



ArtsWestchester Grants – Executive Summary 2026-27

ArtsWestchester is a leading funder of arts and culture in Westchester County made possible by County Executive Ken Jenkins and the Westchester County Board of Legislators. These funds are provided in order to meet the cultural needs of county residents, cultural organizations, and artists.

ArtsWestchester’s mission is to create an equitable, vibrant, and sustainable Westchester County in which the arts are integral to and integrated into every facet of life.

ArtsWestchester, Westchester County’s designated arts agency, was established in 1965 as a leadership and service organization. Formerly known as Westchester Arts Council, it is now the largest private, not-for-profit arts council in New York State. ArtsWestchester fosters the arts in all their diverse forms, with the goal of making the arts available and accessible to all residents and visitors in the Lower Hudson Valley. ArtsWestchester addresses this goal by providing financial support and technical assistance to Rockland and Westchester’s cultural organizations and artists and by providing direct services to the public. The belief that the arts are for everyone is fundamental to ArtsWestchester and informs all our programs and activities including decisions regarding awarding of grants.

Arts Access Grant 2026-27

The **ArtsWestchester Arts Access Support for Organizations Grant** provides public funding—made possible by Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins and the County Board of Legislators—to **strengthen arts and cultural organizations and increase access to cultural experiences across Westchester County**. Arts Access is a competitive grant for nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and historic sites that offer public programs, seasons of performances, exhibitions, or arts education in Westchester County. In response to the needs of the field, ArtsWestchester has consolidated funding from five discrete grant opportunities into one opportunity that will allow for greater flexibility in its usages.

**ARTSWESTCHESTER GRANTS PROGRAM
2026-27 ARTS ACCESS SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS
GRANT GUIDELINES**

Application Deadline: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 by 11:59pm

Application Deadline: Your electronic application must be completed and submitted online only via *Submittable* <https://artswestchester.submittable.com/> by **Wednesday, May 6, 2026 no later than 11:59pm.**

ArtsWestchester’s **Arts Access** grant opportunity offers eligible organizations flexible funding to support cultural programming that helps expand opportunities for Westchester residents and visitors to take part in the arts.

This funding opportunity is a competitive grant intended to support arts and cultural organizations and historic sites in Westchester County that offer programs and services throughout most of the year; organizations whose public programming is developed and funded by friends groups; and organizations that offer a season of arts programs/activities and/or education-based programs.

Arts Access Grants support opportunities for Westchester residents and visitors to the county to experience a range of arts and cultural activities. While the artistic merit of your proposed programming is important, funding decisions are based on an assessment of *all* aspects of your application, including demonstrated financial stability, strength and involvement of the board, scope of programming, number of people and geographic area served, and inclusiveness at all levels of operation (including board, staff, and audience). Applicants are encouraged to be as specific as possible regarding the needs and planned use of funding. Arts Access Support for Organizations grants are made possible with funds from Westchester County Government.

Organizations may apply Arts Access funding towards a season of related events over a set period of time – such as a film series, concert series, workshop series, or education series, or an individual program or event – such as an exhibition, performance, or festival event (not including galas or fundraisers) or curriculum development activities.

A season may be defined broadly, including producing at least one production running a minimum of three (3) performances over the course of a year or a series of readings or workshops that are open to the public.

ArtsW Arts Access is limited to **one request per organization** but funding may be designated for more than one expense area.

AWARD LIMITS

The maximum award possible is based on your organization’s total annual income and is outlined in the table below. ArtsWestchester will not award funds that equal more than 15% of an organization’s income for the last completed fiscal year.

FUNDING TIER	ANNUAL INCOME	MAXIMUM REQUEST
Tier 1	\$1.5 million or greater	\$50,000
Tier 2	Between \$500,000 & 1.499 million	\$40,000
Tier 3	Between \$100,000 & \$499,999	\$25,000
Tier 4	Between \$25,000 & \$99,999	\$15,000

Please note that previous funding is no guarantee of future funding. Grant funds are not intended to be a renewable source of income.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the 2026-27 Arts Access grant your organization must:

- Demonstrate 501(c)(3) federal tax-exempt status as a private, not-for-profit organization incorporated in New York State.
- Have a mission statement that clearly delineates the arts or local history as the primary objective of the organization both programmatically and operationally.
- Be based in Westchester County.
- Have a governing board that meets regularly, operates under a set of bylaws, has at least one-third of its members residing in Westchester County, and is representative of the community you serve.
- Have been in operation for at least three full seasons.
- Have an annual revenue of at least \$25,000 in your most recently completed fiscal year.
- Provide services between July 1, 2026 and June 30, 2027, the period covered by this grant.
- Be in good standing regarding submission of required reports to ArtsWestchester.

Please Note: In general, ArtsWestchester does not provide support to cultural organizations that are part of a college or university, or to groups that are part of a nonprofit organization incorporated outside of New York State. However, the following types of organizations *may* be eligible to apply for Arts Access Support for 2026-27:

- Arts organizations that are affiliated with Westchester-based public colleges or universities that do not receive support from Westchester County Government
- Arts organizations or historic sites located in Westchester, but are part of an organization that is incorporated and operated outside New York State
- Arts organizations or historic sites that are operated by a state agency
- “Friends” groups associated with arts organizations/historic sites are eligible to apply for the Arts Access grant, so long as they meet other eligibility requirements.

If you are unsure or want to confirm eligibility please contact Sue Abbott, Director of Grant Programs, at 914-428-4220, ext. 304, or sabbott@artswestchester.org.

ARTS ACCESS FUNDING PERIOD

The contract period for Arts Access Support for Organizations grant is July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027.

YONKERS AND MOUNT VERNON ARTS INITIATIVES

In recognition of historical funding allocations and Arts Initiative categories supporting organizations in the cities of Mount Vernon and Yonkers, ArtsWestchester will award an estimated 15% of the total ArtsW Access grant allocation to eligible organizations in Mount Vernon and Yonkers following submission of proposals and independent panel review thereof.

For the FY2026 funding cycle, organizations previously eligible to apply under the Yonkers and Mount Vernon Arts Initiatives guidelines may apply for FY2026 Arts Access funding. Organizations who had previously applied using a fiscal sponsor may do so again for the FY2026 cycle. This provision will be reviewed for subsequent funding cycles and may not be available in the future.

OTHER ARTSWESTCHESTER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

If eligible, an organization may apply to other ArtsWestchester grant categories in a single funding period but may not combine funds for one project or program area. Example: If the first application submitted and approved or actively under review, any remaining or future application(s) in that same funding year must be earmarked for another program or purpose. Please Note: This restriction does *not* apply to the *Art\$WChallenge* match program.

GRANTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

If the Panel recommends funding that is approved by ArtsWestchester's Board of Directors you will receive a contract for cultural services. The contract indicates the amount of your grant and the scope of service (based on your application) that you agree to provide during the contract year (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027). The contract also states your responsibilities, the terms and conditions Westchester County Government requires of our subcontractors and reporting requirements.

If your award is significantly lower than the amount requested, ArtsWestchester may require you to submit a revised scope of service and budget along with the contract for cultural services.

You will also receive an agreement to acknowledge ArtsWestchester and Westchester County support by using our logo, the county's and BOL's logos, and credit line on printed and electronic materials associated with your project (website, social media, announcement cards, posters, programs, etc.), as well as under the appropriate category on your list of contributors. These acknowledgements are a requirement for all awardees and help build greater awareness of the importance of public support.

III. APPLYING FOR A 2026-27 ARTS ACCESS SUPPORT GRANT

ELIGIBLE USES OF ARTS ACCESS FUNDING (PARTIAL LIST)

- Artist Fees (examples - performers, artist commissions, teaching artist)
- Marketing/publicity costs
- Space rental (rehearsal, performance, exhibition, etc.)
- Supplies and materials needed for the execution of the program/project
- Programs that engage a special needs population
- Financial aid/scholarships for enrolled students receiving instruction at or through your organization
- Arts Education programs that integrate the arts or an art form into planned curricula
- Staff salary and fringe (up to 25% of funding request)

INELIGIBLE USES OF ARTS ACCESS FUNDING (PARTIAL LIST)

- Activities conducted outside of Westchester County
- Activities not fully open to the public – for example, activities restricted to an organization's membership. Funded activities must be open to the public and funded as such (with the exception of school-based educational programs and activities).
- Benefits, fundraising activities, development staff
- Capital expenses or projects
- Deficit reduction
- Utilities
- Grant-making organizations/activities
- Prize money, awards, or subgrants to other awardees
- Purchase of permanent equipment

- Purchase of refreshments/artist hospitality
- Tuition-based classes or instructional programs, except need-based financial aid
- Programs/activities that are primarily therapeutic, except by prior approval

In addition, ArtsWestchester does not award Arts Access grants to municipalities or arms of government, schools, colleges, social service agencies or to organizations whose activities are primarily recreational or therapeutic.

Reminder: Organizations conducting activities in multiple locations, including outside of Westchester County, must ensure that *Arts Access* funds are used exclusively for program operations and activities occurring within Westchester County and open to the public, except in the case of school-based education programs or activities.

COMPETITIVE REVIEW PROCESS

Once your application is submitted, ArtsWestchester's staff reviews it for completeness. As part of the review process, a staff member may contact you by telephone or email to clarify certain information; however, it is your responsibility to submit a complete and accurate application. An independent panel reviews your application, along with other applications in your tier. Awards are based on a competitive review process and receiving funding is not guaranteed.

The Grants Committee of ArtsWestchester's Board of Directors reviews the panel's feedback and makes its funding recommendations to the full Board of, which then makes the final decision on all grants.

The following criteria are common to all grants:

- Artistic Merit of Programs
- Community Service and Impact
- Financial Viability

PANEL COMPOSITION

The panel consists of a group of experts in a variety of disciplines; it has a sufficient number of participants to ensure a wide diversity of viewpoints, background, and experiences. To ensure impartiality and to avoid conflicts of interest, ArtsWestchester selects a range panelists both based locally and from outside of Westchester to adjudicate applications for Arts Access Support funding. Panelist recommendations are solicited from individuals and organizations that have expertise in particular artistic fields.

SCORING CRITERIA

Arts Access Support grants are based on the merits of your application as a whole as well as the area(s) where funding is proposed to be allocated. The panel will review all areas of application, including applicant organization mission, capacity, scope of services, financial stability, efforts and accomplishments regarding inclusiveness, and the completeness and accuracy of your application. Make sure you address/discuss/demonstrate the following:

Artistic/Programmatic Excellence - Applicants will be evaluated based on the following artistic questions. Application should address not only organization's background/history and strengths but also how/why

- Quality of the proposed project; evidence of creativity and vision
- Qualifications, background, and experience of the artists involved (resume and recent work samples must be included).
- The strength/clarity of the concept or influence behind the artistic work or services proposed.

- The context in which the work or services are being presented and the appropriateness of the work or services in that context.

Impact and Benefit to the Community

Applications will be evaluated for:

- Benefit(s) the public receives from the project. Benefits may include but are not limited to: providing access to artistic disciplines/experiences under-represented in the county; employing/contracting with Westchester artists; furthering the local economy; or serving/engaging Westchester’s under-resourced communities. (ArtsWestchester considers as “under-resourced” people who have limited access to arts services. Their participation in the arts may be marginalized due to geography, race, economic status, gender, sexual preference, age, religion, or disability.)
- Evidence of community support
- The contribution the artwork and/or services make to the development of a vibrant arts and cultural community in the state.
- Organization provides thoughtful and well-designed educational and interactive activities that help build audience appreciation and understanding of the organization and its work.
- Organization provides attendance data (relevant to the population of the community to be served) as well as participant feedback (if available and appropriate).
- Organization uses venues that are fully accessible to the public and comply with all safety and accessibility standards.
- Organization demonstrates significant efforts to reach and engage a broad array of artists and audiences.
- Degree to which the project will involve and reflect audiences based on the demographics of your service area
- Demonstrated efforts to have broad representation in board, staff, and programming
- Plans for publicizing the project to reach a wide audience, as appropriate

Organizational Stability & Managerial/Fiscal Oversight

Responsible management includes:

- Clear organizational history, leadership structure, and accomplishments
- Fiscal Stability
- Existence of professional staff appropriate to the size and mission of the organization
- Engaging in appropriate, cost-effective fundraising activities (as applicable)
- Appropriate compensation of artists

PANEL REVIEW

ArtsWestchester awards grants on a competitive basis. Each application submitted to the ArtsWestchester will be reviewed and deliberated upon by the panel. ArtsWestchester selects individuals as panelists that represent a variety of viewpoints, experiences, ethnicity, and localities. The size of the panel (generally five to seven people) and diverse backgrounds of panelists ensure impartiality and balance. The panel scores and feedback are forwarded to the Grants Committee of ArtsWestchester’s Board of Trustees. The committee reviews panel recommendations and presents recommendations to the Board, which votes to approve grants.

The panel's review system is based on scoring models used by the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). Scores can range from Poor (1) to Excellent (5). Each application will receive an overall score calculated as the average of *all* criteria scores submitted by the panelists.

“Weaknesses” are defined as follows:

- **Negligible:** A weakness that does not lessen impact but if improved could create a greater impact
- **Minor:** An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact.
- **Moderate:** A weakness that lessens impact.
- **Major:** A weakness that severely limits impact.

Rating	Description	Strengths/Weaknesses
5	Excellent	Very strong, few if any weaknesses
4	Very Good	Strong but may contain minor weaknesses
3	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
2	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
1	Poor	

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

A calendar of info sessions will be listed on the Grants page of the ArtsW website. If you would like to speak with a program officer about your application, please contact the Grants staff at grants@artswestchester.org to schedule an appointment.

NOTIFICATION TIMELINE

ArtsWestchester will announce awards in late June, 2026.

RECONSIDERATION

ArtsWestchester will review written requests for reconsideration if we do not fund your proposal. You may appeal the funding decision under the following circumstances only:

- The review committee did not adhere to the guidelines.
- ArtsWestchester provided incomplete or incorrect information to the review committee.

Dissatisfaction with the funding decision is not justification for an appeal. The introduction of new information not submitted with the original application cannot be used to justify an appeal. ArtsWestchester will accept appeal requests up to thirty (30) days after the date of the notification. Requests must be made in writing, addressed to Sue Abbott, Director of Grant Programs, ArtsWestchester, 31 Mamaroneck Avenue, White Plains, New York, 10601.

IV. COMPLETING THE ARTS ACCESS SUPPORT APPLICATION FORM

ArtsWestchester recommends that you answer the questions in Word, then copy and paste the answers into the on-line application. Most of the questions are self-explanatory, narrative questions are included below. Remember to save your work frequently.

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

Organizational History & Mission (750 words maximum): Provide a brief narrative describing the organization's history including mission statement.

Programming & Services (750 words maximum): Use this field to elaborate on how the organization serves the community and its audience. Include details on the community/region/audience it serves; programs and activities (current & planned); and any efforts/accomplishments related to engaging a broad population. Use the following subheadings to organize your narrative:

- Audience
- Programs and Activities
- Efforts and Accomplishments

Attendance 2023 – 2025: Provide the total number of people served for 2023–2025, including both in-person and virtual participants (if applicable). Totals can be reported either by the organization’s fiscal year **or** by each “season,” indicating when the season begins and ends.

PROPOSED USE OF SUPPORT

Request Narrative (1500 words) Please begin your narrative with the phrase “[Name of Organization] seeks a \$[XX] Arts Access grant. Then briefly describe how the requested funds will be used during the contract period July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027. Provide information on exhibitions planned, performances, if any. If allocating funds for one or more of the following focus areas listed below, please use subheadings within the narrative.

- Special Needs
- Financial Aid
- Arts Education

Note: Special Needs populations may include (but are not limited to) cognitive, developmental, mental, behavioral, neurological, physical, emotional, psychological, or disabilities/impairments such ADD/ADHD, autism, cerebral palsy, deafness, dependence on wheelchair, as well as homeless families & individuals and incarcerated men & women. In the work samples section please include materials specific to this program area.

Financial Aid – Include information on process for determining need-based financial aid is distributed and how the public is made aware about the opportunity to apply for aid. Additional Upload – Financial Aid Brochure and sample application for aid.

Arts Education - Provide details and information about programs designed for students, integrating the arts into the core curricula, on-site education programs, and outreach programs in the community.

Proposed Use of Support Detail Please use the template to detail how funds will be allocated as dollar and percentage amounts. Include notes as applicable.

ORGANIZATION FINANCIALS & ADMINISTRATION

Fiscal Year Start & End Date

Total Organization Income & Expenses (last completed fiscal year)

Board & Staff Details

V. THE COMPONENTS OF A COMPLETE ARTS ACCESS SUPPORT APPLICATION

Deadline: Your electronic application must be completed and submitted by **Wednesday, May 6, 2026 by 11:59 pm.**

The *Arts Access Support for Organizations* application consists of the application form *and* the required supporting documents, including work samples. All materials are to be submitted online with your application form.

Acceptable file types are Adobe Acrobat PDF, Excel, JPEG, MP3, and MP4. If materials are in the form of URLs, please create a separate PDF file titled "URL Materials," including a description of the work sample/content and the URL (link) embedded in the text document. URLs cannot be password protected and must remain live through June 30, 2026. Arts Westchester reserves the right to review any/all of the online sources.

- Maximum number of files (including optional support materials)
 - PDF 10
 - Excel 5
 - JPEG 10
 - MP3 5
 - MP4 5
- Maximum size of all files combined – 250MB

REQUIRED MATERIALS: The following items are *required*. If any are missing, your application is considered incomplete and may be determined ineligible for review.

1. Proof of Nonprofit Status *must* be shown in one of the following formats:

- Letter of Determination from the IRS indicating tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3)
- Documentation of charter by the New York State Board of Regents under section 216 of the New York State Education Law
- Documentation of incorporation under section 402 of the New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation Law
- Current New York State Bureau of Charities (Office of the Attorney General) filing receipt

Note: A *New York State Tax Exemption Certificate* from the Department of Taxation and Finance or a *NYS Tax Exempt Purchase Form* is **not** considered proof of nonprofit status and should not be submitted.

2. Organizational Budgets for *Current Year (2026)* and *Previous Year (2025)*

3. 990 or Audited Financials from the last completed fiscal year

4. Resumes or bios of principal administrative and artistic staff (Executive Director, Marketing/Communications Director, Curator, etc.)

5. List of Current Board of Directors, including name, profession, city of residence and number of years on the board

6. Work Samples that indicate the artistic merit of your organization's programming during the past two seasons and of the proposed project in particular. These may include, but are not limited to:

- **Artworks** uploaded as JPEG and MP4 files; include an explanatory list in a separate PDF file
- **Performances/Presentations** uploaded as MP3 and MP4 files. You may also include Web links to clips hosted on external sites (YouTube, VIZIO, etc.). The panel is unlikely to review more than 3 minutes, cue to the correct chapter or time stamp.
- **Manuscripts, Catalogues, and other Printed Materials** uploaded as PDF files.
- **List of Season Programs** for the *current* season (2025-26) and *two previous* seasons (2024-25 and 2023–24).

OPTIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS: We encourage you to include, as appropriate:

- Marketing materials: brochures/programs (maximum: three)
- Press clippings/on-line articles (maximum: three)
- Letters of support from community members, program participants, elected officials, etc.

Before you click the “Submit” button at the end of the application form, we encourage you to you download and save a copy of the completed form for your files. The application will be accessible in read-only format after the deadline. Any questions, please contact grants staff at grants@artswestchester.org.

Good Luck!

ARTS ACCESS SUPPORT FAQs

How do I access the application?

Applications and all supplemental materials are accepted online only through **Submittable** and may be accessed by visiting <https://artswestchester.submittable.com/>. Applications and any supplemental materials submitted via mail or email will not be considered.

For information regarding creating a **Submittable** account and how to submit an application see this [video](#) from Submittable. Please note, ArtsWestchester does not have access to your established *Submittable* account and cannot make account changes or additions for you. If you have questions related to the grant application, please contact the ArtsWestchester grants department at grants@artswestchester.org. For technical support related to the Submittable grant platform, please see [Submittable Resources](#) or contact [Submittable Customer Support Help Desk](#).

Is application assistance available?

Yes. The free online and in-person information session schedule is as follows:

Session 1: Online via zoom Tuesday, March 31 @ 1:00 pm. To register click [here](#). Once registered, you will receive a confirmation email from Zoom containing the meeting link

Session 2: TBD

Please check ArtsWestchester's website for more information and schedule <https://artswestchester.org/grants/>

Please RSVP for an application information session. If you are unable to attend a session and have questions, please email grants@artswestchester.org.

May I submit more than one funding request for my organization?

No. Eligible organizations applying for Arts Access Support may submit only one application for 2026-27 funding.

I'm an individual, can I apply for Arts Access Support?

No. The *Arts Access Support for Organizations* grant is only available to eligible nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. For individual artist support please see information on the state-funded *Arts Alive* grant.

My organization does work in Westchester but is not located in the county, can I apply for Arts Access Support?

No. As this funding is made possible through the support of Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins and the Westchester County Board of Legislators, the opportunity is only open to nonprofit arts & cultural organizations who are based in Westchester County and meet the outlined eligibility requirements.

How Important Is Diversity/Inclusiveness?

ArtsWestchester's *Arts Access Support for Organizations* grants are supported by public dollars granted by Westchester County government and the Board of Legislators. Therefore, we seek to support organizations and projects that demonstrate efforts to include people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, socio-economic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and religions, as well as those with disabilities. We recognize that an organization's service area informs its efforts to be inclusive, and that organizations will address diversity/inclusiveness in different ways.

How will I know if my organization has received a 2026 Arts Access Support Grant?

ArtsWestchester will notify all applicants electronically regarding the status of their application by late June, 2026. If awarded, you may be contacted by a local elected official in recognition of the funding. Applications and support materials will be stored on an encrypted server for future use. If you do not wish to have your application and support materials saved, it is your responsibility to delete the files from the server.

What is the application review process?

It is your responsibility to submit a complete and accurate application. However, ArtsWestchester staff will review your application and may contact you to clarify information. Awards are based on a competitive review process and receiving funding is not guaranteed. Each application is evaluated on its own merits and against others in the application pool. An independent panel reviews all applications and submits scores and feedback on a variety of criteria.

The Grants Committee of ArtsWestchester's Board of Directors audits the panel review process, is informed of the panel's recommendations and shares them with ArtsWestchester's Board of Directors. The panel's recommendations are then voted on by the full Board of Directors.

Is there an appeals process?

Yes. ArtsWestchester maintains an appeals process to ensure that funding decisions are fair and impartial. The basis on which you may appeal are:

- Failure of the panel to adhere to the review criteria specified
- Submission by ArtsWestchester of incomplete or incorrect information to the panel

Dissatisfaction with the funding decision is not justification for an appeal. The introduction of new information not submitted with the original application cannot be used to justify an appeal. ArtsWestchester will accept appeal requests up to thirty (30) days after the date of the rejection notification. Requests must be made in writing addressed to Sue Abbott, Director of Grant Programs. An Appeals Panel, separate from the original panel, will review the request and will notify you of the appeal decision, which will be final.