



Community Arts Development Project Grant Program FY2026 Guidelines for Independent Artists

Applications for GCAC's Community Arts Development Project Grants

Accepted between March 16, 2026 - April 1, 2026

Funding for public arts activities occurring between April 1, 2026 - August 15, 2026

The Garrett County Arts Council, Inc. (GCAC) has been supporting the arts (visual arts, music, theatre, dance, literary arts and culinary arts) in Garrett County since 1976. GCAC was designated Garrett County's official arts agency by the Board of Garrett County Commissioners in 1993 for the receipt and disbursement of public grant funds administered by the Maryland State Arts Council to support visual arts, music, dance, theatre, literary arts, and culinary arts.

GCAC's vision is for Garrett County to have a vibrant and sustainable arts community for artists, their audiences, and the community at large. The GCAC Board of Directors and staff are committed to aiding, encouraging, advising, and coordinating activities dedicated to the promotion of cultural arts in Garrett County, and to integrate such activities into the life of our community.

GCAC is committed to advancing and modeling equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in all aspects of our programs and events, embracing equity and non-discrimination regardless of race, religious creed, color, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, class, language, and/or ability.

Garrett County Arts Council Community Arts Development Funding for Project Grant Awards is supported in part by Maryland State Arts Council (msac.org), Board of Garrett County Commissioners, and private gifts.



Project Grant Overview

Purpose

The purpose of GCAC's Community Arts Development Project Grant is to strengthen the vitality and sustainability of Garrett County's arts and cultural heritage by providing project-based support to arts organizations, independent artists and Garrett County Public Schools.

Project Grants also provide opportunities to serve the growing needs of relevant arts projects and collaborations within the county.

Grant Cycle

Funding Award

GCAC's Project Grant supports eligible activities of Arts Organizations, Independent Artists, and Garrett County Public Schools, with grants up to \$3,500.

Grantees of the Project Grant program receive funding in two payments (75% of award at notification; 25% upon successful completion of final grant report).

If awarded, all funds must be spent or allocated by June 30, 2026. This means that the awarded grant funds are to be expended or otherwise legally committed to be used by June 30, 2026.

Award Match Requirement

FY26 grant applicants are required to provide a minimum 1:1 cash match for all grant funds awarded associated with the application project. Sources of cash match can include cash in hand, federal grants, other non-state grants, earned income and donations.

Documentation of the award match will be noted in the applicant's budget form.

Support Period

Project Grants are awarded to Garrett County 501(c)3 nonprofit, tax exempt arts organizations, independent artists and Garrett County Public Schools* applying to support projects and/or arts events scheduled during the FY26 support period which begins April 1, 2026 and runs through August 15, 2026.

If awarded funds, grantees agree to spend or obligate all funds by August 15, 2026. Obligation means that awarded funds are expended, encumbered, or otherwise legally committed to be used, such that returning the unspent funds would cause the grantee legal harm.

*Project Grants awarded to Garrett County Public Schools applying to support projects and/or arts events must follow Maryland State Department of Education arts-in-education requirements.

Use of Funds

Project Grants for Independent Artists support clearly defined artistic projects that contribute to the cultural life of Garrett County. Project grants support specific artistic activities or phases of a project rather than general studio practice.

A project may represent a new initiative, a continuation of an existing body of work, or a defined phase of a larger creative effort. Projects do not need to begin and end entirely within the grant period; however, the portion of the work supported by grant funds must occur within the established funding timeframe. Applicants should identify a clear goal for the project and describe the steps that will take place during the grant period.

Projects must demonstrate a benefit to the Garrett County community. This may include sharing work through exhibitions, workshops, performances, demonstrations, artist talks, educational programming, or other opportunities for the public to experience the arts. Public engagement may take place through galleries, community spaces, festivals, art or craft shows,

performances, restaurants, churches, or other venues where the work is accessible to the community.

Project Grants for Independent Artists must:

- support the creation, presentation, or advancement of artistic work by an individual artist that contributes to the cultural life of Garrett County;
- result in a public benefit, such as an exhibition, workshop, artist talk, demonstration, performance, or other opportunity for Garrett County residents and visitors to engage with the arts;
- take place in Garrett County or result in work that is shared with the Garrett County community;
- be open and accessible to the general public when applicable;
- be accessible to persons with disabilities as outlined in program requirements;
- include a clearly defined project scope with a beginning, middle, and project goal; and
- be scheduled within the established support period (April 1, 2026 – August 15, 2026).

Project Grants for Independent Artists must fall within one of the following project categories:

Creation of Work

Support for the development or continuation of a body of artistic work, with the intention that the work will be shared with the community in some manner at a future unspecified date.

Community Engagement

Workshops, demonstrations, artist talks, performances, or other educational programming that share artistic knowledge, creative practice, or cultural traditions with the public.

Professional Skill Development

Training, mentorship, coursework, or other professional development activities that strengthen the artist's skills and increase their ability to contribute to the local arts community.

Cultural or Creative Initiatives

Projects that help bring cultural activity, creative programming, or visitors to Garrett County while strengthening the region's arts ecosystem.

What Do We Mean by a Project?

A project should have a clear goal and a defined set of activities that take place during the grant period. The final result does not need to be a fully completed or polished body of work, but the project should demonstrate meaningful progress and a benefit to the community.

Projects may be new initiatives or a continuation of existing work, as long as the portion supported by the grant takes place within the funding period.

Artists are encouraged to propose projects that are realistic in scope for the 4–5 month funding period.

Examples of eligible artist projects may include:

- Creating a small series of artworks to show at a local gallery, art show, craft market, or community venue
- Writing poems, essays, or short stories and sharing them by submitting them to be published in different publications. GCAC grants can cover submission fees

- Composing, learning, or performing new music at local venues or community events
- Taking a specialized workshop to learn a new technique and sharing the skills through a demonstration or class
- Developing part of a larger body of work and presenting it through an open studio, local exhibit, or social media.
- Teaching a community workshop in a craft, visual art, or creative practice
- Developing a culinary arts concept, recipe series, or food tradition and presenting it through a tasting or demonstration

These examples are intended to illustrate the types of activities that may qualify. Artists are encouraged to propose projects that share their creative work with the Garrett County community.

Project Grant Awards for Independent Artists may not be used for:

- General income or artist wages
- Activities performed as part of regular, continuing employment with an entity (e.g., non-profit organizations, LLCs, institutions, colleges or universities, government agencies, etc.)
- Acquisition of capital assets (such as land, buildings, permanent equipment and/or machinery and stocks)
- Lobbying activities and/or contributions to:
 - Any persons who hold, or are candidates for, elected office
 - Any political party, organization, or action committee
 - Any political campaign or referendum

Timeline

The grant timelines below are estimates and may change according to application volume, funding changes, applicant and/or community needs, and staff capacity. Email GCAC at info@garrettarts.org to be notified of any public information sessions and other program updates.

Applications

- Project Grant Award Announcement: March 16, 2026
- Deadline for Applications: Project Grant applications will be accepted through April 1, 2026 at 11:59pm EST

Application Review and Notifications

- Applications reviewed/scored April 11-15, 2026
- Notifications sent to applicants starting April 20, 2026

Final Report Deadline

Final Reports are due 30 days after project (or event) completion, with the latest final report submission due August 15, 2026.

Eligibility

Arts Organizations, Independent Artists and Garrett County Public Schools are all eligible to apply for FY26 Community Arts Development Project Grant funding.

Independent Artists

- An artist or collaborative group not directly affiliated with a larger arts organization or program
 - In the case of collaborative groups, having a membership comprising at least 50 percent Garrett County, MD residents, as defined below

- In the case that an artist(s) is fiscally sponsored, the sponsored artist(s) must be a Garrett County, MD resident, as defined below
- Garrett County, MD residents (i.e., owning or renting residential property in Maryland six months prior to the application's submission and throughout the funded project or program) who are 18 or older; those experiencing homelessness are encouraged to reach out to GCAC staff for details on how to apply
- Producing or presenting projects or programs that are accessible to the public
- The lead artist whose original work is included in the proposed activities
- Not enrolled in any matriculated high school, undergraduate or graduate degree program at the time of application and throughout the grant activities outlined in the application

Additional Eligibility Requirements for Independent Artists

- Only one application per named collaborative group will be considered for funding per fiscal year
- Only one application per project will be considered for funding

The eligibility guidelines listed above provide an overview only. In some cases, GCAC staff might make eligibility determinations addressing situations not described here but in support of the mission of the Garrett County Arts Council.

Application Process

Application Process

- All applications will be submitted via the GCAC online grants management system at garrettarts.org/grantmaking.
- Lost, misdirected or late applications are the sole responsibility of the applicant.
- Applicants must meet all revision deadlines after submission, as specified in writing, or the application will be withdrawn.
- Technical support from GCAC staff is available during regular office hours, 10am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Please note: GCAC staff are available for application assistance during regular business hours with an appointment. If you are calling or emailing for an appointment during non-regular business hours, please allow sufficient time (12 hours minimum) for a response.

Staff Contact Information

GCAC maintains a professional staff to administer its grants programs and GCAC-initiated programs/events. Staff members are available to provide technical assistance to the Garrett County arts community between Monday-Friday.

If you require technical assistance submitting the application or formatting your attachments, you must schedule a session with GCAC staff to use the \$MART ART space and equipment. Due to numerous other applications, obligations, and engagements, GCAC's small but dedicated staff is unable to accommodate walk-ins or immediate over the phone assistance.

Contact information for GCAC Staff and grant application one-on-one feedback:

Kathy Beachler, Executive Director
Email: kathy@garrettarts.org; Phone: 301-334-6580

Rachel Precht, Artistic Programs Manager
Email: rachel@garrettarts.org; Phone: 301-334-6580

Review Process

Staff Review

After Project Grant applications are received electronically they are reviewed by staff for completeness and adherence to grant guidelines. Applicants will be notified if their application is incomplete and if additional information or corrections are necessary, and applicants will be given a specific deadline in writing to provide any revisions or other necessary information.

Professional Grants Panel Review

GCAC utilizes a peer Grants Review Panel to aid in reviewing submitted grant applications. GCAC engages a panel of independent, regional evaluators with a wide range of experience in non-profit management, education/higher education, business/entrepreneurship, market research/advertising, and law/philanthropy. Each grant review panelist is directed to evaluate applications based on GCAC's review criteria and published rubric. Panel meetings are directed and overseen by a dedicated GCAC staff member.

GCAC Board Authorization and Funding Approval

Grant awards are calculated using the application's scores received from the grant review panel, and then presented to the GCAC Board of Directors for authorization and final funding approval.

Application Prompt	Review Criteria
<p>1a. Describe your proposed arts activity/event/project. Within your response, include specific logistical details of executing your proposed activity.</p> <p>1b. Describe your plans for community engagement, the goals or intended impact of the arts activity on the community, and the geographic area the project will serve.</p>	<p>Excellent to Outstanding - 60 Points Response includes a clear, specific, and thorough explanation of the artist's proposed arts activity/event/project</p> <p>Excellent to Outstanding response includes clear and thorough evidence of goals or intended community impact; including engagement, intention, timeliness, and/or inspiration in relation to the defined community's needs</p>
<p>2. Describe the timeline of your proposed arts activity. Within your response, include a detailed schedule of the project, including specific timing as it relates to steps of planning, promotional efforts, expenditure of funds, implementation and execution of events/activities, and evaluation.</p>	<p>Excellent to Outstanding - 20 Points Response includes clear, specific, and realistic timeline demonstrating a realistic schedule, including specific timing as it relates to expenditure of funds, planning, promotional efforts, implementation of events/activities, and evaluation</p>
<p>3. Describe the overall budget for the proposed project. Within your response, include a clear listing of all projected expenses for the project, sources of income beyond the GCAC request, and how GCAC funding would be used.</p>	<p>Excellent to Outstanding - 20 Points Response includes clear, detailed, and realistic financial plan for income and expenses tied to the proposed project.</p>

In addition to responding to the prompts above, applicants are required to submit with application:

- A current, signed W-9 form upon application submission. The address on the W-9 form must match the address entered in the application. If awarded, grant funds will be made payable to the organization or artist indicated on the W-9 and sent to the address listed in the form.
- Applicants may be asked to submit a financial statement from the last completed fiscal year demonstrating an allowable income figure, expenses, and having operated for at least one full fiscal year. (Example: Profit & Loss Financial Statement, bank statement, etc.).

Ineligible and Declined Applications

Applications that do not receive funding generally fall into one of two categories: ineligible or declined.

An application is marked ineligible if it is not complete or does not comply with the eligibility requirements of the Community Arts Development Project Grant program. An application can be marked ineligible at any time during the review process.

After an application is considered eligible, it may be declined for several reasons. An application may be declined due to funding allocation limitations at the time, or for the following reasons:

- Required information is incomplete or insufficient to make an award determination
- There are material inconsistencies between the application and the applicant's operations
- There are significant operational, financial, or other circumstances that reasonably suggest the applicant is, or may become, unable to use the grant funds in alignment with the grant guidelines and agreement.

Application Feedback

Applicants may request feedback on their applications — whether ineligible, declined, or approved for funding — by contacting GCAC Executive Director Kathy Beachler at kathy@garrettarts.org.

Award

Notification

Notifications will be sent to applicants by the GCAC executive director starting April 20, 2026.

Disbursement

Upon award notification, applicants will be asked to submit a Conflict of Interest and Compensation Disclosure Statement indicating any relationships with any GCAC personnel (director, officer, or employee). With receipt of signed forms, GCAC will process the first payment of 75% of award; the remaining 25% payment will be processed upon successful completion of final grant report.

Reporting

Recipients of a FY26 Community Arts Development Project Grant must file a final report in the provided format and by the deadlines specified in the applicant's signed grant agreement. (All grantees must file a final report online at www.garrettarts.org.)

Awardees must maintain accurate records of all activities connected to the grant, including records of attendance and all related financial transactions.

The report will require narrative and financial updates on the project arts activities conducted during the grant support period. This final report form collects information about the grantee and grant activities, including optional demographic information, data for the Maryland State Arts Council, summary of activities and use of grant funds, and other project-specific information and documents, as relevant.

Final Reports are due 30 days after program/event completion, with the latest final report submission due August 15, 2026.

Failure to submit the final report by the specified deadline may jeopardize current and/or future GCAC grants received by the organizations and may also result in requiring repayment of awarded grant funds.

Appeals Process

GCAC takes great care during the grant review process to ensure fair and equitable distribution of grant monies based on stated criteria. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the denial of an award or with the amount of an award is not sufficient reason for an appeal. However, a grant request may be reconsidered if a procedural impropriety or error has affected its review.

Grounds for such reconsideration are:

- A decision based on review criteria other than those stated in these guidelines.
- A decision based on material provided to panelists and/or Board of Directors that was substantially incorrect, inaccurate, or incomplete despite the applicant having provided the staff with correct, accurate, and complete application information.

Based on the above, if an applicant believes there is legitimate reason for an appeal, the following steps must be taken:

- The applicant must discuss the problem with the GCAC staff member who handled the application.
- To pursue an appeal, the applicant must write a letter to the GCAC Executive Director within 60 days following receipt of the grant award or denial letter requesting a reconsideration of the GCAC Board of Directors' decision and stating the grounds for the request.
- The applicant will receive written notification on the determination of the appeal within 90 days of the receipt of the written request for reconsideration.

Grantee Requirements

Any arts organization, independent artist or Garrett County Public School receiving FY26 Project Grant funds from the Garrett County Arts Council MUST:

- Give credit to Garrett County Arts Council and the Maryland State Arts Council whenever and wherever credit for funding support is given - whether orally, in print, on radio or television, on the internet (website or social media), or through any other public media.
 - Press releases, social media posts, should include acknowledgment to GCAC and MSAC via logo placement
 - Events should make an announcement including the phrase "Sponsored in part by a Garrett County Arts Council Community Arts Development grant with funds provided by the Maryland State Arts Council."

- Provide GCAC press releases or similar information regarding programming and organizational events in order for GCAC to maintain an arts calendar and provide comprehensive information to the public. Email information to info@garrettarts.org that can be easily copied and pasted (such as but not limited to text, images, and hyperlinks). If using social media, please tag GCAC in your online posts.
- Provide GCAC with a minimum of two complimentary tickets or passes to any grant funded project for which an admission is charged for the purpose of grant review and evaluation. (Please make sure the complimentary tickets or passes are provided to GCAC staff at least one week prior to the sponsored event.)

Any arts organization, independent artist or Garrett County Public School receiving FY26 Project Grant funds must also:

- Comply with Title VI, Section 601, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that no persons, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination related to, the arts
- Comply with Title IX, Section 1681 et seq. of the Education Amendments of 1972
- Comply with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 6101-6107
- Comply with relevant State and federal laws
- Maintain complete and accurate records of all activities connected with the grant
- Give credit to GCAC and MSAC in accordance with recognition guidelines (provided upon signed grant award agreement), whenever and wherever credit is being given
- Notify the appropriate GCAC staff person in writing if a significant change is made in any GCAC-funded project

In addition to the requirements above, all GCAC grantees must ensure that any programming remains accessible to all and, if needed, conduct programs in accessible venues in order to meet accessibility requirements. Grantees are required to:

- Comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, as amended
- Prohibit discrimination on the basis of: (a) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, or national origin; of (b) gender expression, sex, or age, except when age or sex constitute a bona fide occupational qualification; or (c) the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability
- Designate an Accessibility Point of Contact to ensure compliance, receive accommodation requests, and document grievances, as well as publish direct contact information for the Point of Contact to the public
- Create and publicly share a grievance procedure to allow stakeholders to address any events or programs that are inaccessible
- Upon request, submit documentation of operations and compliance with the above