandem with other grant programs to ensure that all Boston residents can access and participate in arts programming and creative expression.

The BCC is a five member council composed of Boston residents and is facilitated by the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture (MOAC). Council members work in partnership with MOAC on the strategic direction of the grant program, and they also provide final approval of selected grantees. Council members are selected on the basis of their lived experience within Boston's arts, cultural, and creative communities and their demonstrated commitment to cultural equity.

Our Commitment To Equity

To truly thrive, Boston must be an equitable city. The Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture (MOAC) and the Boston Cultural Council acknowledge the systemic harm perpetuated by Boston's arts sector. People of color in Boston have faced significant barriers to creative resources, space, and economic opportunity. We commit to an intersectional racial justice lens that uplifts those most harmed by systemic oppression and racism. We hold ourselves accountable to implement policies and programs that eliminate structural racism, embrace collective healing, and center BIPOC/ALAANA and LGBTQIA+ community members, as well as those who face discrimination due to their age, gender, disability, social status, neighborhood, citizenship status, and more. The BCC, in partnership with MOAC, envisions a vibrant and creative Boston, where everyone can access and participate in the arts.

BCC Grant Strategy

Ensuring BCC grants contribute towards the goals above requires intentional effort to fund organizations that demonstrate and promote cultural equity in the Boston arts ecosystem. BCC also aims to address inequities in arts funding in Boston. A [2016 study published by The Boston Foundation](#) reports that while small to mid-sized organizations make up 86% of Boston's arts organizations in Boston, they receive significantly less funding compared to larger organizations. It is for this reason that the BCC supports small to mid-sized arts organizations in the Boston arts ecosystem by focusing on organizations with

annual budgets under \$2 million, committing the majority of grant funds to those with the smallest budgets. In summary, BCC is committed to fund small to mid sized organizations that demonstrate and promote cultural equity in the Boston arts ecosystem.

BCC Grant Categories and Eligibility

Grant Categories

Organizations may apply for grants up to a set limit, based on their organizational budget (total expenses from the most recently completed fiscal year). If an organization is selected as a recipient, they will receive the total amount they are eligible in their budget category. The categories are:

Tier 1: \$5,000	Organizations with budgets between \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000 qualify for Tier 1.
Tier 2: \$7,500	Organizations with budgets between \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 qualify for Tier 2.
Tier 3: \$10,000	Organizations with budgets less than \$500,000 qualify for Tier 3.

Eligibility: Who is Eligible to Apply?

- Non-profit organizations with budgets under \$2 million whose mission and programming demonstrates a clear commitment to foster and sustain the arts and/or cultural creative expression in any arts discipline
- Boston-based organizations or organizations not based in the City of Boston but whose primary programming takes place in Boston and demonstrates strong community partnership. Reviewers will be looking for specific examples of public benefit to the people of Boston
- Unincorporated groups can apply with a fiscal sponsor as long as they meet the rest of the eligibility criteria. This includes: artist collectives, volunteer groups, publications, and any other group jointly working toward common creative goals
- Organizations can submit only one proposal per funding cycle
- Nonprofits with L3C designations are eligible to apply

Grant Fund Restrictions

Grant funding may not be used for the following items:

- To pay salaries or stipends for employees of the Boston school system, library, parks department, or municipality
- On capital expenditures for schools, libraries, and other municipal agencies
- On programming that discriminates or discourages participation on the basis of race, gender, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, sexual orientation, or age
- To purchase food or beverages of any kind

The BCC does not award grants to:

- Individuals (Individual artists seeking funding from the Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture may be eligible for the Opportunity Fund and the Neighborhood and Downtown Activation Grant. Please see MOAC’s [website](#) for grant opportunities.)
- K-12 schools or K-12 school foundations
- Main Streets organizations
- Colleges or universities
- “Friends of…” organizations whose primary purpose is to support government entities
- Religious programs of any kind

How to Apply

Application Checklist

- Account registration with Submittable.com
- Most recent financial information like a board approved budget or a budget completed using the [BCC budget template](#)
- Financial documents such as Forms 990 or 1023 that contain your organization’s EIN, year of formation, and NTEE code (if applicable)
- Materials for the online application including your organization’s mission statement
- Up to three support materials such as brochures, flyers, images, testimonials, or other collateral that demonstrates your programming and mission

Application Forms and Submission

BCC uses Submittable for all grant applications. The FY24 BCC Grant can be found [here](#). If you would like to review the application questions in advance of starting an application, [you can go here](#). If you are a first time applicant, you will need to create an account with [Submittable](#). Grant updates and final reports will be made through this account, so we recommend using an email address that is generic for your organization - something that multiple people have access to. While we prefer to have all proposals submitted online, we also accept hand-written hard copies. Hard copies can be picked up in the MOAC’s office: 1 City Hall Square, Boston, MA 02108 (Eighth floor, Room 802).

Application Support

The Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture will host weekly office hours for applicants to discuss the BCC Organizational Grant and its application. Office hours will be from 3-4PM EST every Tuesday while the grant is open for applications, and you can drop in at any time during that hour. Office hours start on Tuesday, **Oct 3, 2023**. You can access weekly office hours using [this link](#).

We have an FAQ that you can [access here](#) and on our website that we will be updating weekly to include the questions applicants are sending in and their answers, in case that information is helpful to all other applicants.

If you have any further questions, please email BCC@Boston.gov with the subject line “Question about BCC Grant Application.” Answers to these questions will be added to the FAQ.

Application Opening and Deadline

The BCC grant application opens on October 1, 2023. The application deadline is Friday, November 17, 2023 at 11:59PM. If you are submitting a hand-written hard copy, it must be postmarked no later than November 17, or delivered to the MOAC’s office by 5:00PM on November 17. No late applications will be accepted, and MOAC staff will not be available after 5pm Friday, November 17. To avoid technical issues, it is recommended to submit your application before the deadline.

Review Process

Once received, grant applications are initially reviewed for eligibility and completeness. If eligible and complete, applications are assigned for review, scored via an evaluation rubric, discussed and selected by the Grant Advisory Team, and approved by the BCC board. All applicants will be notified of BCC funding decisions in March and grants will be disbursed in Spring 2024.

The BCC is committed to implementing transparent, equitable and inclusive grantmaking practices. The BCC Organizational Grant review process will engage MOAC’s Grant Advisory Team, a cohort of diverse stakeholders inclusive of community members and MOAC staff. The aim of the Grant Advisory Team is to position community members as key decision makers on systems and structures that ultimately have the power to shape their lives and the well-being of their communities.

Evaluation Criteria

Once basic eligibility is met, proposals will be evaluated based on a set criteria. Please see the rubric on page 5 to view the evaluation criteria.

Reconsideration

An applicant may request reconsideration of a decision on its application if the applicant can demonstrate that the BCC failed to follow published application and review procedures. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the Boston Cultural Council within fifteen (15) days of grant notification. No reconsideration may be requested regarding the amount or a decision made about artistic quality or programming priorities.

Grant Payment

During the 2023-2024 grant cycle, all Boston Cultural Council grants will be made in full and up front. Grant reporting is required for grant amounts of \$10,000 and over. All grantees must establish a Supplier/Vendor before payment is processed. You can go [here](#) to learn how to create a Supplier/Vendor ID. Please email vendor.questions@boston.gov or call 617-961-1058 for additional assistance.

Conflict of Interest

The Boston Cultural Council observes the Mass Cultural Council’s Conflict of Interest Policy regarding review panels. To ensure that all review panels are free from conflicts of interests, panelists are required to disclose any current or prospective affiliations they or their immediate family members have with an actual or potential applicant. “Affiliation” applies to employment, board memberships, independent contractual relationships, advisory or policy relationships, substantial contributor relationships, or other financial relationships. In addition, panelists are required to disclose any past or current adversarial relationships with actual or potential applicants. Panelists will not be permitted to participate in discussions or votes relating to applicants with whom they have an affiliation or relationship.

Accessibility and Accommodations

If you need accommodations or assistance with your application, please contact BCC@Boston.gov. If you would prefer to call, please call 617-635-2787.

Scoring Matrix for BCC Grants 2023-2024				
1. Organizational & Financial Eligibility				
<p>The applicant is a 501c3 or is fiscally sponsored. Their budget size falls into the grant program categories.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Facts: Uploads, IRS Letter, Total Operating Budget, Other funding from City of Boston. 	Yes / No			
2. Arts, Cultural, and Creative Work				
<p>2a. Arts Discipline</p> <p>The organization is doing relevant work in an area of the arts and creative expression that aligns with the BCC Grant funding priorities in the City of Boston.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Facts: Org. Type The Basics: Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs? <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization is based in the City of Boston and/or primarily provides clear impact to communities within the City of Boston 	0 (Fails to meet criteria)	1 (Meets some criteria)	2 (Meets criteria)	3 (Exceeds criteria)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization’s mission and/or programming demonstrates a clear commitment to foster and sustain the arts and/or cultural creative expression in any arts discipline. • Program provides innovative arts, cultural, and creative programming that 1.) advances a vibrant, creative and just Boston and 2.) enhances the quality of life in our city. 				
<p>2b. Authentic Community Roots</p> <p>The organization has solid community roots, whether by being locally led (power and decision making are community-driven) and/or having authentic partnerships with Boston-based residents, groups, and/or organizations that have a direct relationship to the community impacted by the programming.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Basics: Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs? • Equity in Boston: Serves historically excluded communities? • Reflective Leadership: If and how staff reflect the communities with whom you work and/or Boston’s diverse communities <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization clearly communicates who it is serving and why, can describe the community in which it works and the role it plays in that ecosystem • Organization is community-led and/or has opportunities for community-led decision making and input and/or can demonstrate how it has put community input into practice • Organization has authentic partnerships rooted in the community they work with (multiyear partnerships, partners who represent community interest, shared power with partners) 	<p>0 (Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1 (Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2 (Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3 (Exceeds criteria)</p>

3. Unique Value to Boston Arts Ecosystem

<p>3a. Serves Unique Gap/Need</p> <p>The organization fills an important gap in the Boston arts ecosystem.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equity In Boston: Present unique artistic and cultural perspective outside of dominant ideologies ● The Basics: Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs? ● The Basics: Budget for hiring artists? ● How do you know you will be successful? <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organization can state what unique role it plays in Boston or in its community ● Organization can point to an evidence-based or experience-based community need that it is addressing ● Organization has a cultural or artistic perspective that is underrepresented in the current arts ecosystem 	<p>0 (Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1 (Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2 (Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3 (Exceeds criteria)</p>
<p>3b. Innovative Programming</p> <p>The organization offers culturally competent, responsive, and innovative programming in Boston that is arts-centered.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equity In Boston: Present a unique artistic or cultural perspective? ● The Basics: Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs? ● The Basics: Budget for hiring artists? ● How do you know you will be successful? 	<p>0 (Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1 (Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2 (Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3 (Exceeds criteria)</p>

<p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present unique artistic and cultural perspective outside of dominant ideologies ● Programs continue to evolve/grow/iterate to best meet organization’s mission and goals and be responsive to the current moment ● Organizations receive positive feedback on the success of their programs and integrate feedback 				
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4. Commitment To Equity

<p>4a. Diverse & Equitable Employer</p> <p>The organization is an equitable employer, and has intentional plans and actions in regards to diversity.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Basics: Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs? ● Your Mission & Values: Within your team, how do you promote cultural equity to advance a more vibrant, creative and just Boston? ● Your Mission & Values: Please tell us about your internal organizational practices, policies and procedures. <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organization can clearly communicate how it is approaching being an equitable employer ● Organization has demonstrated values related to equity, diversity, and inclusion within their organization to ensure employees of various backgrounds are able to thrive within the workplace ● Organization can communicate organizational demographics and how they’re representative of their communities and/or Boston’s historically excluded communities (for example: BIPOC/ALAANA and LGBTQIA+ community) 	<p>0 (Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1 (Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2 (Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3 (Exceeds criteria)</p>
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<p>members, as well as those who face discrimination due to their age, gender, disability, social status, neighborhood, citizenship status, etc.)</p>				
<p>4b. Inclusive Policies</p> <p>The organization has an authentic commitment to inclusive organizational policies. They are on a journey and may have aspirational plans or have concrete examples and experience that they articulate in a meaningful way.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equity in Boston: What relevant experience, hiring, promotion practices and learning has your leadership committed to that enables you to serve Boston’s historically excluded communities? ● Your Mission & Values: How do your values and mission support cultural equity?? <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organization has plans, goals, trainings, and/or strategies in place to achieve organizational equity goals ● Organization has demonstrated progress toward their goals ● Organization can share examples of policies or organizational changes it has made to better achieve equitable outcomes 	<p>0 (Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1 (Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2 (Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3 (Exceeds criteria)</p>
<p>4c. Removing Barriers</p> <p>The organization is intentional about removing barriers and/or expanding access to the arts.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equity in Boston: In what ways does your organization expand access? Serve different 	<p>0 (Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1 (Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2 (Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3 (Exceeds criteria)</p>

<p>abilities? Reach historically excluded communities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Basics: Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs? <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organization has clear examples of how it is removing barriers to the arts, including who is impacted and how ● Organization has communicated a clear accessibility strategy for its programs and/or facilities ● Organization is centering access and inclusion in program design (pay what you want, programs specifically for people for disabilities, etc) 				
<p>4d. Vision</p> <p>The work they do is aligned with the BCC’s vision of equity.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your Mission & Values: How do your values and mission support cultural equity in Boston? ● The Basics: Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs? <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organization is explicit about their vision of equity ● Organization demonstrates commitment to an intersectional lens ● Organization centers the voices of those historically excluded from access to power and resources ● Organization is committed to increase access to and participation in the arts 	<p>0 (Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1 (Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2 (Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3 (Exceeds criteria)</p>

<p>4e. Reviewer's Cut</p> <p>This is an opportunity for the reviewer to rate the overall application in case the questions have missed an important component the applicant shared. Please rate the organization and their work on a scale of 0 to 3 based on your overall equity impression, using the Boston Cultural Council Equity Statement (page 1). If reflective of information not captured by this matrix, please note in comments.</p>	<p>0 (Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1 (Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2 (Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3 (Exceeds criteria)</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Equity Alignment Subtotal</i> <i>(up to 15 points)</i></p>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>			
<p style="text-align: right;">Total (out of 27 points)</p>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>			