arts & humanities
council of montgomery county

New Name! GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT GRANTS
Level I

Formerly General Operating Support Grants for Mid-Size Arts & Humanities Organizations

FY21 GRANT GUIDELINES

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Letter of Intent (LOI) DEADLINE: Friday, February 14, 2020- 11:59 p.m.

Application DEADLINE: Friday, March 13, 2020 – 11:59 p.m.

Applications will be accepted for activities 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.

Letter of Intent, Applications, and all relevant materials must be submitted online at http://artsandhumanities.fluidreview.com

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

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

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 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](#).

Table of Contents

Introduction

General Operating Support I Grants (GOS I) are available to Montgomery County, MD based non-profit arts and humanities organizations that have both annual cash operating expenses and cash operating income of $50,000 to $150,000. Organizations that have annual expenses of more than $150,000 are also eligible if the organization is not applying for *General Operating Support II Grants (GOS II)*.

General Operating Support is defined as support for day-to-day operating costs or to further the general mission or work of an organization, rather than for a specific project. Grant awards support organizations that work in a wide array of arts disciplines including performing arts, folk and traditional arts, media arts, visual arts, literary arts, and humanities disciplines including history and philosophy.

Applicants must submit a balanced budget for the most recently completed fiscal year of **no less than** $50,000 and have had annual cash operating expenses/income of at least $50,000 during the past three completed consecutive fiscal years.

Grant Award

The grant request may not exceed 35% of the organization's most recently completed fiscal year's cash operating expenses/income or $50,000, whichever is lower. Requests over $25,000 require the applicant to submit an FY19 audit, or a review of their FY19 financial statements if an audit is not available (see additional information under Financial Support Materials on page 10). FY21 grants will be awarded for activities occurring on July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

Purpose

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

- Encourage organizations to maintain an active, two-way, ongoing relationship between the organization and the community in the planning, participation, and evaluation of public activity/activities, which include intentional strategies for diversity, equity, access, and inclusion;
- 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;
- 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;
- Improve and/or stabilize the management infrastructure and effectiveness of arts and humanities organizations.

FY21 *GOS I Grants* Estimated Timeline

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

Letter of Intent (LOI)

All organizations planning to apply for FY21 *GOS I Grants* must submit a *Letter of Intent* through AHCMC's online grant application system at http://artsandhumanities.fluidreview.com **no later than 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 14, 2020.**

- Failure to submit a *Letter of Intent* through AHCMC's online grant application system will result in the applicant being deemed ineligible to apply for an FY21 *GOS I Grant*

Organization Eligibility Requirements

An organization may be eligible to apply for an FY21 *GOS I Grant* if the applicant has submitted a Letter of Intent by the published deadline demonstrating that it has met all the following criteria for at least the previous three consecutive fiscal years immediately prior to the application deadline:

- Has its primary mission the exhibition, presentation, production or performance of, and/or education in, an arts and/or humanities discipline; and/or provides support services for artists and/or scholars and for arts and/or humanities organizations;
- Has a balanced budget and annual documented cash operating expenses/income of no less than $50,000 (see definition of cash operating expenses/income in the Budget Eligibility Requirements section on page 5);
- Demonstrates 501 (c)(3) status through one of the following ways:
  - o The applicant has 501 (c)(3) status, as evidenced by their IRS Letter of Determination;
  - o 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;
- Has its primary office in Montgomery County, as demonstrated by the IRS Letter of Determination;
- Is governed by an independent, legally liable Board operating under a mission statement for the organization and an operating budget specific to the organization;
- At least 40% of the applicant's board members reside and/or work in Montgomery County as of the grant application deadline;
- 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 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;
- Offers at least 51% of its programs and services in Montgomery County, as demonstrated by previous, current, and projected years' activities/programming; and
- Has fulfilled all outstanding requirements for any grant(s) received from the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County in prior years.

For the purpose of this grant, costs related to improving or expanding the organization's physical structure must be counted as capital expenses, **not** as operating expenses.

An organization applying for an FY21 *GOS I Grant* may also apply for the *Wheaton Cultural Project Grant*, provided that the project is not part of its regular programming/season, and either the *Advancement Grants* **or** *Capital Improvement Project Grants* within the same fiscal year.

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.

Budget Eligibility Requirement

An organization may not apply for more than 35% of its most recently completed fiscal year's annual cash operating expenses/income or $50,000, whichever is lower. Requests over $25,000 require the applicant to submit an FY19 audit, or a review of their FY19 financial statements if an audit is not available.

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

- Investment Fees
- Interest Expenses
- Re-granting
- Capital improvements/other related costs

- Depreciation
- Loan principal payments
- In-kind donations
- Bad debt

Non-allowable 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 expenses/income. Grants program staff will review all financial data and may contact applicants for additional information.

Financial Review 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 must submit an FY19 audit, or a review of their FY19 financial statements if an audit is not available. The 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.
- If the review and/or audit 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 review and/or audit will be submitted to AHCMC.
- The review and/or audit must be submitted to AHCMC **no later than June 1, 2020**. **If the review and/or audit 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 the review and/or audit expresses substantial doubt regarding an entity's ability to continue as a Going Concern, that entity may be deemed ineligible.

Matching Requirements

- All grant recipients must provide a one-to-one match for the grant award.
- The match must consist of at least 50% cash, as follows:
- Cash may come from any source except AHCMC and the Montgomery County Government, and may include, but is not limited to, foundation grants, state and federal grants, private donations,

ticket sales, and member dues;

- The match may be entirely cash.
- The match may consist of no more than 50% in-kind contributions, as follows:
  - o In-kind contributions may consist of donated goods, donated services, and volunteers, as described in further detail below.
  - o The value of all in-kind contributions shown as income must be offset by in-kind expenses in the total budget.
  - o The value of in-kind goods and services must be documented with invoices, billing statements or donation letters. If the grant is awarded, this documentation must be provided with the final report required at the end of the grant period.
  - o The appropriate value of volunteer time must be calculated. Click here to find the current value of volunteer service.
  - o Professionals, such as attorneys, accountants, sound engineers, and lighting designers, who are providing services without charge, will not be considered volunteers. These individuals will be counted as having donated services, provided that the applicant supplies documentation about the usual hourly rate charged by the professional.
  - o The value of staff time paid by the organization as an in-kind expense must be documented in budget notes.

Grant Limitations

- An organization may not apply for an FY21 *GOS I Grant* for more than 35% of its most recently completed fiscal year's annual cash operating expenses/income, or $50,000, whichever is lower
- Requests for over $25,000 require an FY19 audit, or a review of their FY19 financial statements if an audit is not available
- Eligible funding requests are for a minimum of $10,000
- Eligible funding requests may not exceed $50,000
- An organization may not apply for other AHCMC grants during the same funding cycle, except for a *Wheaton Cultural Project Grant* and either an *Advancement Grant* **or** a *Capital Improvement Project Grant*.

GOS I Grants will not fund:

- Capital improvements, construction or renovation projects;
- Fund-raising activities, including costs of receptions, refreshments or food;
- Purchase of real property including land, buildings, warehouses, offices, and anything affixed to the land;
- Activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization's members;
- Cost of souvenirs such as T-shirts;
- Debt retirement;
- Scholarships, awards or tuition assistance awarded by the organization;
- Political advocacy, or activities that support or promote the interests of any one political party or candidate; and
- Travel outside the United States.

Application and Panel Process

All eligible applications are evaluated by a panel of arts, humanities 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 members 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: Organizational Capacity, Programming Quality, Community Impact, and Financial Stability (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.

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 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.

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.

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 four priority areas.

Organizational Capacity (25 points)
- ✓ Sustains an organizational structure appropriate for the size and scope of the organization.
- ✓ Has achieved or is making demonstrated, intentional progress towards recruiting staff that is diverse and reflects the community.
- ✓ Retains qualified, experienced artistic/scholarly staff and managerial staff.
- ✓ Has an effective governing Board that provides active and appropriate leadership. The Board 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.
- ✓ Demonstrates evidence of both short- and long-term planning, with Board and staff setting strategic goals for the organization and progress measured 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.
- ✓ 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, program 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.
- ✓ Achieves results indicating that programs are relevant and inspiring to the people, organizations, and communities for whom they are intended.

Financial Stability (25 points)
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Operates with ratio of current assets to current liabilities and liquid net assets appropriate for achieving organizational goals.
- ✓ Has a clear plan for addressing any deficits or other financial challenges and operates with transparency.
- ✓ Utilizes sound financial controls and reporting procedures.

Grant Disbursement

Grant payments will be made in two installments:
- The first 75% of the grant award will be made to the grantee following AHCMC's receipt of any outstanding final reports or grant requirements, FY21 signed grant agreement, voided check with organization's name, and county funding.
- The remaining 25% of the grant award will be made upon the grantee's submission of its mid-

year report due no later than January 31, 2021.

AHCMC will not release an organization's first 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.

Submitting late reports can have a detrimental impact on an organization's funding when the applicant applies for the next grants cycle. **The deadline to submit the FY21 final report is July 31, 2021**.

Return of Grant Funds

- The grantee must return the grant funds if it is not possible to implement the grant as described in the grant agreement. **Please contact Grants Program staff before grant funds are returned.**
- If AHCMC determines that grant funds were spent not in compliance with the guidelines or not consistent 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, 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 for the operating expenses of the organization and in consistency with the requirements of this grant;
- Repay any grant funds not used for the stated purpose of the grant;
- Not use the grant funds for capital improvements, purchase of real property, scholarships or tuition assistance for program participants, travel outside the country, political advocacy, or debt retirement;
- Operate with its principal office in Montgomery County, MD;
- Offer at least 51% of its programs and services in Montgomery County to the public with or without an admission fee;
- Use the grant funds with respect to the limitations listed on page 6 of these guidelines;
- 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 mid-year report through AHCMC's online grants system between January 1, 2021 and January 31, 2021, informing AHCMC of any significant changes in programming, financials and personnel that have occurred since the grant has been awarded.
- Submit a final report through AHCMC's online grants system no later than **July 31, 2021**,

presenting information about the organization's achievements, progress and financial information during the fiscal year. Submitting late reports can have a detrimental impact on an organization's funding when the applicant applies for the next grants cycle.

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, festivals or other activities resulting from this grant and to participate in CultureSpotMC.com, AHCMC's online calendar.

The Online Application Process

Letters of Intent, Applications, and Support Materials for *GOS I 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 http://artsandhumanities.fluidreview.com to create an account.
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 and Letter of Intent form.
3. Select "Create Submissions" on the right for "FY21 GOS I Grant Application".
4. On the main application form, before moving on to the next page, be sure to click "Save * Continue" 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.

All applicants for *GOS I Grants* must submit a Letter of Intent for approval by AHCMC grants staff. If the Letter of Intent is approved, the applicant will receive an email notification inviting the applicant to fill out the grant application.

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;
   - List of key staff with bios, indicating full-time, part-time, paid, and volunteers;
   - The organization's current Strategic Plan, if available; and
   - Organizational Chart, if available

3. **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 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
- The organization's FY19 audit, if available. If the organization does not have an audit and is requesting more than $25,000, a financial review is required. The 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.
- Projected FY21 budget (if available, applicants can submit a draft).

4. **Programming Support Materials - One PDF**
   - Include materials that will assist the panel in evaluating the organization's programming, presenting, and /or producing activities, i.e., newspaper clippings, program booklet, photos, brochures, or flyers.

5. **Work Sample(s)**
   - Upload work sample(s) that demonstrates your organization's programming. The quality of your presentation on the work sample is critical to the evaluation of your application. Applicants should submit their strongest work samples. **Performing arts organizations are highly encouraged to submit video or audio work samples.** If your work includes audience interaction, a live performance recording is helpful. 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, script, or screenplay, submit no more than 10 pages;
   - Applicants are encouraged to submit samples reflecting recently completed work. Samples must adhere to the following guidelines for the discipline of the work in which you are engaged.
     - Multidisciplinary projects / cross-disciplinary projects may include work from performing, visual, media, design, Folk and Traditional Arts, and literary arts. Applicants must submit work sample(s) that convey more than one artistic/scholarly discipline.
     - For Performing Arts (Dance/ Music/ Festivals /Presenting / Folk and Traditional Arts/ Storytelling/ Theater/ Media Arts): Applicants are encouraged to submit video or audio work samples, instead of stills or photos. Upload no more than five minutes of video. You may split the video into two files if necessary, but the total time of the video may not exceed five minutes.
     - For History or Social Sciences, Historical, Critical or Theoretical Approaches to the Arts, Linguistics, Literary Analysis, Philosophy, Ethics or Comparative Religion: Upload no more than 10 pages of research, or published material. 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.
     - For Visual Arts: Upload no more than five minutes of video, or no more than 15 images. The images may depict individual works or a selection of works.

Grant Preparation Assistance

First-time applicants are highly encouraged to contact Grants Program 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 submission deadline. To schedule an appointment, contact Karen Judson, Grants Program Manager, at (301) 565-3805 ext. 28, or Karen.Judson@creativemoco.com.

Important Reminders:

1. Applications must be submitted online at http://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/

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http://artsandhumanities.fluidreview.com.**

Questions?

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