



Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

These questions have been pulled from our webinar (watch the recording [here](#)), drop-in sessions, and emailed questions sent to culturalsustainability@midatlanticarts.org.

Program Guidelines are available to view [here](#).

What is Cultural Sustainability?

Question: What is the background behind the creation of the Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grant?

Answer: The Cultural Sustainability grant was created out of a partnership with the Wallace Foundation and the 6 Regional Arts Organizations across the United States to address funding disparities in our sector that have historically excluded arts organizations founded by, with, and for communities of color. The goal of this grant is to address these systemic inequities and ensure BIPOC organizations are able to receive funding comparable to other established arts organizations.

Question: What is the total funding amount for this grant and what's the duration?

Answer: If your organization has annual operating expenses between \$0 and \$249,999, you can receive grants up to \$46,000. Organizations with expenses between \$250,000 and \$499,999 can receive up to \$66,000 in funding. The program period for this grant is May 2025 – June 2026.

Question: What is the total amount of award dollars that will be distributed?

Answer: The total amount of award dollars for this grant is \$1.2M.

Question: Does this grant require matching funds?

Answer: No, the Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grant does not require matching funds.

Question: Are there geographic priorities within the Mid Atlantic region that you are considering in awarding grants?

Answer: We are not prioritizing any specific state or territory in the Mid Atlantic Region in our distribution of Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grants. Mid Atlantic Arts will select up to 20 grantees from its 10 states and territories:

- 10 selected organizations (one per state and territories) with operating expenses between \$0-\$249,999 will receive a general operating grant up to \$46,000.
- 10 selected organizations (one per state and territories) with operating expenses between \$250,000 - \$499,999 will receive a general operating grant up to \$66,000.

Question: Will this grant program be available in the future?

Answer: The Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grant is a pilot program. Currently, this is a one-time opportunity with no additional funding cycle planned. Please let us know if this grant resonates with you and your community. We continually strive to provide relevant granting opportunities that the arts community within the Mid Atlantic region wants to see.

Criteria to Receive a Cultural Sustainability Grant

Budget

Question: Our operating budget was under \$500,000 but in the last three years we've received multi-year grants that have put us above that amount. Are we still eligible?

Answer: In the application for the Cultural Sustainability grant, you will be required to provide evidence of your operational budget for the last three years. Unfortunately, the \$500,000 operating expense limit is in place for all 3 years, unless the increase in your operational budget was due to COVID relief, CARES Act, or ARPA funding.

Question: Is the annual budget based on the current fiscal year or the next one?

Answer: The annual budget should reflect the most recent year-end, whether that is the fiscal year or the calendar year.

Question: Are in-kind programming expenses excluded from the under \$500,000 operating budget limit?

Answer: No, in-kind programming expenses are included in the \$500,000 operating budget limit. Please include any in-kind contributions in your financial statements as part of your operational budget to meet the eligibility requirements.

Experience

Question: We used to do a lot of programming to serve communities of color, but since COVID-19, we haven't been as consistent with our programs. We'd like to use this money to get back on track, programmatically. Are we still eligible?

Answer: To be eligible for this grant, your organization must have at least three years of arts and cultural programming, but these years do not have to be consecutive. If you can share evidence in your application of at least 3 years of programming that supports historically underserved communities of color, then your organization is eligible.

Question: Could you please clarify exactly what you mean by arts and cultural programming?

Answer: Arts and cultural programming refer to a broad range of activities, programs, and initiatives that involve the creation, presentation, and preservation of art and culture. This can include both formal and informal activities in a variety of settings including, but not limited to museums, theaters, galleries, public spaces, schools, community centers and online platforms.

Question: Are technology programs serving underserved communities considered art programs?

Answer: If they are arts-focused, then yes!

Community Focus

Question: Can you provide more detail on the definition of "communities of color"?

Answer: To be eligible for the Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grant, your organization should show a strong commitment to supporting historically underserved communities of color. This includes Black, African American, Latine, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Indigenous, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, North African, Caribbean

communities and other communities of color that are underrepresented in the arts and culture sector.

Question: We are an organization in Puerto Rico, which is racially and culturally mixed. How should we understand our eligibility for this grant in the context of Puerto Rico's communities of color?

Answer: Puerto Rico is unique in many ways, including how the term "people of color" is understood. In Puerto Rico, where the majority of the population identifies as people of color, the interpretation of this term may vary. As such, eligibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

While we cannot define how any organization or community should identify themselves, self-identification will be an important part of the application process. If you have specific questions about your organization's eligibility or about communities in Puerto Rico, we encourage you to reach out to us directly. Additionally, we will include panelists from Puerto Rico to ensure that applications from the island are reviewed by individuals who are familiar with and part of the local community.

Leadership

Question: Our organization was not founded by people of color, but we serve people of color. Are we still eligible?

Answer: We are asking organizations to self-identify their connection to Black, Indigenous and communities of color within their application. We suggest taking the time, when crafting your narrative, to identify the communities that your organization is a part of, and the communities that benefit from your work. This will help us gain an understanding of your relationship to, and with communities of color.

Mission

Question: What if your organization has a long-term relationship with communities of color, but the mission does not explicitly state a prioritization of serving communities of color?

Answer: When reviewing your application, panelists will focus on how your organization's community focus, leadership, mission and practices demonstrate an active commitment to supporting historically underserved communities of color. Additionally, your organization must be working to address systemic inequities through its practices, even if this is not explicitly stated in the mission.

Your organization must also be one of the following:

- **501(c)(3) nonprofit**
- **For-profit entity (LLC, S-corp, etc.)**
- **Artist collective (either incorporated with a tax ID or with a fiscal sponsor from an established for-profit or non-profit entity that has a tax ID)**

Question: If artist collectives with fiscal sponsors are eligible, does their fiscal sponsor have to work with them on the application? Or does the collective have to do the application independently?

Answer: Artist collectives with fiscal sponsors are eligible for the Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots Grant. When completing your application in the Smart Simple portal, you will be prompted to indicate whether you have a fiscal sponsor. If you select "yes," you will be asked to provide additional details about your fiscal sponsorship. The system will generate a downloadable PDF with your application information, which you can share with your fiscal sponsor for their review and signature. Once signed, you will need to upload the completed form back into the Smart Simple portal on the fiscal sponsor page. If you encounter any issues with this process, please contact us at culturalsustainability@midatlanticarts.org.

Question: Does the fiscal sponsor have to be located in a Mid Atlantic state?

Answer: Fiscal sponsors do not have to be located in a Mid Atlantic state or territory but the organization applying for a Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grant must be located in the Mid Atlantic region (DC, DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA, PR, USVI, VA, and WV).

Question: Can single member LLCs apply?

Answer: Yes, single member LLCs can apply, as long as they fit all other eligibility criteria.

How to Apply

Question: Does the application have to be in English?

Answer: No, you are welcome to complete your application in Spanish or your native language. Please note, we will be using an automated translation service to translate your application to English for panelist review. If you have any further questions about this, please contact us at culturalsustainability@midatlanticarts.org.

Question: Can I request ADA accommodation?

Answer: Yes. If you need to request accommodation at any point during your application process, please reach out to us by email or phone at culturalsustainability@midatlanticarts.org or 410-539-6656 x120. We ask that any accommodation requests be made no later than three weeks prior to the application

deadline on January 6, 2025. That would mean any accommodation requests need to be made by **December 16, 2024**, before we break for the holidays.

Question: I'm registered with my state's Smart Simple portal. Does Mid Atlantic Arts have a separate portal or will the application opportunity appear in my state portal?

Answer: Mid Atlantic Arts has a specific portal that you will need to register with. You can find our Smart Simple portal at this link:

https://midatlanticarts.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp

Question: If you're applying as a collaborative project, whose budget do you submit?

Answer: The Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grant provides unrestricted operating support, which is not project specific. Applicants are required to submit evidence of an individual organization's operational budget for the last three years.

Question: What types of documents should we be providing in the Proof of Community Engagement section of the application?

Answer: In the Proof of Community Engagement section of the application, we are asking for 1 file upload. Please choose a document that speaks to your organization's mission and your connection to, or your impact in communities of color. Some examples of documents you could include are a letter of recommendation from a community member, a partnership letter, a program description that details your mission, or a letter of support from a notable artist or community leader.

Question: Can we submit multiple work samples? And if so, what file types are allowed?

Answer: There is an optional section of the application where you are able to submit work samples. While not required, we highly encourage providing work samples for your application. We suggest selecting materials that further highlight your organization's connection to the communities it serves. You can choose up to two work samples to submit. Our panel of reviewers will be taking approximately 5 minutes to review each upload, so please keep that in mind when you're making your selections. Work samples can be provided as a web link, photo/image, video, or document upload. Please provide a short-written description of the uploaded file.

Question: Do we need to upload tax information in our application?

Answer: You are not required to upload tax information in your application but are welcome to provide this documentation as proof of operational budget if you would like.

Question: Can we provide a profit and loss statement for our proof of budget?

Answer: Yes, a profit and loss statement will provide sufficient evidence of operational budget size.

How Can I Use Cultural Sustainability Funding?

Question: What can I use unrestricted operational funds for?

Answer: The Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grant provides unrestricted operational funding to arts organizations founded by, with and for communities of color, allowing them to sustain and expand their practices, benefiting the communities they serve. Funds can be used to support the organization's mission and advance organizational goals, including current and new programs and initiatives. Funding can be used to build capacity, support operations, expand programs, deepen your community engagement efforts, or cover rent and utilities, for example.

Grant Payments, Taxes, and Requirements

Question: Could you explain a bit more about the virtual workshop grantees are expected to lead during the program's one-year duration?

Answer: If selected, grantees will be required to lead a virtual workshop during the grant period for their fellow grantees and Mid Atlantic staff. Workshops can be on any subject of your choosing; for example, community engagement, cultural preservation, inclusivity, or social advocacy. The intention of these workshops is to cultivate a co-learning space and an opportunity to share your organizations' experiences and expertise within a cohort of peer organizations. Additionally, grantees will be invited to join virtual peer networking sessions and quarterly check-ins with Mid Atlantic Arts staff.

Question: On page 4 of the Guidelines, it states, "For businesses and LLCs, there may be specific requirements for using the funds, so feel free to reach out with any questions." ...are you able to speak to those specific requirements today?

Answer: For businesses and LLCs, Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grants cannot be used for the following purposes:

- The sole benefit of any private shareholder or individual
- Capital projects such as new construction
- The purchase of land or buildings
- The compensation of foreign nationals currently embargoed by the federal government (e.g., North Korea)
- International travel
- Lobbying
- Membership in airline travel clubs
- Membership in country clubs

Panel Review Process

Question: Will the applicants receive feedback from the reviewers on the applications (i.e. comments or constructive suggestions)?

Answer: Yes, applicants who do not receive Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grants will receive feedback on their applications.

Question: You mentioned that the five panelists will “inform the final selection of grantees.” Do these panelists make the final decision on which organizations will receive grants?

Answer: A panel of at least five peers and colleagues from arts communities of color in the Mid Atlantic region will review applications. They will use a scoring system provided by Mid Atlantic Arts to evaluate each submission. Mid Atlantic Arts staff will then review the panelists' scores and select the finalists. Final decisions on grant recipients will be made by Mid Atlantic Arts staff and the Board of Directors, with input from the panelists' scores and comments.

Question: On average, how many proposals will be reviewed by each panelist?

Answer: The Cultural Sustainability: Community Roots grant is a pilot program. We are unable to anticipate how many applications we will receive by the January 6, 2025 deadline. We anticipate each panelist will review between 45-60 applications, with each application being reviewed by at least 2 panelists.

Contact Us

Contact Sarah Branch, Program Director, Creativity in Community at sbranch@midatlanticarts.org, or Sarah Theune, Program Associate, Performing Arts & Creativity in Community at sarah@midatlanticarts.org or call 410-539-6656 x120

The Cultural Sustainability application, including narrative questions and work sample requirements, can be previewed and downloaded in Microsoft Word and PDF formats at this link:

<https://www.midatlanticarts.org/opportunity/cultural-sustainability/>

For questions about language accessibility, please contact culturalsustainability@midatlanticarts.org.