



GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT GRANTS Level II

FY25-26 GRANT GUIDELINES

SUBMISSION DETAILS

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: Friday, February 2, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, March 29, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.

Applications will be accepted for activities occurring between
July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2026.

Grant awards will be announced in June 2024.

First-time applicants are highly encouraged to contact AHCMC grants staff.

**All Letters of Intent, applications, and relevant materials must be submitted
online through AHCMC's grants portal.**

Late Letters of Intent, applications, and relevant materials will not be accepted.

*All grant funding is subject to fiscal appropriation, reduction, or termination
by the Montgomery County Government.*

P.O. Box 8817, Silver Spring, MD 20907

(301) 565-3805

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The Mission of the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County

The Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCRC), in partnership with the community, cultivates and supports excellence in the arts and the humanities, expands access to cultural expression, and contributes to economic vitality in the region.

Equity & Inclusion

With the acknowledgment and understanding that access to resources has been historically limited for certain groups of people, AHCRC is committed to cultural equity within all funding activities and to serving communities that have been traditionally underrepresented in mainstream funding, discourse, leadership, and resource allocation including, but not limited to, Black, Indigenous, Native American, Latinx, Chicanx, Arab, MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian), Asian, Pacific Islander, and other communities of color, socio-economically disadvantaged communities, differently abled individuals and/or people with disabilities, and Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual constituents. AHCRC recognizes that language is fluid, and the intersectional justice movement is redefining terminology regularly. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated periodically as language continues to shift over time.

ADA Compliance

Funded programming and the workspace for staff, contractors, and volunteers should be accessible to differently abled individuals and/or people with disabilities. AHCRC encourages applicants to consider physical and programmatic accessibility as an integral part of the project planning and budgeting process. Applicants may include the cost of access accommodations as part of their project’s budget, for example, sign interpreters, audio describers, etc. Additional resources, including a PDF of *Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator’s Handbook*, can be found on [AHCRC’s website](#).

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Introduction

General Operating Support II Grants (GOS II) are available to non-profit arts and/or humanities organizations located in Montgomery County, MD that have had both allowable annual cash operating revenue and expenses of at least \$150,000 for the last three completed consecutive fiscal years. Grants are also available to an arts and/or humanities division within an umbrella non-profit organization, provided that the division's allowable annual cash operating revenue and expenses were at least \$150,000 for the last three completed consecutive fiscal years. Grant awards support organizations that work in a wide array of arts and humanities disciplines including performing arts, media arts, visual arts, literary arts, folk and traditional arts, history, and philosophy.

General operating support is defined as support for day-to-day operating costs to further the general mission or work of an organization rather than for a specific project.

Purpose

By awarding *General Operating Support II Grants*, the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC) seeks to:

- Encourage organizations to maintain an active, two-way, ongoing relationship with the community in the planning, participation, and evaluation of public activities, which include intentional strategies for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA);
- Promote stability in arts and humanities organizations by providing a base of funding to support operating budgets;
- Help ensure diverse arts and humanities experiences for constituents of Montgomery County, MD;
- Stimulate local support and involvement in the arts and humanities, including volunteer participation, audience development, and financial contributions;
- Strengthen the scholarly and artistic capabilities of arts and humanities organizations; and
- Improve and/or stabilize the management infrastructure and effectiveness of arts and humanities organizations.

Grant Award

Multi-year (2-year) Grants: Grants for FY25-6 will be awarded for activities occurring from **July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2026.**

Grant awards for eligible GOS II applicants are based on a percentage of the organization's average total allowable cash revenue or expenses, whichever is lower, over the past three completed consecutive fiscal years, the panel's score, the total number of eligible applicants, and available public dollars. **Grant awards cannot exceed \$600,000.**

FY25-26 GOS II Grants Estimated Timeline

Webinars and Workshops	January 2024
Letter of Intent Deadline	February 2024
Full Application Deadline	March 2024
Panel Review	April/May 2024
Award Announcement	June 2024
FY25 Mid-Year Report	January 2025

Financial Update	June 1, 2025
FY25 Final Report	July 2025
FY26 Mid-Year Report	January 2026
FY26 Final Report	July 2026

Important Notes

- Organizations planning to apply for FY25-26 GOS II Grants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) through AHCMC’s online grant application system **no later than 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 2, 2024.**
 - If the LOI is approved, the applicant will be invited to complete a full application.
 - **Failure to submit an LOI through AHCMC’s grant portal will result in the applicant being deemed ineligible to apply for an FY25-26 GOS II Grant.**
- More than one submission per application for a GOS II Grant per funding period **will not be accepted.**
- Funds can only cover expenses incurred between **July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2026.**
- If awarded, grantees must provide a cash match for the GOS II grant of one dollar for every dollar of grant funds awarded.
- **GOS II applicants may not apply for a *General Operating Support I Grant or Programming & Capacity Building Project Grant* within the same fiscal year.**
- GOS II applicants may apply for either an *Advancement Grant or Capital Grant*¹ within the same fiscal year.
- GOS II applicants may apply for a *Wheaton Cultural Project Grant* within the same fiscal year, provided that the proposed project is not part of the applicant’s regular programming.
- Due to the large volume of requests and limited funding, applications from national, statewide, or regional arts and/or humanities organizations are not accepted at this time.
- Applicants who need assistance or accommodation to complete this application should contact AHCMC grants staff.
- **Organizations that receive funding in Montgomery County Government's base budget for operating expenses (or general operating costs) are ineligible to receive AHCMC grant awards in any and all categories for which the applicant applies if the government’s base budget funding exceeds AHCMC’s maximum grant award amounts.**

Applicant Eligibility Requirements

Eligible applicants are categorized as Core and Affiliate organizations. All organizations eligible to apply must have met all the criteria below for the relevant category **by the published Letter of Intent (LOI) deadline and for the last three completed and consecutive fiscal years:**

CORE ORGANIZATIONS

- Has its primary mission as the exhibition, presentation, production and/or performance of, and/or education in, an arts and/or humanities discipline, and/or provides support services to artists and/or scholars and/or arts and/or humanities organizations;
- Has its primary office in Montgomery County, MD, as demonstrated by the address included in the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Letter of Determination;
- Has a balanced budget and documented allowable annual cash operating revenue and expenses of no less than \$150,000 (see the definition of allowable operating expenses within the Budget

¹ Capital Grants may be applied for through the Montgomery County Grants Office.

Eligibility Requirement section on page 6);

- Demonstrates 501(c)(3) status as described below:
 - Has 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the IRS; or
 - Operates as a specific arts and/or humanities entity or division within a larger 501(c)(3) organization whose primary mission is not arts and/or humanities-based;
- Is governed by an independent, legally liable Board of Directors operating under a mission statement for the organization and an operating budget specific to the organization;
- At least 40% of its Board members reside and/or work in Montgomery County, MD;
- Has as a full-time (35 hours or more) paid executive director, CEO, managing director, or comparable position who reports directly to the organization's Board of Directors and has had that position filled for no fewer than six months prior to submitting the application;
- Offers at least 51% of its programs and services in Montgomery County, MD, as demonstrated by previous, current, and projected activities and programming. **Activities may be open to the public, with or without an admission fee, in person or virtually. If in person, activities should follow current COVID-19 guidelines for in-person events as required by the Montgomery County Health Department ([Click here for health department information about safety requirements for in-person activities](#). [Click here for additional COVID-19 resources](#).);** and
- Has met all outstanding requirements for any grant(s) received from the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County in prior years.

AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

- Has its primary mission as the exhibition, presentation, production and/or performance of, and/or education in, an arts and/or humanities discipline, and/or provides support services to artists and/or scholars and/or arts and/or humanities organizations;
- Has its primary office outside of Montgomery County, MD, however:
 - Has a local Montgomery County, MD telephone number (such as 301 or 240 exchange); and
 - Has staff present on the premises of a Core Organization at least 1,000 hours a year distributed over no fewer than 40 weeks during the year;
- Has a balanced budget and documented allowable annual cash operating revenue and expenses of no less than \$150,000 for its Montgomery County, MD programming (see the definition of allowable operating expenses within the Budget Eligibility Requirement section on page 6);
- Demonstrates 501(c)(3) status as described below:
 - Has 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the IRS; or
 - Operates as a specific arts and/or humanities entity or division within a larger 501(c)(3) organization whose primary mission is not arts and/or humanities-based;
- Is governed by an independent, legally liable Board of Directors operating under a mission statement for the organization and an operating budget specific to the organization;
- At least 15% of its Board members reside and/or work in Montgomery County, MD;
- Has as a full-time (35 hours or more) paid executive director, CEO, managing director, or comparable position who reports directly to the organization's Board of Directors and has had that position filled for no fewer than six months prior to submitting the application;
- Has an agreement with a Core Organization to provide a regular season of programming and/or educational services at the facility of the Core Organization. **Activities may be open to the public, with or without an admission fee, in person or virtually. In-person activities should follow current COVID-19 guidelines as required by the Montgomery County Health Department ([Click here for health department information about safety requirements for in-person activities](#));** and

- Has met all outstanding requirements for any grant(s) received from the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County in prior years.

Budget Eligibility Requirements

An eligible applicant has had allowable annual cash operating revenue and expenses of no less than \$150,000 for the last three completed fiscal years.

Non-allowable cash operating revenue includes, but is not limited to:

- Unrealized gains or losses
- Investment revenues (interest and dividends)
- In-kind donations
- Revenue raised for capital
- Funds intended for re-granting

Non-allowable cash operating expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Investment Fees
- Interest Expenses
- Re-granting²
- Capital improvement expenses/other related costs³
- Depreciation
- Loan principal payments
- In-kind donations
- Bad debt

This list is not exhaustive—there may be additional non-allowable revenue and expenses. Grants program staff will review all financial data and may contact applicants for additional information.

Applicants must use the FY23 audit to complete the AHCMC Budget Worksheet for the 2023 fiscal year. ([Download a template of the Budget Worksheet under the “Application + Templates” tab on the AHCMC website by clicking here.](#)) The Budget Worksheet must be submitted with the FY23 audit **no later than June 1, 2024.**

FOR AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS:

- **In place of the AHCMC Budget Worksheet, Affiliate Organizations must submit a list of FY23 revenue and expenses that directly support eligible programs.** An eligible program is defined as a performance, a production, a class, a lesson, a presentation, a lecture, or other activity that is attended by the public and takes place in Montgomery County, MD.

When expenses are divided between eligible (county) and non-eligible (non-county) programs, the amount included as an expense in this application must be based on a ratio of measurable units, such as number of rehearsals or tickets sold. This ratio is computed as the number of units for the eligible program divided by the total number of the same units for the entire program. For example, expenses could include one-third of total expenses for rehearsing a show that is presented six times – twice in the County and four times outside of the County; the ratio of two to six is one-third.

Eligible expenses are limited to:

- Salaries and benefits of staff based in the County for time spent working on eligible programs;
- Payments to contractors for time spent working on eligible programs;
- Promotion and marketing expenses for eligible programs;
- Lease expenses for space located in the County and used for eligible programs;

² Scholarships, awards, and tuition assistance are considered forms of re-granting.

³ Costs related to improving or expanding the organization’s physical structure must be counted as capital improvement expenses, not as operating expenses.

- Rental of office or production equipment located in the County and used for eligible programs;
- Non-capital equipment or instruments located in the County and leased or acquired for eligible programs;
- Maintenance of space and equipment located in the County and used for eligible programs;
- A portion of promotion and marketing expenses for a program that takes place both inside and outside the County, such as a performance that is repeated in more than one jurisdiction; and
- A portion of the expenses of rehearsing and producing programs that take place both inside and outside the County, such as a performance that is rehearsed outside the County and performed in the County.

Do not include the following expenses:

- A percentage of the whole organization’s overhead expenses; and
- A percentage of staff salaries for staff not based in Montgomery County, MD.

Audit Requirements

All FY25-26 GOS II applicants must submit a full audit. Grants are awarded to applicants that are fiscally stable and have a demonstrated history of fiscal responsibility. If an audit expresses substantial doubt regarding an entity’s ability to continue as a Going Concern, that entity may be deemed ineligible.

- Audits must be prepared by an independent CPA and must include the independent auditor’s report and the notes. The management letter should also be included if the applicant consents to its inclusion.
- At the time of application, applicants must submit an FY23 audit. If not available by the application deadline, the applicant must include FY23 financial statements, signed by the organization’s treasurer or Executive Director, CEO, or comparable position with a letter of extension stating the estimate time for the completed audit.
- The FY23 audit must be submitted to AHCMC **no later than June 1, 2024. If the audit or financial review is not received by June 1, 2024, the applicant will be considered ineligible.**

If awarded an FY25-26 GOS II grant, grantees will be required to submit an FY24 audit as part of the Financial Update by June 1, 2025, to receive FY26 funding.

Match Requirements

Grantees must provide a cash match for the GOS II Grant request of one dollar for every dollar of grant funds awarded. **If funded, grantees must submit documentation with the final report substantiating the entire match.** Documentation may be provided in the form of ticket sale data, copies of acknowledgement letters to donors, award letters from grantors, etc.

Except as restricted below, the cash match may be from any source, including but not limited to reserves, ticket sales, tuition, and/or state and federal grants.

The match may not include:

- In-kind contributions or donated services;
- Any earned revenue from the Montgomery County Government; or
- Grants or appropriations from Montgomery County Government sources.

Grant Limitations

GOS II Grants will not fund:

- Public, private, or charter schools;
- Capital improvements, construction, or renovation projects;
- Purchase of real property, including land, buildings, warehouses, offices, and anything affixed to the land;
- Activities for the exclusive benefit of the grantee's members;
- Fundraising activities;
- Cost of receptions, refreshments, or food;
- Cost of souvenirs such as T-shirts;
- Debt retirement;
- Re-granting⁴;
- Political advocacy or activities that take a position regarding any one political party, candidate, or issue;
- Administrative and programming costs incurred outside of Montgomery County, MD; and
- Travel outside the United States.

Review Panel Process

All eligible applications are evaluated by a panel of arts, humanities, and/or cultural professionals in an open panel review process. Panelists are chosen to represent a cross-section of professionals qualified to provide expert knowledge of specific arts, humanities, and/or cultural disciplines as well as for their management experience, professional knowledge of the sector, and prior panel experience. AHCMC staff make every effort to ensure that the panel is diverse in all respects.

AHCMC staff review applications for eligibility and completeness, but do not score. Staff manage all administrative and logistical tasks necessary to conduct a successful panel review, provide panelists all documentation necessary to evaluate applications effectively, inform the panel in matters of AHCMC policy and procedures, and facilitate panel meetings. Panelists are provided with the eligible applications and support materials approximately four weeks prior to the panel review meeting to allow sufficient time for their evaluation. All eligible applications are evaluated based on the following AHCMC Evaluative Criteria: Organizational Capacity, Programming Quality, Community Impact, and Financial Stability (described in detail below). Scores awarded in FY25 will be used for funding allocations in both FY25 and FY26.

Prior to the panel meeting, panelists will have an opportunity to submit written questions for each grant applicant via AHCMC staff. Applicants will have the opportunity to provide written responses to these questions. Applicant responses to questions will be distributed to all panelists prior to the panel review.

The panel convenes to discuss and provide scores for each application. Panel meetings are open to applicants who wish to observe; however, applicants are not permitted to make any comments or participate in any way at the panel meeting. Applicants may not contact panelists before or after the panel meeting regarding their application review. Once the application deadline has passed and the panel has received the application for review, AHCMC staff will not forward updates from the applicant to the panel.

AHCMC staff use the applicant's panel score to calculate and recommend grant award amounts to AHCMC's Grants Committee. The Grants Committee reviews and revises the grant awards as necessary and forwards their recommendations to the AHCMC Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has final authority to approve or decline all grant awards.

Panel scores and comments are available to all applicants upon request after the award notifications

⁴ Scholarships, awards, and/or tuition assistance are considered forms of re-granting.

have been publicly announced. Applicants are **highly encouraged** to schedule a feedback appointment to review panel scores and comments by contacting Karen Judson, Grants Manager, at (301) 565-3804, or Karen.Judson@creativemoco.com.

Evaluative Criteria

Panelists evaluate and score each FY25-26 GOS II Grant application based on the extent to which the application addresses the following Evaluative Criteria. An applicant's commitment to each of the Evaluative Criteria should thread through the entire application, including the narratives, financials, and support materials. By demonstrating this commitment, organizations of any size and discipline can achieve an exceptional score in each of the four priority areas.

*** Applicants that receive an averaged panel score below 60 points will not be eligible for a grant.***

Organizational Capacity (25 points)

- ✓ Sustains an organizational structure appropriate for the size and scope of the organization;
- ✓ Retains qualified, experienced artistic/scholarly staff and managerial staff;
- ✓ Has achieved or is making demonstrated, intentional progress towards recruiting staff that is diverse and reflective of the community;
- ✓ Has an effective governing Board that provides active and appropriate leadership, operates in accordance with acknowledged best practices in the non-profit sector, and has achieved or is making demonstrated, intentional progress towards Board diversity reflective of the community;
- ✓ Encourages the involvement of volunteers (non-Board) who can help the organization achieve its mission; and
- ✓ Demonstrates evidence of both short- and long-term planning, with Board and staff setting strategic goals for the organization and measuring progress against clearly established benchmarks.

Programming Quality (15 points)

- ✓ Develops programs that are aligned with the organization's mission;
- ✓ Demonstrates a commitment to quality and creativity, including a willingness to experiment and innovate within the stated mission, as well as a willingness to expand and diversify programming to build participation/audiences;
- ✓ Conducts program evaluation involving all stakeholders to measure impact and demonstrates that feedback is utilized in planning; and
- ✓ Demonstrates success of prior programming (i.e., internal evaluation data and external community recognition).

Community Impact (35 points)

- ✓ Uses data and demographics to clearly define audience and demonstrates an understanding of the community to be served;
- ✓ Conducts outreach to engage diverse communities, including underserved and marginalized populations;
- ✓ Includes the community in program planning and evaluation and is responsive to community feedback;
- ✓ Collaborates and forms meaningful partnerships with other stakeholders to achieve the organization's mission;
- ✓ Ensures that programs, services, facilities, and online media are accessible to the public by identifying and removing barriers to participation; and
- ✓ Achieves results indicating that programs are relevant and inspiring to the people, organizations,

and communities for whom they are intended.

Financial Stability (25 points)

- ✓ Utilizes sound financial controls and reporting procedures;
- ✓ Has a clear plan for addressing any deficits or other financial challenges and operates with transparency;
- ✓ Maintains diversity of funding sources, including earned and contributed income;
- ✓ Employs fundraising strategies appropriate for the size of the organization and the community served to ensure sustainability; and
- ✓ Operates with ratio of current assets to current liabilities and liquid net assets appropriate for achieving organizational goals.

The Online Application Process

All applications and relevant materials must be submitted online through the AHCMC SurveyMonkey Apply (SM Apply) grants portal: <https://artsandhumanities.smapply.io/>. For specific questions about SM Apply, please contact Krystle Seit, Grants Coordinator, at (301) 565-3805 ext. 20, or Krystle.Seit@creativemoco.com.

1. Go to [SM Apply](#) and login to your SM Apply account using your username and password.
 - If you do not have an account, create one by clicking the green “Register” button in the upper right-hand corner. Complete all necessary steps to activate your account.
2. Select “Programs” in the upper right-hand corner to view open opportunities.
3. Find the box that reads “FY25-FY26 General Operating Support II Grants” and select the green “More” button.
4. Click the green “Apply” button on the right-hand side.
5. Complete all required tasks marked with an asterisk (*).
6. Submit your application by clicking the green “Submit” button on the left-hand side.
 - Applications cannot be submitted unless all required tasks are marked as complete.
 - Applications that are complete but not submitted by the deadline **cannot be reviewed**.

Required Letter of Intent (LOI) Materials

[Download a template of the LOI under the “Application + Templates” tab on the AHCMC website by clicking here](#). Please note that templates are for the applicant’s reference only; all Letters of Intent, applications, and relevant materials must be submitted online through SM Apply.

Applicants will be asked to confirm and/or upload the following:

1. **Arts and/or humanities mission statement as approved by the applicant’s Board;**
2. **AHCMC Budget Worksheet to confirm at least \$150,000 of allowable annual cash operating revenue and expenses for the last three completed consecutive fiscal years** (refer to pages 4-5 for the different requirements between Core and Affiliate organizations);
 - [Download a template of the Budget Worksheet under the “Application + Templates” tab on the AHCMC website by clicking here](#).
3. **IRS Letter of Determination and 501(C)(3) Status Check in SM Apply as confirmation of non-profit status;**
4. **Montgomery County, MD office address;**
5. **Agreement with Core Organization (Affiliate Organizations only):** Affiliate Organizations must upload a letter confirming that the organization meets the requirements to qualify as an Affiliate Organization, as outlined on page 5 of these guidelines, signed by an authorized representative

- of the Core Organization with which it has an agreement;
6. **List of Board of Directors with affiliation confirming that the eligible percentage of Board members reside and/or work in Montgomery County, MD;**
 - Include residency and work addresses (city and ZIP code accepted) with those who reside and/or work in Montgomery County highlighted;
 7. **Confirmation of a full-time (35 hours or more) paid executive director, CEO, managing director, or comparable position who reports directly to the organization’s Board of Directors and has had that position filled for no fewer than six months prior to submitting the application;**
 - Applicants will be asked to provide the title, contact information, date of hire, and hours for at least one paid employee. Refer to the applicant eligibility requirements on pages 4-5 for the minimum number of hours per week required;
 - Affiliate organization applicants will be asked to confirm staff present on the premises of a Core Organization at least 1,000 hours a year distributed over no fewer than 40-weeks during the year;
 8. **Confirmation that the eligible percent of programs and services are offered in Montgomery County, MD;**
 - Applicants will complete a chart in AHCMC’s grants portal detailing which percentage of activities occur in Montgomery County, MD;
 - Affiliate organization applicants will additionally be asked to confirm a regular season of programming with a Core Organization;
 9. **Confirmation of ability to meet the June 1, 2024 deadline for the FY23990; and**
 10. **Confirmation of ability to meet the June 1, 2024 deadline for the FY23 audit.**

Applicants with approved LOIs will be invited to complete a full FY25-26 GOS II application.

Required Full Application Materials

All documents except for work samples must be submitted as PDFs. (See the work sample directions below for information about acceptable file formats.) Contact AHCMC grants staff for assistance in converting documents to PDFs.

IMPORTANT! Staff will remove materials that exceed the stated limits below.

A completed, online SM Apply application includes:

1. **A Completed Narrative**
 - [Download a template of the application under the “Application + Templates” tab on the AHCMC website by clicking here.](#) Please note that templates are for the applicant’s reference only; all letters of intent, applications, and relevant materials must be submitted through SM Apply.
2. **Organizational Support Materials**
 - Bios of Key Staff and/or Volunteers, indicating paid full-time staff, paid part-time staff, and unpaid volunteers;
 - Current Strategic Plan, if available; and
 - Organizational Chart, if available.
3. **Financial Support Materials**
 - FY23 990, or if not yet available, the letter of extension;

- FY23 audit with the AHCMC Budget Worksheet, or if not yet available, the letter of extension, if applicable, indicating that the FY23 audit will be submitted by June 1, 2024;
- Profit & Loss Statement for the most recently completed fiscal year;
- Balance Sheet for the most recently completed fiscal year;
- Current Fiscal Year Operating Budget with Actuals Year-to-Date; and
- Projected FY25 operating budget, if available.

4. Programming Support Materials

- **One PDF no more than 5 pages including a cover page, if applicable.**
- No more than 5 hyperlinks embedded in Programming Support Materials.
- Include materials that will assist the panel in evaluating the applicant's programming, presenting, and/or producing activities. (i.e., evaluation results of previous programming, testimonials, newspaper clippings, program booklets, photos, brochures, flyers, etc.)

5. Work Sample(s)

- Upload a **maximum of 10 work samples** that demonstrate the applicant's abilities and achievements. **Work samples must be no more than 10 files or 10 pages total (including both images and written work).**
- Applicants are encouraged to submit recently completed and high-quality work samples.
- Space will be provided in the application for a brief description of the work sample(s).
- **Work samples may be submitted in any one or combination of the file formats below.**
 - Images: Up to 4 MB per file, which can be uploaded individually or formatted as one PDF.
 - Audio/Video: Maximum 4, up to 100MB per file, no more than ten minutes combined. **Please note that any submitted audio/video counts towards the limit of 10 work samples.**
 - The SM Apply link feature only supports links to YouTube and Vimeo.
 - If using the SM Apply link feature for YouTube or Vimeo, use the full hyperlink at the top of your browser instead of shorthand links (i.e., use the full <https://www.youtube.com> link, not <https://youtu.be>).
 - Applicants may choose to use the SM Apply link feature or embed the links in a document and upload it as a PDF.
 - If providing links to websites other than YouTube or Vimeo, links must be embedded in a document and uploaded as a PDF. For each link, the entire link should be visible.
 - Check that links are not broken.
 - Check that the content from hyperlinks is viewable and does not require a password.
 - If the submitted video and/or audio is more than ten minutes combined, applicants must include instructions for which segments are relevant. (Ex: Please click on the YouTube hyperlink to watch the video from 0:47 to 4:10.)
 - Written Work:
 - Double-spaced with at least 11-point font and 1-inch margins.
 - If the work submitted is a portion of a larger work, include a synopsis of the chapters and an outline of the complete work. Clearly explain how and where the piece submitted fits into the whole.
- Work samples should reflect the primary discipline of the applicant.
 - For Presenting and/or Multidisciplinary: work sample(s) should convey more

than one arts and/or humanities discipline.

- For Performing and Media Arts: applicants are highly encouraged to submit video or audio work samples, instead of stills or photos.

6. A Completed AHCMC Reporting Data Form

- **This form corresponds with AHCMC's reporting obligations. Responses will not be factored into eligibility or the panel review for the FY25-26 GOS II Grants.** All responses will be kept confidential. Responses will only be shared publicly in the aggregate.

Grant Preparation Assistance

First-time applicants and/or applicants who need assistance or accommodation to complete the application are highly encouraged to contact AHCMC grants staff.

Grant Preparation Webinars

AHCMC will conduct free grant preparation webinars to instruct prospective applicants on how to complete grant applications. While attendance is not required, AHCMC strongly encourages all potential applicants to attend webinars, even if the applicant has applied previously. Whether or not an applicant attends a webinar will not be a factor in evaluating the application. Please go to <https://www.creativemoco.com/find-opportunities/newsletters/> to join the AHCMC Grants Program email list and receive notifications about grant opportunities, deadlines, and webinars.

Personal Appointments

Personal appointments with AHCMC staff are available for those who are unable to attend a webinar or who need additional assistance. Appointments can include assistance with the content of the application, such as a draft review, and/or assistance navigating the online grants portal. Consultation services in languages other than English are available by appointment.

Personal appointments must be held **at least two weeks prior to the application deadline. Drafts for review must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the application deadline.** To schedule an appointment, contact Karen Judson, Grants Manager at (301) 565-3804, or Karen.Judson@creativemoco.com.

Grant Award Calculations

FY25 GOS II base awards will be determined using the following calculations:

- Using the submitted budget worksheets, AHCMC staff will determine each applicant's allowable cash revenue and expenses for the past three completed fiscal years (FY21, FY22, and FY23).
- Using either allowable cash revenue or allowable cash expenses for each of the past three completed fiscal years, whichever is lower, AHCMC will average those numbers to calculate each organization's eligible FY25 budget.
- Base awards will be a percentage of the FY25 eligible budget for each organization. AHCMC strives to grant a minimum 5% base award, contingent on Montgomery County funding.⁵

⁵ Exact percentages and calculations will not be available until after the final FY23 County budget has been determined, the panel has reviewed and evaluated applications, and final FY21 audits and Budget Worksheets have been submitted by all applicants. Base awards are expected to be announced in June 2022; competitive bonus awards, if available, will be announced approximately 30 days after the last grantee one-on-one meeting with AHCMC, and in accordance with the appeal process timeline as described on page 15 of the guidelines. FY24 grant awards will follow the same process.

In the event that funds available for GOS II are sufficient to award each organization a minimum of a 5% base award as outlined above; the **competitive excellence awards** system will trigger:

- Additional funds available will be used to award competitive excellence awards, which will be determined using the average score given by the panel based on the evaluative criteria published in these guidelines.
- Organizations that receive a score above the average score for FY25-26 GOS II eligible applicants will be eligible for a competitive excellence award. The amount of the award will be determined by the degree to which the organization exceeds the average score.
- **Not all organizations will receive competitive excellence awards.**
- Competitive excellence awards will be added to the base award to determine the total award.

The base award will be recalculated for FY26, **based on updated financials submitted by the grantee and the Montgomery County allocation.** Organizations that receive an excellence award in FY25 will receive an excellence award in FY26, based on the panel score received in FY25.

Post-Award Information

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read this section carefully before applying.

Grant Agreement

Following the award of a grant, an authorized representative of each grantee must sign a Grant Agreement with AHCMC stating that the grantee agrees:

- To complete and submit the Bill.com contact form on SurveyMonkey Apply and create an account on Bill.com for direct deposit of grant funds;
- To comply with all FY25-26 *General Operating Support II Grants* eligibility and other guideline requirements throughout the duration of the grant period;
- To use the grant funds only for operating expenses during the period of **July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2026;**
- Not to use the grant funds the activities listed under “Grant Limitations” **on pages 7-8** of the FY25-26 GOS II Grant guidelines;
- To use funds only for administrative or programming costs incurred in Montgomery County, MD. Award funds cannot be used for administrative or programming costs incurred due to activities that took place outside of Montgomery County, MD (i.e., other counties in Maryland, Washington D.C., or Virginia);
- To return any grant funds not spent, or not spent in compliance with published grant guidelines, grant agreement, and/or the approved grant proposal no later than **July 31, 2026;**
- To submit an **FY25 mid-year report to AHCMC no later than January 31, 2025,** and an **FY26 mid-year report no later than January 31, 2026.** Reports are submitted through AHCMC's online grants system, informing AHCMC of any significant changes in programming, communal impact, financials and personnel that have occurred since the grant has been awarded;
- To submit an **FY25 final report to AHCMC no later than July 31, 2025,** and an **FY26 final report no later than July 31, 2026.** FY25 final reports received after July 31, 2025, and FY26 final reports received after July 31, 2026 could have an adverse impact on the likelihood of receiving future awards;
- Not to discriminate against any person on the basis of any characteristic described in Section 27-1(a) of Chapter 27 of the Montgomery County Code;
- To comply with all ADA requirements pertaining to the organization;
- To acknowledge the support of the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County and the

Montgomery County Government on all materials distributed to the public, including use of the AHCMC logo when possible; and

- To provide complimentary access to any public activities upon request of AHCMC staff.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in cancellation of funds, forfeiture of funds, and/or ineligibility to apply for future awards.

Grantees are encouraged to notify AHCMC about exhibitions, performances or other activities resulting from this grant and to participate in CultureSpotMC.com, AHCMC's online calendar.

Grant Disbursement

Grant awards will be disbursed to each grantee for each fiscal year of the grant period.

FY25 Disbursement

Grant award will be disbursed in full following AHCMC's receipt of:

- The required Grant Agreement;
- The required Bill.com contact form and the creation of a Bill.com account, allowing direct deposit of funds to the grantee's bank account⁶;
- The required one-on-one meeting with AHCMC grants staff;
- The grantee's payment for outstanding constituent service fees (i.e., MarketPower), if applicable; and
- **Payment from the Montgomery County Government to AHCMC for the grants awarded.**⁷

FY26 Disbursement

Grant awards will be disbursed in full following AHCMC's receipt of:

- The required FY26 Grant Agreement;
- The required FY25 Final Report;
- The required Financial Update, which includes the FY24 audit, 990, and AHCMC Budget Worksheet;
- The required one-on-one meeting with AHCMC grants staff;
- The grantee's payment for outstanding constituent service fees (i.e., MarketPower and CultureSpot), if applicable; and
- **Payment from the Montgomery County Government to AHCMC for the grants awarded.**⁸

Appeals Process for Competitive Excellence Awards

AHCMC takes great care during the grant review process to ensure fair and equitable distribution of grant monies based on the criteria stated in the guidelines. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the amount of the award is not sufficient reason for an appeal. However, a grant request may be reconsidered if a procedural impropriety or error has affected the review of the application.

Grounds for reconsideration are:

- A decision based on evaluative criteria other than those stated in these guidelines; or
- A decision based on material provided to panelists, Grants Committee, and/or Board members

⁶ Grant awards are disbursed through Bill.com, a paperless payment system that allows AHCMC to send online and secure E-payments.

⁷ AHCMC may not receive grant funds by July 1, 2022, for disbursement, however grantees may begin to allocate funds for allowable expenses as of July 1, 2022.

⁸ AHCMC may not receive funds by July 1, 2023, for disbursement, however grantees may allocate funds for allowable expenses incurred between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

that was substantially incorrect, inaccurate, or incomplete despite the applicant having provided AHCMC with correct, accurate, and complete application information.

Based on the above, if an applicant believes that there is a legitimate reason to appeal, the following steps must be taken:

- The applicant must discuss the problem with the grants staff member who handled the application.
- If the applicant wishes to pursue an appeal, the applicant must send a letter to the AHCMC Chief Executive Officer **within 30 days following receipt of the panel comments and estimated competitive excellence award**, requesting a reconsideration of the decision, and stating the grounds for the request.
- Appeals will be reviewed by both AHCMC grants staff and the AHCMC Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has final authority to approve all grant awards.
- The applicant will receive written notification on the determination of the appeal within 45 days of the receipt of the written request for reconsideration.

Reporting

All grantees are required to submit four online reports throughout the cycle: one mid-year and one year-end report for 2025 and 2026. These reports allow AHCMC staff to understand progress measured against goals, offer support where necessary, and provide an opportunity for organizations to reflect on their activities during the year. Submitting a late report may have a detrimental impact on an applicant's eligibility for future funding.

Financial Update

In order to receive FY26 funding, grantees will be required to submit their FY24 990, audit, and FY24 Budget Worksheet by June 1, 2025.

Return of Grant Funds

- The grantee must return the grant funds if the grantee is unable to implement the grant as described in the grant agreement. **Please contact AHCMC grants staff before grant funds are returned.**
- If AHCMC determines that grant funds were spent for activities not in compliance with these guidelines and/or not aligned with the approved grant proposal, the grantee must return the amount spent on non-allowable expenses.
- **Grant funds received but not spent by June 30, 2025, must be returned to AHCMC by July 31, 2025, with the grantee's FY25 final report.**
- **Grant funds received but not spent by June 30, 2026, must be returned to AHCMC by July 31, 2026, with the grantee's FY26 final report.**

Important Reminders & Tips

- Applications must be submitted online through AHCMC grants portal **by 11:59 p.m. by the posted deadline. Late applications will not be accepted.**
- Applications that are emailed, delivered in person, faxed, or submitted in any fashion other than the online grants system will not be accepted.
- **Follow the instructions in SM Apply carefully.**
- Write clearly and concisely—do not use jargon. Remember that the panelists who are reading

the application may be unfamiliar with the applicant's work.

- Keep in mind that AHCMC staff do not participate in panel discussions—the application must stand on its own.
- Be sure to reference the evaluative criteria when preparing and writing the application.
- Before submitting, proofread the application for readability and content.
- **To avoid unanticipated technical glitches, do not wait until the deadline to submit.**

SUBMISSION DETAILS

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: Friday, February 2, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, March 29, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.

Applications will be accepted for activities taking place between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2026.

Grant awards will be announced in June 2024.

All Letters of Intent, applications, and relevant materials must be submitted online through AHCMC's grants portal.

Questions?

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Karen Judson, Grants Manager
(301) 565-3804, or Karen.Judson@creativemoco.com

Krystle Seit , Grants Coordinator
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Applicants are encouraged to learn more about energy-efficient opportunities to reduce energy costs at <http://montgomerycountymd.gov/green/>.