
2027 CULTURAL OPERATING FUNDING (COF) INFORMATION GUIDE

Deadline: Wednesday, November 4, 2026, at 11:59 pm

Cultural Operating Funding (COF) offers core support for operations, programs and/or services to a wide range of arts and cultural organizations in Vancouver, to advance the goals of the City's 10-year culture plan, [Culture|Shift](#).

This guide provides information about the objectives, eligibility, criteria and application process for this program. Please review this information guide first before starting your application.

Key Dates

Applications open	Wednesday, September 23, 2026
Applications close	Wednesday, November 4, 2026, 11:59 pm
Staff preliminary review	November-December 2026
Notification of advance grant*	Mid January 2027
Council approval of advance grant*	Late January 2027
Payment of advance grant*	Early February 2027
Peer Assessment Committee review	February/March 2027
Council approval of grant recommendation	April 2027
Grant payment (balance)	Mid April 2027

** for previous recipients*

Application Support

Applicants who are Deaf/deaf, Hard of Hearing, or live with a disability and need support to complete their grant applications can access up to \$500 towards the costs of assistance from service providers. Please contact program staff lead if you have any questions or need support with the application process.

Staff Contacts

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For information about other City programs, awards, and services, visit:
<http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/arts-and-culture-grants.aspx>

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New for 2027

Grant Percentage Guidelines

New guidelines have been developed for grant recommendations, that outline grant ranges for organizations as a percentage of their annual operating budgets. These ranges are intended to support peer assessment committees in making equitable and balanced funding recommendations. Organizations with a 2026 operating grant above or below the grant ranges will not automatically be increased or decreased to align with the new guidelines for grant amounts. Applications will continue to be assessed according to the criteria and priorities of the program, and funding will be allocated accordingly. More information can be found in the **Grant Amount** sections on page 8.

Cultural Operating Funding - Spaces (COF-S) Top-Up Request

Formerly known as the Affordable Spaces Grant Program, the Cultural Operating Funding - Spaces (COF-S) pilot program will offer a streamlined application process for local non-profit arts and culture space operators that:

- currently receive other City cultural core support through Cultural Operating Funding, Cultural Equity and Accessibility Funding, and Cultural Indigenous Funding; and
- operate Vancouver-based cultural spaces that provide subsidized or affordable space to artists and/or cultural organizations outside of the organization's own programming.

Eligible organizations may request a COF-S Top-Up by completing the COF-S task in the COF application. All COF-S requests will be assessed together, and recommendations will be made at the same time as the COF/COFM recommendations. Please refer to the [COF-S Info Guide](#) for more information, and reach out to Mary Shin at mary.shin@vancouver.ca for any questions specific to the COF-S Top-Up or cultural spaces grants.

Demographic Data Task

This task asks organizations to self-identify if they represent or serve equity-deserving groups. The City collects this information to better understand who benefits from cultural grant programs and to support equity in program design, outreach, assessment, and reporting. The information also helps identify and address barriers to accessing funding. In addition, the City reports on funding allocated to specific communities as part of various City strategies and action plans.

Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be reported in a way that identifies your organization. Data may be combined with responses from other applicants and summarized for public reporting.

Commitment to Advancing Equitable Funding

Culture|Shift: Culture Plan 2019-2029

COF and other cultural grant programs are informed by *Culture|Shift*, the City of Vancouver's 10-year plan that provides a strategic framework to support arts and culture. *Culture|Shift* calls for us to be deeply mindful of how arts and culture is conducted upon the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation). We are tasked to address historical inequities, create new frameworks, and set directions for more equitable distribution of support so that all can participate in the cultures and creative stories of Vancouver.

Culture|Shift key directions are:

- Arts & Culture at the Centre of City Building
- Reconciliation & Decolonization
- Cultural Equity & Accessibility
- Making Space for Arts & Culture
- Collaboration & Capacity

The City provides funding to celebrate, elevate, and support the range of creative people, projects, and organizations who contribute to Vancouver's diverse communities. These investments will:

- Celebrate and reflect the diversity of the unique creative people who live here.
- Uphold, recognize, and support Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Urban Indigenous artists and cultural workers, grounded in inherent and constitutionally protected Indigenous Rights.
- Elevate racialized artists and cultural workers.
- Provide accessible opportunities for diverse public participation.
- Build reciprocal and meaningful relations.
- Be embedded in community (informed by and led by).
- Centre the artists and people whose stories are being told.
- Compensate artists and creative people involved.
- Draw from the depth of local knowledge.
- Build leadership, knowledge and resources for artists and cultural leaders across the sector.

Read the full culture plan at: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/vancouver-culture-shift.pdf>

Prioritizing Indigenous and Equity-deserving Artists and Organizations

We acknowledge that grant and award funding programs have historically been informed by a limited world view of arts and culture. This has enabled many organizations to establish and thrive, while simultaneously creating patterns of historic exclusion for many artists and organizations. In order to balance funding investments to support groups, projects and artists that reflect the diversity of Vancouver and the unceded traditional lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples, we aim to increase investment to equity-deserving artists and organizations who have been discriminated against and most impacted by structural racism.

The City is guided by Equity <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/equity-framework.pdf> and Accessibility <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/accessibility-strategy.aspx> frameworks.

The City uses an Indigenous Rights, a Racial Justice, an Intersectionality, and a Systems Orientation lens in its approach to Equity. This means to acknowledge:

- The distinctiveness of Indigenous sovereignty and to uphold Indigenous rights;
- That one out of every two residents in Vancouver is racialized, and commit to dismantling racism and elevating racialized voices;
- How multiple forms of discrimination intersect and take an intersectional approach to how gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic class, race, religion and immigration status have compounding negative impacts; and,
- Embedded discrimination within systems, and the redesign of the rules and incentives of systems, in order to lead to more equitable outcomes.

Indigenous and equity-deserving individuals and groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities, and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation. Priority groups include but are not limited to people who identify as:

- xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)
- Indigenous – First Nations, Metis, and/or Inuit
- Black or of African descent
- People of Colour
- Deaf/deaf, Hard of Hearing
- Living with a disability/disabled people
- LGBTQ2+ and gender diverse

Equity in the Assessment Process

Representation on Assessment Committees

Arts and Culture has a policy to exceed 50% representation of people from equity-deserving communities in all of its assessment committees for grants and awards. We recognize it is not possible to include every dimension of equity but strive to achieve a meaningful representation of voices that represent the make-up of our cultural sector. We also look for representation of artistic practices; type, tenure and size of organization; various positions/roles; and perspectives from new and senior leaders and artists. Staff will take measures to ensure that members will be invited into culturally safe and welcoming spaces.

Equity in Assessment Criteria

The application provides opportunities to describe the organization's contribution towards a more equitable and inclusive arts and culture sector. Questions ask about your organization's mission, vision and core values; who you are working with, why and how you invite them into safe, collaborative spaces; what it means to be working on unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples; your operational practices, and plans for intentionally prioritizing opportunities for racialized artists and cultural workers.

This is ongoing and transformational work. Responses that reflect an understanding of how you contribute to equity in your operations and programs, and what you might need to be doing further, are encouraged. Below are a few resources to assist with your equity assessment and actions.

Equity Self-Assessment Tools for Organizations

The City is using The Centre for Global Inclusion's [Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks tool \(GDEIB\)](#) to assess the organization as a whole. It can be downloaded for free upon signing a user agreement. The GDEIB is developed by an international panel of experts in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and included a local expert from Vancouver for this edition. The tool provides information on goals, definitions, and how to use the tool. It can be used for self-assessment and an action plan for change using the following scale:

1. Inactive - No Diversity & Inclusion work has begun; diversity and a culture of inclusion are not part of organizational goals.
2. Reactive - A compliance mindset; actions are taken primarily to comply with relevant laws and social pressures.
3. Proactive - A clear awareness of the value of Diversity & Inclusion; starting to implement Diversity & Inclusion systemically.

4. Progressive - Implementing Diversity & Inclusion systemically; showing improved results and outcomes.
5. Best Practice - Demonstrating current best practices in Diversity & Inclusion; exemplary for other organizations globally.

The City of Seattle Arts and Culture department has developed this [self-assessment tool](#) for their local arts and culture organizations. It uses the following scale:

1. Exclusive Segregated Organization
2. Passive Status Quo Organization
3. Symbolic Multicultural Organization
4. Evolving Anti-Racist Organization
5. Structurally Changing Organization
6. Inclusive Transformed Organization

Organizations interested in working with consultants or experts to help with equity audits and equity planning may apply for additional funding through the **Cultural Learning and Sharing** program which supports organizational and leadership development. Learn more: <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/learning-and-sharing-grant-program.aspx>

About Cultural Operating Funding

Program Description and Goals

This program provides core funding to Vancouver-based, professional non-profit arts, cultural and creative organizations that have a mission to develop, create, produce, present and disseminate artistic work or provide professional services or space for the benefit of the local arts and culture sector, in any artistic discipline (i.e. Indigenous arts and culture, community arts, dance, interdisciplinary, literary, media, multidisciplinary, museums/heritage, music, theatre, visual arts).

This program aims to leverage the collective community efforts of Vancouver's arts and culture sector to:

- Provide opportunities where artists and cultural workers have the freedom, agency and space to create and share their stories.
- Ensure meaningful and broad public participation and access to a range of programs and services for the greater understanding of Vancouver's dynamic cultural landscape.
- Provide consistent support for the impactful delivery of one or more of the following that contribute to the visibility of the cultural diversity of Vancouver: professional programming, services, and/or space.
- Support healthy leadership practices and ensure leadership pathways in service to the sector.
- Create a more equitable, vibrant, collaborative and sustainable arts and culture sector.

Definitions:

Artist - Arts and Culture defines "artist" as someone who has an active artistic practice, is recognized by their peers, has specialized training in their practice (not necessarily in academic settings), seeks compensation for their work, and has a history of public presentation or production.

Services – the delivery of services or resources in support of artists and arts organizations in the areas of research, information, professional development, networking, administration, audience development, legal advice, or marketing and communications.

Space – the provision and operation of facilities for professional artists and arts organizations adequately zoned and equipped (box office, technical support) for public assembly, performance, rehearsal, meetings, etc.

Eligible Organizations

To be considered for this program the organization will meet the following criteria:

- 1) Have an existing funding relationship with the City of Vancouver:
 - Currently receive Cultural Operating Funding or have received three Communities and Artists Shifting Culture (CASC), Cultural Indigenous, or Cultural Equity grants.
- 2) Operations and Mandate:
 - Be a non-profit society or a community service co-op legally registered and in good standing with BC Registries Services, or a registered charity with the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA). (Please confirm standing through [BC Online](#) prior to submitting application.)
 - Be physically located in and deliver programs and services within Vancouver.
 - Have a clear mission and history of consistent annual delivery of arts and cultural programs or services in support of the mission for at least two years.
 - Have paid professional and experienced leadership (either full-time or part-time staff members) in artistic or administrative roles.
 - Board members meet the minimum articles of applicable governing acts (e.g. BC Societies Act).
 - Have an equity policy or plan, accessibility plan, and respectful workplace policies, procedures and practices in place.
 - Compensate artists and cultural workers at minimum standard industry rates.¹
 - Ensure that in interactions or communications with and about City officials and staff, their staff and volunteers do not make statements or engage in conduct which could be characterized as threatening, intimidating, harassing, or discriminatory.²
3. Financial:
 - Have a minimum operating expense budget of \$150,000, as shown in last actual Financial Statements. Generally, to be competitive in the program, organizations will show an average operating budget of \$200,000 or more.
 - Have independently-prepared financial statements signed by two Board members (in the form of audited statements, a review engagement or compilation engagement)
 - In good standing with the City of Vancouver (i.e., does not have outstanding invoices with any City departments).

¹ For more information on these standards, please refer to the following organizations:

American Federation of Musicians: www.afm.org; Canadian Federation of Musicians cfmusicians.afm.org/; Canadian Actors Equity Association: www.caea.com; Canadian League of Composers: www.clc-lcc.ca; Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists: www.cadabc.org; Professional Writers Association of Canada: www.pwac.ca; Canadian Artists Representation/Le front des artistes canadiens/CARFAC: www.carfac.ca

² This does not restrict a recipient or their staff from exercising their freedom of expression as protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. See page 10 for more detail.

Ineligible Organizations and Activity

- Organizations that do not have an arts and cultural mandate
- Public or private educational institutions (public schools, universities, colleges, training organizations)
- Community Centres and Civic Associations, as well as other City of Vancouver affiliated branches and departments
- Organizations already receiving core support from another department at City of Vancouver (eg, Core Support from Social Policy)
- Core artistic training and in-class activity
- Capital projects
- Deficit reduction, third party fundraising activity, scholarships, contests, or competitions
- Activity taking place outside Vancouver city limits

Grant Amounts

New recipients generally start with a base level grant of \$15,000-20,000. Depending on available funding, organizations may be recommended for a higher amount. Previous recipients will receive an advance grant of 40% of their previous grant, when there are no outstanding conditions or concerns.

The following guidelines for grant amount recommendations outline ranges for organizations as a percentage of their annual operating budgets. These ranges are intended to support peer assessment committees in making equitable and balanced funding recommendations and will be applied in accordance with the following principles:

- All grant recommendations, and the potential for grant increases and decreases, will be made in the context of the available program budget as determined by Council.
- Shifts in funding ensure that City resources support organizations having the greatest impact in advancing program priorities.
- Organizations with lower assessment scores will receive grants at the lower end of the range, while higher-scoring organizations will receive grants at the upper end.
- Organizations already at the top or bottom of the range will generally not receive increases or decreases.
- Organizations with a 2026 operating grant above or below the grant ranges will not automatically be increased or decreased to align with the new guidelines for grant amounts. Applications will continue to be assessed according to the criteria and priorities of the program, and funding will be allocated accordingly. Any grant decreases will follow guidelines in the grant reduction policy (more info located in the [Assessment and Recommendation Process](#) document).
- Grant ranges will apply to the portion of the organization's annual operating budget related to eligible activities, related to the delivery of arts and culture programs and services within the City of Vancouver.

Guidelines for grant amount recommendations:

Annual operating budget (based on last actual)	Grant ranges for organizations	Grant ranges for organizations highly responding to Culture Shift priorities
\$150K - \$299K	7-10%	10-15%
\$300K - \$499K	5-10%	8-12%
\$500K - \$999K	3-7%	7-9%
\$1M - \$2M	2-5%	5-7%
\$3M - \$5M	1-3%	3-5%
over \$6M	up to 1%	1-3%

Information on the 2026 COF grant awards and recipients is located at:

<https://council.vancouver.ca/20260414/documents/r2.pdf>

Considerations for New Applicants

If there is available funding to add new organizations to COF, priority will go to applicants who have a demonstrated track record with the following criteria through previous peer assessments:

- Contribution to the diversity of cultural programming in Vancouver through consistent annual programs and/or services and public demand.
- Have explicit commitments to equity in mission, leadership, operations, and programs and/or services, with robust equity policies and practices, and accessibility plans in place.
- Have stable or growing capacity with staff structure and administrative systems (communications, financial, HR).
- Have a governance model supportive of the mission with members being representative of the people and communities being served.
- Have growing and diverse financial resources and practices: sustained average annual cash budget sufficient to support ongoing programs and services; diversified cash resources (earned, private and public).
- Financial statements demonstrate a need for core support

Considerations for Multi-year

Multi-year grants may be offered in 2027 pending Council approval of the annual budget. The multi-year stream offers a three-year funding commitment at the same grant level and consists of the COF application in year 1, and a simple report back in years 2 and 3. Applicants recommended for multi-year will demonstrate:

- stable operating activities and staff structure
- strong alignment with *Culture|Shift* priorities
- a grant level that will be sustainable for three years

New operating recipients, organizations receiving decreases, and organizations with budgets over \$8M are not eligible for multi-year grants.

Additional Considerations for Non-Indigenous Groups Proposing to work with Indigenous Artists and Content

Your organization's activities take place on the unceded and ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation). Acknowledging what it means to be a guest on these lands

and the actions you will take to respect local protocols is a necessary practice. In addition, if you are proposing to work with Indigenous artists or content, we ask that you consider and address the four themes below in **question 3.3 of the COF application**.

1. *Cultural Protocols*: local First Nations and Urban Indigenous people have diverse protocols that govern how cultural expressions and collaborations are developed, shared, and stewarded. Consider how you will learn and respect the specific cultural protocols relevant to your collaborations with Indigenous communities, Nations, or individuals.
2. *Consent, Credit, Leadership and Compensation*: Consider how you will ensure that Indigenous artists, knowledge keepers, and other collaborators have given consent, are credited appropriately, and are in leadership positions in the development or co-development of the project. Consider how Indigenous Peoples are compensated and resourced appropriately for their involvement.
3. *Cultural Safety*: Consider how you will create or partner to create respectful and safe spaces, venues and programs where Indigenous people's work and wellness are not compromised by power imbalances, discrimination, stereotypes, and unconscious bias.
4. *Sites of Cultural Significance*: Applicants are advised that culturally-significant areas including Stanley Park, Locarno Beach, Vanier Park, or Jericho Beach and all waterfront sites will not be considered without demonstrated permission from all three Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and with their meaningful involvement.

Terms and Conditions

Grant Agreement

If the applicant organization receives a grant, it must adhere to legal terms and conditions that will form a binding Agreement between the Recipient and the City of Vancouver for the use of funds. The full Agreement is set out in the online submission and should be reviewed and authorized by a representative of the organization who has the full right, power, and authority to enter into the Agreement and complete the work. If you would like a copy of the full agreement in advance of completing the application, please contact staff.

Grant Acknowledgement

Grant recipients will acknowledge the City's assistance and the Grant in all public communications or materials. Grant recipients can contact Anthony Hoang at anthony.hoang@vancouver.ca to receive the recognition marks electronically.

Respectful Workplace and Communications

The City is committed to a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace. City policies define expectations for respectful, appropriate workplace behaviour and processes for reporting and resolving incidents of bullying and harassment, including discrimination. Policies comply with the B.C. Human Rights Code, WorkSafe BC regulations, and the Criminal Code of Canada.

The City of Vancouver policies include:

- Respect in the Workplace Policy: [ADMIN050.pdf \(vancouver.ca\)](#)
- Preventing Violence in the Workplace Policy: [SUBJECT: \(vancouver.ca\)](#)

- Code of Conduct: <https://policy.vancouver.ca/AE02801.pdf>

Eligibility for this program, and conditions of the Grant Agreement, requires recipients to provide a healthy/respectful workplace environment demonstrated through policies and practices. If a complaint of unsafe working conditions is received by Arts & Culture, staff will ask that the complaint be directed to the organization's leadership and be put through their processes according to their policies and procedures.

Eligibility for this program, and conditions of the Grant Agreement, also requires recipients to not, in interactions with or in any communications with and about City officials (Mayor and Council) and City staff, make statements or engage in conduct which could be characterized as threatening, intimidating, harassing, or discriminatory. This does not restrict a recipient or their staff from exercising their freedom of expression as protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This includes:

- promoting political or social participation and engagement
- advocacy of policy change
- criticism of City policies and decisions
- or anything else which is properly considered "political speech"

In the event that the City receives a complaint about such communications or conduct, City staff may make a recommendation to City Council that a recipient be ineligible for a grant, or that a grant already provided must be returned by the recipient. In that event, City staff will engage with the applicant or recipient to gather more information and will ensure that the applicant or recipient has an opportunity to address Council about any recommendation made by City staff, before Council makes a decision as to whether to deny a grant or require a grant to be repaid.

Freedom of Information

Information submitted when applying to City of Vancouver cultural grant programs is subject to the access and privacy provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (British Columbia)*.

VanApply Online Grants Management System

The City uses an online grants management system (GMS) called VanApply which uses the SurveyMonkey Apply platform.

Getting Your COF Application Started in VanApply

1. Go to <https://vanapply.vancouver.ca/> and log-in.
2. From your profile, click on your name on the top left of the screen → select your **organization** name from the drop-down menu.
3. Click on 'Manage Organization' near the top right of the screen.
4. Click on 'Profile', scroll down to #6, and enter the **access code** for the COF grant that you received in the invitation email sent to the Primary Admin associated with your account. If you did not receive the email, contact staff (miko.hoffman@vancouver.ca or brenda.grunau@vancouver.ca).
5. Click on 'Programs' on the top right → COF will appear in the program list.

Forgot your password? Click the 'Forgot your password?' link on the log-in page and follow the instructions to create a new password.

New to the organization? Contact your organization's VanApply administrator to set you up in the system in order to avoid creating duplicate profiles.

A note about submitting your application:* The Primary Admin or any Admin can start the application and becomes the default owner of the application. **The owner is the only one who can submit the application. However, ownership can be transferred to another Admin or the Primary Admin by right-clicking their name and choosing "Make owner".

Online How-To Guides and Technical Support

For more information, visit:

<https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/vanapply-online-grant-application-system.aspx>

Applicants can contact anthony.hoang@vancouver.ca for technical support, available Monday to Friday from 9 am to 4 pm.

Additional COF Application Resources

[Application Questions and Criteria](#)

Provides the application questions, criteria, and scoring matrix. When the program launches, a preview of the application form will be available as a downloadable Word document.

[About the Peer Assessment Process](#)

Provides an overview of the decision-making process for the COF program.

[Culture|Shift Glossary of Terms and Resources](#)

Provides definitions of key terms and links to related *Culture|Shift* related resources.