ArtsNEXT

Funding for Bold, Ground-Breaking Projects

Ohio Arts Council

The ArtsNEXT program provides competitive funding for innovative and experimental projects. Awards support big ideas that push boundaries, engage participants in unexpected ways, pilot new solutions to challenging problems, improve program design with calculated risk-taking, or result in the creation of new work. These forward-looking projects help define Ohio as an exciting, cutting-edge place to make, consume, and experience the arts.

GRANT AWARDS: Applicants may generally request between $5,000 and $20,000, though larger awards are possible in unique circumstances. All awards require a 1:1 cash match.

ELIGIBILITY: All applicants must possess nonprofit status or nonprofit intent, but need not be registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Applicants may be: 1) nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in any arts discipline (literature, performing arts, visual arts, traditional arts, multidisciplinary arts, etc.); 2) other nonprofit organizations that provide arts programming (government entities, social service agencies, etc.); or 3) educational organizations (public, private, charter, and parochial schools from pre-kindergarten through university level) that demonstrate a commitment to arts programming in a larger community setting.

Organizations receiving Arts Learning support, or operating support through the Sustainability or Arts Access program, are eligible to apply.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS: ArtsNEXT grants are one-year awards for organizational project support. This program supports projects that allow an organization's programming to evolve creatively. Priority is given to projects designed to improve the accessibility, affordability, and/or diversity of arts experiences, as well as those demonstrating an appropriate amount of risk with a strong potential for success. Funds may be used for a wide variety of expenses, including artist fees, production expenses, marketing, planning, education, and program evaluation. The budget section of the ArtsNEXT application provides a full list of allowable expense areas.

NOTE: ArtsNEXT is not designed to fund routine updates or minor embellishments of long-running programs. Organizations considering applying should be fully invested in the hard work of innovating through research, experimentation, and focus, with the goal of breaking patterns, testing ideas, and arriving at new results. The most successful ArtsNEXT projects, whether big or small in scope, will be those that address a specific challenge in a novel way, turn an existing idea or practice on its head, and achieve benefits impossible under the prior approach.

ArtsNEXT applicants must identify which *one* of these three types of innovation best describes their proposed project. When possible, panels will review applications from each type of innovation together. Types include:

1. **Incremental Innovation.** Projects exhibiting incremental innovation make small changes or improvements over time that nonetheless go above and beyond the routine course corrections required of all successful programs, and can be thought of as "variations on a theme." Examples might include

trying a new marketing strategy, hosting an event in a new type of venue, or building on existing programming in a sequential, logical way. Incremental innovations involve minimal risk.

2. **Transferable Innovation.** Projects that borrow, replicate, or adapt a proven practice from another industry, organization, or community are employing transferable innovation. Projects improve the design of an existing program or service by applying ideas that have been successful in another setting. Examples include producing a new activity that has been well-received elsewhere, modifying an idea from the private sector for use in a nonprofit setting, or experimenting with programming that has flourished in a different arts genre. Transferable innovation typically involves moderate risk.

3. **Disruptive Innovation.** These are the big ideas that often come to mind when the concept of innovation is discussed. Disruptive innovation interrupts current behavior rendering existing practices obsolete. These projects are rare, unproven, and revolutionary. Examples might include radically changing the delivery of an arts experience, upending expectations about participation in a particular genre or type of arts activity, or creating something entirely new in the arts and cultural field. Disruptive innovation is inherently an unusual and high-risk proposition.

Sample activities might include:
- exploring the intersection of the arts and healing with activities produced in partnership with a healthcare institution
- implementing a pilot program or activity based on a promising practice from another industry
- executing a partnership that brings local artistic assets together to activate a nontraditional space
- adapting an arts event successful in a suburban setting to a new urban or rural community or region
- developing and evaluating specialized programming to serve as a model for other organizations
- expanding a longtime activity to include an entirely new creative element
- revamping the way a successful arts activity is marketed to attract new and more diverse participants
- launching a locally-driven and authentic creative place-making initiative
- developing a technology to deliver arts experiences in new and more accessible ways
- using partnerships to change the delivery of an arts experience, making it more affordable

An ArtsNEXT award may not be used to fund activities described in and already being supported through another OAC grant. Please refer to the Introduction and Overview for a list of activities the OAC cannot fund.

HOW TO APPLY: All applications to the ArtsNEXT program must be submitted via the ARTIE system. Please refer to ARTIE: Organizational Grant Applications for a description of the process. New applicants are encouraged to contact the OAC prior to applying.

EVALUATION AND SCORING: A panel of arts and cultural professionals, educators, innovators, artists, and other community members evaluate and score ArtsNEXT grant applications. Panel meetings are open to the public and audio-streamed online. Representatives of applying organizations are encouraged to attend or listen online. Visit the calendar on the OAC's Grants page for meeting details and instructions for participating.

At the panel meeting, panelists discuss how well each application satisfies the program's evaluation criteria. Panelists highlight strengths and weaknesses, discussing all aspects of the application and its support materials. Following the public discussion, each panelist enters a final score for each application. Later, OAC staff use averages of these scores to determine funding award recommendations. The OAC Board is the only body authorized to make final funding decisions and must approve funding recommendations. The review process is competitive, and not all applications are funded.

REVIEW CRITERIA: Criteria are divided into four categories: Program Quality, Community Engagement, Defining and

Measuring Success, and Resource Management. Criteria evidence may be found in any portion of an application or associated support materials. Each criterion is worth up to five points, for a maximum of 60 points.

Program Quality (20 points)
☐ Project shows clear evidence of incremental, transferable, or disruptive innovation compared to relevant past programming
☐ Project's innovation will result in activities of higher artistic, educational, or cultural value
☐ Project's innovation – whether incremental, transferrable, or disruptive – will improve the accessibility, affordability, and/or diversity of arts experiences
☐ Project's artistic and/or educational leaders are highly qualified and skilled in program development

Community Engagement (10 points)
☐ Efforts to engage participants are intentional and energetic, as well as inclusive of people with disabilities
☐ Activities will be promoted using the best available tools and an understanding of targeted communities

Defining and Measuring Success (20 points)
☐ Project planning involves a broad range of voices appropriate to the type of innovation proposed
☐ Project success is clearly defined and measurable, including metrics that gauge the effectiveness of implementing the innovation
☐ Project's innovation calls on applicant to take the ideal amount of risk necessary – not too much, but not too little – to maximize its chances of achieving success
☐ Organization will carefully document the impact of its programs with an emphasis on project replication and the sharing of best practices

Resource Management (10 points)
☐ Budget for proposed activities is realistic, aligned with proposal narrative, and supported by an appropriate range of earned and contributed income
☐ Plans for project sustainability are thoughtful, rational, and well-explained

TIMELINE: The following timeline outlines the ArtsNEXT grant lifecycle. Any deadline falling on a Saturday, Sunday, or state holiday, is extended until the next business day.

Fiscal Year 2020 Applications

YEAR	DATE	TASK/DEADLINE
2018	November 1	Application Available in ARTIE
2019	March 1	Application Deadline
	May	Panel Meeting
	July	Grant Award Announcement
	August 30	Grant Agreement Deadline
2020	July 30	Final Report Deadline

Fiscal Year 2021 Applications

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2019	November 1	Application Available in ARTIE
2020	March 1	Application Deadline
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	July	Grant Award Announcement
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2021	July 30	Final Report Deadline