



## BACKGROUND

The Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture's (MOAC) believes artists have a crucial role in creating a thriving, healthy community for all. Furthermore, MOAC is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to creative expression through lifelong arts programming across all Boston neighborhoods. To support this vision, the *Neighborhood and Downtown Activation Grant program* was established to fund community-focused arts, cultural, and creative activations in public spaces that foster joy and strengthen community wellbeing across Boston neighborhoods.

### Who can apply?

This fund is open to individuals, nonprofit organizations, collectives, fiscally sponsored groups, and businesses working with and alongside community partners to implement creative activations of various scales in Boston, with a priority for projects that center communities who have been impacted by long-standing systemic inequities.

### What is a creative activation?

Specific to this grant, a creative activation is an arts, cultural, and/or creative experience in a publicly accessible space that imagines and explores new possible uses for that space.

This includes experiences that:

- **Transform the Space:** Result in permanent or temporary changes to the physical, social, or atmospheric components of the space.
- **Highlight Community:** Center the social fabric, traditions, norms, and conversations within the community, showcasing its existing strengths and history.
- **Incorporate Multiple Creative Elements:** Demonstrate a variety of creative elements, cultural traditions, artistic disciplines, and community engagement processes.
- **Engage and Benefit Residents:** Are designed, planned, and executed in partnership with residents, local organizations, business owners, and workers, aiming to benefit those within and surrounding the space.

This grant is open to both existing creative activations that are ongoing and new activations that are being launched for the first time. General examples of creative activations include (but are not limited to): performance art, community celebrations, a community-led stage, interactive theater productions, film screenings with conversation, cultural festivals, arts and cultural markets, community dialogues that center the arts, a digital arts festival, and more. For examples of selected grantees in rounds one and two, [please see here](#).

**Please read through the full grant description prior to applying.** A strong application will fit the full criteria outlined in this description.



## THE BASICS

**Contact:** For questions regarding the Neighborhood and Downtown Activation Grant, please email [artsgrants@boston.gov](mailto:artsgrants@boston.gov) with subject line “NDAG, round 4”. If phone is preferred, please leave a message at 617-910-0048, and someone from the grants team will be in touch with you.

**Funding Source:** American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Boston Planning and Development Public Impact Contribution Funds

**Total Funds Available:** Up to \$5 million

### Size of grants:

- Cultural Festival: \$5,000, one time grant
- Small-Scale Activation: Less than \$20,000, one time grant
- Mid-Scale Activation: Less than \$50,000, one time grant
- Large-Scale and/or Multiyear Activation: \$50,000 - \$100,000, one time grant and multiyear, up to 2 years

### Additional Information

- Events and programs of all scales will be considered, including those with a budget under \$10,000. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a budget that is commensurate with their proposed activation.**
- Individuals with proposals over \$50,000 are required to submit an application in partnership with a nonprofit organization or business.
- Pending on funds available, approved proposals **may receive partial funding** of the total requested grant amount.
- For large, multiyear funding, we encourage applicants to list additional funders that you have either confirmed and/or are considering pursuing.
- **There is a limited number of large, multiyear funding opportunities.**

## ELIGIBILITY, CRITERIA, AND PRIORITIES

### Applicant Eligibility

Applicants need to meet all of the following criteria to be eligible:

- Be an individual, non profit organization, collective, fiscally sponsored group, or a business working with and alongside community partners
- Be Boston residents or demonstrate that their project is led by partners and/or artists who are Boston residents
- Have a direct relationship to the community or area in which the activation or program is taking place. This can include being from that community, having spent a significant amount of time working and building relationships in that place, etc.



## Project Requirements

- All projects and related programming are located in the City of Boston and **are free and open to the public**
- Have a concrete location(s) in which the activation(s) will take place, even if the place(s) is not yet confirmed. Project ideas that list entire neighborhoods will not be considered.
- Demonstrate strong alignment with MOAC's definition of creative activation as an arts, cultural, and/or creative experience in a publicly accessible space that imagines and explores new possible uses for that space. This includes experiences that:
  - **Transform the Space:** Result in permanent or temporary changes to the physical, social, or atmospheric components of the space.
  - **Highlight Community:** Center the social fabric, traditions, norms, and conversations within the community, showcasing its existing strengths and history.
  - **Incorporate Multiple Creative Elements:** Demonstrate a variety of creative elements, cultural traditions, artistic disciplines, and community engagement processes.
  - **Engage and Benefit Residents:** Are designed, planned, and executed in partnership with residents, local organizations, business owners, and workers, aiming to benefit those within and surrounding the space.
- All events and programs funded by the Neighborhood and Downtown Activation Grant are required to be accessible for persons with disabilities under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including additional accommodations to be made available upon request of any person who requires alternately formatted materials, auxiliary aids, or other accommodations.
- An evaluation plan to document and communicate the impact of the program to the public.

**Permitting:** All activations must obtain all required permits for the activation, separate from this grant program. For more information on permitting requirements and process, you can go [here](#).

## Considerations and Priorities

Projects that include some or all of the these elements will be prioritized:

*Location:*



- Priority will be given to activations that occur or include the following neighborhoods: Mattapan, Roxbury, Dorchester, Hyde Park, East Boston, and Chinatown.

*Public participation / co-creation:*

- Going beyond the public as an audience and strategically building opportunities for the public to contribute to the vision, creation, and enjoyment of the activation.

*Youth participation and training:*

- Integrating outcomes for young people (ages 14 to 24) into the activation, facilitating opportunities for young people to inform and lead work, including opportunities to learn specific skills or gain career exposure.

*Partnerships and Collaborations:*

- Authentic partnerships and collaboration that bring communities that are segregated due to race, income, or geographic boundaries, into conversation and cross-neighborhood collaboration with each other.
- Applications from for-profit organizations that are partnered with non-profits, artists, or community groups will have priority over applications from for-profit organizations that do not have local non-profit partners.

**What this does not fund:**

- Fundraising events, advertising, or any activity that is primarily for the commercial benefit of one entity
- Religious programs of any kind
- Ticketed events that have an entry fee (ticketed free events are eligible)
- Other foundations or grant-giving organizations
- Events that have taken place prior to the application deadline

**Evaluation and Reporting Requirements**

Once the activation(s) proposed is complete, grantee partners will be asked to complete a brief final report form, as well as a survey about the grant process. This will allow MOAC to improve our grantmaking processes in the future to better support community work. Some applicants will be required to meet with the Grants + Programs team periodically and to review the final report.

**APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE**

The application is available on [Submittable here](#). Funds will support activations starting after November 1, 2024. All American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds must be in contract by the end of the calendar year 2024 and be fully spent by grantee partners by the end of calendar year 2026. Funds will be disbursed in 1-2 installments for one time grants and over 3 or more installments for multiyear grants.



A condensed application process is as follows:

- Submit application via Submittable
- Initial review of application by the Grant Review Committee
- Virtual Q&A / Conversation between applicant and grants team (only some applicants will be asked to join a conversation)
- Final Proposal and approval

### **Application Support**

The Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture will host three virtual office hours for applicants to discuss the NDAG and its application. Office hours will be held on the following dates and times (dates include links to the office hour):

- [Friday, August 30, at 12-1 p.m.](#)
- [Thursday, September 5, at 9-10 a.m.](#)
- [Wednesday, September 18 at 4-5 p.m.](#)

### **Due Dates**

Grant applications will be reviewed on a quarterly basis. The following quarterly due dates for applications in fiscal year 2024 are as follows:

- Round 1: July 3, 2023 by 11:59 pm
- Round 2: October 31, 2023 by 11:59 pm
- Round 3: February 16, 2024 by 11:59 pm
- Round 4: September 23, 2024 by 11:59 pm

Applications submitted after 11:59pm will not be accepted. A member of MOAC will inform all applicants on the status of their application within 10-12 weeks of the due date. If approved, payment can take up 30 days to process.

### **Grant Review Committee**

MOAC is committed to implementing transparent, equitable and inclusive grantmaking practices, including the way we determine and distribute funding. The Grant Review Committee (GRC) is a diverse cohort across age, race, cultural backgrounds, professional and lived experiences, artists and community members, ability, gender identity, and more. It is comprised of MOAC staff members and community members, positioning community members as decision makers on systems and structures that ultimately have the power to shape their lives and the well-being of their communities.

### **Accessibility and Accommodations**

If you need accommodations or assistance with your application, please contact the



grants team at [artsgrants@boston.gov](mailto:artsgrants@boston.gov) with subject line “NDAG, round 4,” or leave a message at 617-910-0048, and someone from the grants team will be in touch with you.

### **Review Application Questions**

Applications will be accepted through [Submittable](#). If you would like to review application questions, you can see a pdf version of them below. Please be sure to read through the grant description in its entirety before applying, including criteria and project priorities, to assess if your activation proposal is a good fit for this grant program.

### **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

- [Application Questions for Individual Artist\(s\)](#)
- [Application Questions for Nonprofits & Businesses](#)