



## **ADVANCEMENT GRANTS**

### **FY21 GUIDELINES**

#### **SUBMISSION DETAILS**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, February 21, 2020 – 11:59 p.m.**

Applications will be accepted for projects occurring from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

The grant award announcement will occur in June 2020.

First-time applicants are highly encouraged to contact Grants Program staff.

**All applications and relevant materials must be submitted online at <http://artsandhumanities.fluidreview.com>.**

**Late applications and materials will not be accepted.**

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

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## The Mission of the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County

The Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC), 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 and Inclusion

With the acknowledgement and understanding that access to resources has been historically limited for certain groups of people, AHCMC 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 African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) constituents, socio-economically disadvantaged communities, differently abled individuals, and LGBTQ+ communities.

### ADA Compliance

Funded projects should be accessible to people with disabilities. AHCMC 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. Tips for how to implement project accessibility can be found [here](#).

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## Introduction

*Advancement Grants* are available to non-profit arts and humanities organizations located in Montgomery County, MD, that have annual cash expenses of at least \$50,000 for the most recently completed fiscal year. FY21 *Advancement Grants* cover activities occurring from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

## Grant Award

The award amounts for *Advancement Grants* range from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

**Organizations applying for \$25,000 to \$50,000 MUST submit an FY19 audit, or a review of FY19 financial statements if an audit is not available. Requests for over \$50,000 require an FY19 audit.**

Grant awards will be determined based on a competitive process that includes review by an advisory panel. The panel evaluates the applications based on the criteria contained in these guidelines.

Grant awards support organizations that work in a wide array of arts disciplines including performing arts, media arts, visual arts, literary arts, and folk and traditional arts. Grants also provide funding for the humanities, including history, literature, and philosophy.

## Purpose

By awarding *Advancement Grants*, the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC) seeks to:

- Assist arts and humanities organizations in maintaining fiscal stability and long-term viability;
- Support arts and humanities organizations in their long-term planning, planning for capital improvement projects, and/or technology improvements critical to their mission; and
- Encourage the use of intentional strategies for achieving equity, diversity, inclusion and access in the field

## FY21 *Advancement Grants* Estimated Timeline

Webinars and Workshops	January 2020
Application Deadline	February 2020
Panel Review	April 2020
Award Announcement	June 2020
Mid-Year Report	January 2021
Final Report	July 2021

## Organization Eligibility Requirements

An organization is eligible to apply for an FY21 *Advancement Grant* if the applicant has met all the criteria below for the previous three consecutive fiscal years. These requirements must be met prior to the application deadline:

- Has its primary mission as the exhibition, presentation, production or performance of the arts/humanities; and/or the applicant's mission includes educating the public about the arts and/or humanities; and /or the applicant provides support services to artists and/or scholars and/or humanities organizations;
- Has a balanced budget and annual documented cash operating expenses of no less than \$50,000

for the most recently completed fiscal year (see the definition of operating expenses within the Budget Eligibility Requirement section on page 5);

- Demonstrates 501(c)(3) status through one of the following ways:
  - The applicant has IRS code 501(c)(3) status;
  - The applicant operates as a specific arts and/or humanities entity or division within a larger 501(c)(3) organization whose primary mission is not arts or humanities based;
- The applicant has its principal office in Montgomery County, as demonstrated by the address included in the IRS Letter of Determination;
- 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;
- Has at least 40% of its board members reside and/or work in Montgomery County as of the grant application deadline;
- The applicant offers at least 51% of its programs and services in Montgomery County, as demonstrated by previous, current, and projected activities/programming;
- Has at least one paid staff person working a minimum of 5 hours a week to support the organization's Board, comply with the grant requirements, and maintain ongoing programming. Requests for over \$25,000 require at least one paid staff person working a minimum of 20 hours a week to support the organization's Board, comply with the grant requirements, and maintain ongoing programming; and
- Has met all outstanding requirements for any grant(s) received from the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County in prior years.

**An organization that received an *Advancement Grant* in FY19 and FY20 is not eligible to apply for an *Advancement Grant* under the FY21 guidelines.** Organizations that received two-years of consecutive funding in FY19 and FY20 may apply for an FY21 *Capital Improvement Project Grant* (CIP) or an FY22 *Advancement Grant*.

## Proposal Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, the *Advancement Grant* proposal must meet the following requirements:

- Contributes to the organization's fiscal stability and long-term viability
- Addresses long-term planning, planning for capital improvement projects, or technology improvements critical to an organization's arts or humanities mission
- Heightens the applicant's ability to provide services that directly benefit Montgomery County constituents

Examples of eligible proposals include, but are not limited to:

- Purchase of equipment or software intended to upgrade the organization's technological capacity or a project designed to improve the optimization of existing technology
- Board or staff training, in an area such as financial management
- Creation of a long-term strategic or business plan
- Identification and implementation of organizational strategies to achieve greater Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and/or Access (DEIA)
- Studies and plans related to new and replacement machinery, [research and development](#) and the [production](#) of new [services](#), and other major [capital expenditures](#). This is also called [investment appraisal](#), or [capital budgeting](#)

## Budget Requirements

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

- General operating expenses
- Investment Fees
- Interest Expenses
- Re-granting
- Capital improvements/other related costs
- Depreciation
- Loan principal payments
- In-kind donations
- Bad debt

Non-allowable as cash operating income include, but not limited to:

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

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

## Audit Requirements

- Organizations applying for \$25,000 or less do not need to submit an audit or a financial review.
- Organizations applying for over \$25,000 and up to \$50,000 must submit a financial review of FY19 financial statements and/or FY19 audit. A financial review must be conducted by an independent CPA in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services. The CPA's report should describe the scope of the review and a statement of findings. Additional information about financial reviews can be found on our website.
- **Organizations applying for more than \$50,000 must submit an audit prepared by an independent Certified Public Accountant for their 2019 fiscal year.**
- The audit submitted to AHCMC must include the independent auditor's report, including the notes. The management letter should also be included if the organization consents to its inclusion.
- If the audit and/or review is not completed by the application deadline, the applicant must include a financial statement for FY19 signed by the organization's treasurer with a letter stating the estimated date for when the FY19 audit or review will be submitted to AHCMC.
- The FY19 audit and/or review must be submitted to AHCMC **no later than June 1, 2020. If the audit or review is not received by June 1, 2020, the organization will be disqualified.**
- Grants awards are given to organizations that are fiscally stable and have a demonstrated history of fiscal responsibility. If an audit and/or review expresses substantial doubt regarding an entity's ability to continue as a Going Concern, that entity may be deemed ineligible.

## Matching Requirements

To be eligible, the applicant must provide a cash match for the *Advancement Grant* request of one dollar for every dollar of grant funds awarded.

- Sources of the matching funds may include gifts from new donors and increased gifts from current donors.

- At least 50% of the cash match must be from donors that are new to the applicant or gift increases from current donors. **Donors who have not given before June 30, 2019 are considered new donors.** Applicants must submit documentation explaining the gifts from new donors and gifts increases from current donors.
- Except as restricted below, the remaining match may be from any source, including reserves, ticket sales, tuition, or state and federal grants.

The match may not include:

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

If funded, the applicant must submit documentation substantiating the entire match, and a confirmation that at least 50% of the matching funds are new donations (as explained above).

## Grant Limitations

- The activity and expenditures for the activity must occur no earlier than July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021
- Activities may not take place before a Grant Agreement between the organization and AHCMC is signed
- Grant requests below \$10,000 will not be accepted
- Grant requests above \$100,000 will not be accepted
- Grant requests for more than **one** *Advancement Grant* per fiscal year will not be accepted
- Grant requests for more than **one** project per *Advancement Grant* will not be accepted
- **An organization that received an *Advancement Grant* in FY19 and FY20 is not eligible to apply for an FY21 *Advancement Grant*.** Organizations that received two-years of consecutive funding in FY19 and FY20 may apply for an FY21 *Capital Improvement Project Grant* (CIP) or an FY22 *Advancement Grant*
- ***Advancement Grants* will not fund:**
  - General Operating Expenses;
  - Purchase of real property, including land, buildings, warehouses, offices, and anything affixed to the land;
  - Scholarships or tuition assistance awarded by the organization;
  - Costs of receptions, refreshments or food;
  - Cost of merchandise such as T-shirts;
  - Debt retirement;
  - Political advocacy, or activities that support or promote the interests of any one political party;
  - Activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization's members; and
  - Travel outside the United States.

## Application and 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 provide the applications and support materials to panelists approximately four weeks prior to the panel review meeting in order to allow panelists sufficient time for their evaluation. During the panel review meeting, the panel evaluates all eligible applications based on AHCMC Evaluation Criteria: Effectiveness of Project, Quality of Proposed Management, and Appropriateness of Budget and Amount of Grant Request (described in detail below).

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.

The panel meets in person 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 grant review.

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.

The panel scores and comments are available to the applicant upon request after the award notifications have been publicly announced. Applicants may contact Karen Judson, Grants Program Manager, at (301) 565-3805 ext. 28, or [Karen.Judson@creativemoco.com](mailto:Karen.Judson@creativemoco.com).

## Evaluation Criteria

Panelists use the Evaluation Criteria to score the application. Your organization's commitment to each Evaluation Criteria should thread through your entire application, including the narratives, financials and support materials. By demonstrating this commitment, organizations of any size and discipline can achieve an exceptional rating in each of the three priority areas.

Each *Advancement Grant* application will be evaluated based on the extent to which it addresses the following criteria:

### Effectiveness of Project (50 points)

- ✓ Project is essential to the mission and core work of the organization
- ✓ Objectives are clearly stated and achievable
- ✓ Project is an effective way to reach these objectives
- ✓ Achieving these objectives will significantly enhance the organization's capacity to engage with the community, fiscal stability and long-term viability

- ✓ Applicant clearly articulates how the completion of the project will benefit Montgomery County constituents

### **Quality of Proposed Management (25 points)**

- ✓ Implementation plan, including timeline, is clearly described and achievable
- ✓ Individuals who have participated in the planning and who will direct, manage and/or participate in the proposed project are well qualified

### **Appropriateness of Budget and Amount of Grant Request (25 points)**

- ✓ Sources and amounts of anticipated matching funds are reasonable and attainable
- ✓ Budget is reasonable, realistic, clear, and complete
- ✓ Budget is appropriate for the scale of the project
- ✓ Budget is adequate to achieve the project objectives

## **Grant Disbursements**

Grant payments will be made following AHCMC's receipt of the signed Grant Agreement, a voided check with organization's name, and payment from Montgomery County to AHCMC for the total of the grants awarded.

AHCMC will not release an organization's grant payment until the organization has:

- Submitted its final report from previous year, if applicable;
- The applicant is in good standing with AHCMC and has paid all constituent service fees (i.e. MarketPower and CultureSpot payments) have been fulfilled.

## **Changes in Grant Implementation**

The grantee must alert AHCMC in case of significant changes in the organization's administration, financials, and/or programming. The grantee must submit a change request form and get AHCMC approval—a meeting may be required. In case the grantee is not able to implement its programs and/or conduct business as described in the grant agreement, the grantee must return the grant funds.

- All requests for project changes must be submitted in writing on a form supplied by AHCMC.
- **Requests for project changes will not be considered, after May 31, 2021.**

## **Return of Grant Funds**

- The grantee must return the grant funds if it is not possible to carry out the project as described in the grant agreement. **Please contact Grants Program staff before grant funds are returned.**
- If AHCMC determines that grant funds were spent for activities not in compliance with these guidelines, or for activities that were not described within the approved grant proposal, the grantee must return the amount spent on non-allowable expenses.
- **Grant funds received but not spent by June 30, 2021 must be returned to AHCMC by July 31, 2021 with the grantee's final report.**



## Grant Agreement and Reporting

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

- Use the grant funds only for the purposes described in the grant proposal(s);
- Repay any grant funds not used for the stated purpose of the grant;
- Not use the grant funds for: general operating expenses; purchase of real property; scholarships or tuition assistance awarded by the organization; costs of receptions, refreshments or food; cost of merchandise such as T-shirts; debt retirement; political advocacy, or activities that support or promote the interests of any one political party; activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization's members; and travel outside the United States;
- The grantee must operate the funded project through a Montgomery County office;
- Not discriminate against any person on the basis of any characteristic described in Section 27-1(a) of Chapter 27 of the Montgomery County Code or on the basis of political opinion or affiliation in any of its policies, procedures or practices;
- 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;
- Send copies to AHCMC of all materials that are distributed to the public, e.g., flyers, brochures, program booklets;
- Submit a completed mid-year report to AHCMC no later than **January 31, 2021** through AHCMC's online grants system; and
- Submit a final report through AHCMC's online grants system no later than **July 31, 2021**, presenting information about the implementation of the project funded by this grant, including evidence that the required match has been obtained. AHCMC will reduce the total grant award by 5% for any organization that submits its final report after July 31, 2021.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in grant cancellation, forfeiture of remaining funding, return of disbursed grant amount, and ineligibility to apply for future grants.

Grantees are encouraged to notify AHCMC about exhibitions, performances or other activities resulting from this grant and to participate in [CultureSpotMC.com](http://CultureSpotMC.com), AHCMC's online calendar.

## The Online Application Process

All applications and materials for *Advancement Grants* must be submitted online on the AHCMC [FluidReview](#) portal.

1. Log on to your FluidReview account using your username and password. If you don't have an account, go to <https://artsandhumanities.fluidreview.com/> to create one.
2. Once you have created your online account, you will be able to access the application portal. Select "View Grants" to see open grant applications.
3. Select "Create Submission" on the right for "FY21 Advancement Grant Application."
4. On the main application form, before moving on to the next page, be sure to click "Save" at the bottom of each page.

If you have any questions, please contact Ana-Alicia Feng, Grants Program Coordinator, at (301) 565-3805 ext. 21, or [AnaAlicia.Feng@creativemoco.com](mailto:AnaAlicia.Feng@creativemoco.com).

## Required Application Materials

A completed, online FluidReview application includes:

### 1. Completed narrative

- Download a Word template of the application under the “Application” tab on our website [here](#). Please note that you will have to fill out this form on FluidReview.

### 2. Organizational Support Materials

- The organization’s IRS Letter of Determination (if the applicant organization did not apply for a grant from AHCMC in FY20 or if there have been changes to the applicant’s non-profit status);
- List of Board of Directors with residency and work address (city and zip code acceptable);
- List of key staff with bios, indicating paid full-time staff, paid part-time staff, and unpaid volunteers;
- The organization’s current Strategic Plan, if available; and
- Organizational Chart, if available.

### 3. Project Support Materials – One PDF

- If the application requests funds for equipment or technology, one of the support materials must be a list of the items that will be purchased with a list of possible manufacturers/vendors and the estimated cost of each item. Materials should assist the reviewers in determining how you designed or planned your activity.
- These materials may include reports from earlier phases of the project, consultant proposals, consultant CVs, information about how other organizations have approached similar activities, articles about best practices in the field for this type of activity, or relevant training bulletins.

### 4. Financial Support Materials

- The organization’s FY19 990, or if the FY19 990 is not yet available, the letter of extension. **If the FY19 990 is not received by June 1, 2020, the organization will be disqualified;**
- The organization’s FY19 audit and/or review, if the requested amount is \$25,000 or more. **If the FY19 audit and/or review is not submitted by June 1, 2020, the organization will be considered ineligible**
- The organization’s financial statements (Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet) for the most recently completed fiscal year;
- Current fiscal year operating budget with actuals year-to-date;
- Budget Worksheet provided by AHCMC; and
- Documentation of pledges of financial support.

### 5. Programming Support Materials - One PDF

- Include materials that will help the panel understand the applicant’s artistic or humanities activities, i.e., newspaper clippings, program booklet, photos, brochures, or fliers.

### 6. Work Sample

- Upload work sample(s) that demonstrate the applicant’s abilities and achievements. Provide information that explains to the reviewer what the work sample is and how it relates to your proposed project. Applicants should submit their strongest work samples. Quality work samples are critical to the evaluation of your application. **Performing arts organizations and groups are highly encouraged to submit audio or video samples, instead of stills or photos.** If

your work includes audience interaction, a live performance recording is helpful. Applicants should submit recent samples. Submit your Work Sample in the format specified below:

- Video: Maximum 2 videos, up to 100 MB per file, no more than five minutes combined.
- Audio: Maximum 2 files, up to 10 MB per file, no more than five minutes combined.
- Live video or audio hyperlinks can also be placed within PDF that is uploaded to FluidReview (i.e., an applicant can submit a live hyperlink to YouTube within a PDF)
- Images: Maximum 15 images, up to 4 MB per file, which can be uploaded individually or formatted as one PDF.
- Upload written work as follows:
  - For prose, submit no more than 10 pages plus a chapter outline/synopsis;
  - For poetry, scripts, or screenplays, submit no more than 10 pages;

## Grant Preparation Assistance

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

### Grant Preparation Workshops and Webinars

AHCMC will conduct free grant preparation webinars and workshops to instruct prospective applicants on how to complete grant applications. While attendance is not required, AHCMC strongly encourages all potential applicants to attend grant preparation events, even if the applicant has applied previously. Whether or not an applicant attends a webinar or a workshop will not be a factor in evaluating the application. Please click [here](#) or go to <http://creativemoco.com/grants/> to join our email list and receive notifications about grant deadlines, webinars, and workshops.

### Personal Appointments

Personal appointments are available for those who are unable to attend a webinar or a workshop or who need additional assistance. These appointments are available for assistance with both the content of the application and/or assistance with the online grant application system. 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.

To schedule an appointment, contact Karen Judson, Grants Program Manager at (301) 565-3805 ext. 28, or [Karen.Judson@creativemoco.com](mailto:Karen.Judson@creativemoco.com)

## Important Reminders:

1. Applications must be submitted online at <https://artsandhumanities.fluidreview.com> by **11:59 p.m. on the posted deadline.**
2. All required materials must be submitted online by the deadline or the application will not be accepted.
3. Applications that are emailed, delivered in person, faxed or submitted in any fashion other than the online grants system will not be accepted
4. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

### **TIPS**

- Write clearly and concisely—do not use jargon. Remember that the people who are reading your application may be unfamiliar with your organization, and/or organizations in Montgomery County and/or current events in Montgomery County.
- Keep in mind that the AHCMC staff does not participate in panel discussions. The application must stand on its own.
- Be sure to reference the evaluation criteria as you are developing and writing your application.
- Applicants are encouraged to learn more about energy-efficient opportunities to reduce energy costs at <http://montgomerycountymd.gov/green/>

### **SUBMISSION DETAILS**

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Grant awards will be announced in June 2020.

**First-time applicants are highly encouraged to contact Grants Program staff.**

**All applications and materials must be submitted online at**  
<http://artsandhumanities.fluidreview.com>.

### **Questions?**

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