

**2026 CULTURAL OPERATING FUNDING (COF)
GENERAL INFORMATION and ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA for NEW APPLICANTS**

The Cultural Operating Funding (COF) program offers core support for operations, programs and/or services to a wide range of arts and cultural organizations in Vancouver. 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.

The City’s Arts and Culture department offers many other programs, awards and services. Details are on the City’s web page at: <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/arts-and-culture-grants.aspx>

Key Dates (subject to change)

For new applicants:

Expression of Interest opens	Wednesday, June 3, 2026
Expression of Interest closes	Wednesday, July 8, 2026, 11:59 pm
Staff Review	August 2026
Invitation to apply	Mid-Late August, 2026

For previous recipients and groups invited to submit full applications:

Applications open	Wednesday, September 23, 2026
Applications close	Wednesday, November 4, 2026, 11:59pm
Staff preliminary review	November-December 2026
Peer Assessment Committee review	February/March 2027
Council approval of grant recommendation	Late March/early April 2027

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.

Contact Information

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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.

*Professional 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.

**Professional 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 & Accessibility 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 (ie, does not have outstanding invoices with any City departments).

Ineligible Organizations and Activity

- Organizations that do not have arts and cultural mandates
- 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

Grants will not exceed 50% of an applicant's last actual expense budget. New recipients generally start with a base level grant of \$15,000-20,000 and may be recommended for a higher amount based on available funding.

Considerations for New Applicants

If there is available funding to add new organizations to COF, priority will be given to applicants who have a demonstrated track record meeting 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.

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 15 for more detail.

- 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

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