



ARTS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS FY27 CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

The City of Dubuque Arts & Culture Capacity Building grant program provides funding to support initiatives that aim to create a more sustainable and effective arts organization. Eligible organizations may apply for grants of \$1,000 to \$8,000 to support capacity-building initiatives. The organization must maintain a cash operating expense budget, exclusive of other City of Dubuque grant support, of no less than \$10,000 per year. A total of \$35,00 in funding is available.

“Capacity Building,” as defined by the National Council of Nonprofits, is “whatever is needed to bring a nonprofit to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity, so it may more effectively and efficiently advance its mission into the future. Capacity building is not a one-time effort to improve short-term effectiveness, but a continuous improvement strategy toward the creation of a sustainable and effective organization.”

Examples of capacity building initiatives:

- Planning Activities: organizational assessments, strategic planning, creating a development plan and/or fundraising strategy
- Donor Development: online donor portals, donor experience improvements
- Nonprofit Training: staff nonprofit 101 training, nonprofit board member training, leadership development and review, project or program development, program management and evaluation
- Strategic Relationships: strengthening relationships with professional advisors and/or nonprofit partners
- Internal Operations: improvements to donor database/financial management systems, volunteer management, or staff-like support for affiliate growth
- Other assessment, consulting, or facilitation that improves an identified area of organizational capacity

Proposals that include a combination of strategies will be considered, so long as the applicant clearly demonstrates how multiple strategies align toward common goals.

Capacity Building grants are not intended for individuals, special projects, or programs.

The Arts & Cultural Affairs Capacity Building grant program is funded, administered, and managed by the City of Dubuque’s Department of Economic Development, Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs.

ARTS & CULTURE ORGANIZATION DEFINITION

An arts and culture organization is defined as an entity with a **primary purpose** to create, produce, present, or provide arts and culture programs, experiences, or activities for public audiences.

Organizations must offer programs in an artistic discipline, operate as a museum, or provide informal learning in arts and culture disciplines.

The organization's **primary purpose** is assessed and verified by staff using the organization's website, mission, core activities, and IRS National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) codes. Assessment ruling(s) are final. Organizations determined by staff to be ineligible will not move forward and are specifically denied any appeals process.

FAIRNESS AND REPRESENTATION STATEMENT

The City of Dubuque Arts & Culture Grants Program(s) commits to fair treatment within the arts and culture sector by evaluating its programs and practices. The City recognizes the multiple benefits that arts and culture exploration provide, regardless of race, color, religion, age, disability, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity/expression.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants must meet all the following eligibility requirements:

- Applicant is an arts and culture organization as defined by grant guidelines
- Applicant is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with at least two years of programming documentation and two Form 990s
- Applicant serves residents of the city of Dubuque and programming occurs within city limits
- Applicant will have a clean record of compliance and be in good standing with the City of Dubuque's Arts and Culture Grant Program(s)

INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- For-profit organizations, businesses, or sole proprietors
- Educational institutions including private or public K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and community colleges
- City of Dubuque government departments or entities
- Individual artists
- Nonprofit organizations that are not arts and cultures organizations (for example, social service, nonprofits, religious institutions, athletic groups, etc.)
- Organizations with a **delinquent** City of Dubuque Arts and Culture Grant Program Final Report
- The use of a fiscal agent/sponsor is not allowed

GRANT AWARD

- Requests may range from \$1,000-\$8,000. Requests for less than \$1,000 will not be considered.
- Applicant must demonstrate a 50% cash match. **Personnel time is not eligible for cash match.**

- Projects must occur between July 1, 2026 and June 30, 2027

INELIGIBLE COSTS

- This grant program does not support capital projects, fundraising events, deficit reduction, endowment, vehicles, furniture, ongoing operational or program delivery costs, consumable supplies, food/beverages for meetings or events, advertising or marketing campaigns, or the costs associated with filing for 501c3 status.

ONLINE APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Applicants must submit applications via the City of Dubuque's [SlideRoom](#), an online application portal. Applications will not be accepted in any other format. Late, incomplete, or ineligible applications will not be accepted. Applicants can access the current online application requirements at:

<https://cityofdubuque.org/392/Funding-Programs>

TIMELINE

Application Open: FY27 application available at www.cityofdubuque.org/artsgrants	March 27, 2026
Informational Webinar available on the City of Dubuque website	March 27, 2026
Application Deadline:	April 24, 2026, by 11:59 PM
Grant Review Panel Meeting	June 9, 2026
Grants Subcommittee Meeting – Funding Recommendations	June 11, 2026
A&C Affairs Commission Meeting – Funding Recommendations Approval	June 23, 2026
City Council – Approval of Funding	July 6, 2026
Award Notification:	July 2026
Disbursement of Funds:	
Organizations who have completed their previous FY final report prior to Aug. 1, 2026	Funding processed August 1, 2026
Organizations who submit their previous FY final report August 2-31, 2026	Funding processed September 1, 2026
Period of Performance:	July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027
Final Report Due	August 31, 2027

REVIEW PROCESS

Department Eligibility Review

Submitted applications are reviewed by staff for completion, eligibility, and adherence to published

funding priorities and guidelines. New application information or subsequent application clarification submitted after a program deadline is not considered. Staff will also review an applicant's record of compliance and good standing with City of Dubuque's Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs. Applications or applicants determined by staff to be ineligible or incomplete will not move forward to panel review and are specifically denied any appeals process.

Competitive Panel Review

Eligible applications will be referred to a competitive review by a volunteer citizen panel of regional arts and culture OR nonprofit professionals with appropriate expertise commensurate to the purpose of the grant program.

Funding Recommendations

Scoring and allocation recommendations are presented, reviewed, and voted upon by the Arts and Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission before advancing to Dubuque City Council for final approval.

Decision Notification

Applicants will be notified of funding decisions via email by July 8, 2026. Applicants are notified of the status of their application whether they *are* or *are not* awarded funding. Applicants will be contacted if any additional information is required and are encouraged to refrain from contacting staff for application status updates until funding decisions are made.

Application Questions & Scoring Rubric

The Capacity Building Scoring Rubric will be used by the panel to evaluate grant applications. Application questions are provided for reference only. Applicants must review and complete application requirements in the SlideRoom portal. Each section has criteria and corresponding point values to ensure a fair review process. The rubric is on a scale of 25 points.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Our granting strategy is to fully fund awardees to allow completion of a one-year project.

Review will be based on the following criteria. These criteria consider the value of the capacity-building project to the organization and the value of the organization to the community.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES: The application provides a clear overview of the organization and the programs and services it offers.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The organization clearly identifies the area of capacity that the project will improve and explains how this improvement will strengthen the organization's ability to fulfill its mission.

PROJECT PLAN: The capacity-building project plan clearly outlines manageable and measurable objectives and outcomes.

PRIORITIES & TIMING: The organization demonstrates that the capacity-building project is both a timely priority and aligned with the organization's strategic goals.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES: The organization and proposed capacity-building project engages and utilizes other resources such as funding sources, volunteers, and community partnerships.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

If awarded funding, the organization must acknowledge the City of Dubuque's support in appropriate communications pertaining to the grant. Recognition guidelines and logos are available on the City's website.

REPORTING

Applicants must submit a performance report within 60 days of the end of the funding cycle no later than August 31, 2027. The applicant agrees to retain all financial records, reporting documents, and all other records pertinent to the City of Dubuque grant program for a period of three calendar years beyond the contract. Delinquent performance reports will impact applicant's compliance record and standing with the City of Dubuque's Arts and Culture Grant Program(s), affecting future eligibility.

ACCESSIBILITY AND QUESTIONS

We are committed to making our programs and services accessible to everyone. Please contact the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs at (563) 690-6059 or bspurlin@cityofdubuque.org to request any accommodations, translation, interpretation, or other assistance you need in completing this process. The applicant is solely responsible for the content and timely submission of this grant.

The City of Dubuque strives to be an equitable community of choice and prioritizes support to organizations that intentionally apply fair access to programs. It is important that grantees can share examples of their commitment to welcoming and serving any and all Dubuque residents by presenting a broad representation of culturally aware experiences, representing a variety of voices, and expanding access.

