

CITY OF SAVANNAH

Arts & Cultural Enrichment

PROGRAM

2026 FUNDING GUIDELINES

Healthy, vibrant neighborhoods are more than the built environment. They are places where people live, work, play, and socialize among people of diverse backgrounds and interests. Arts and Culture are important contributors to the vibrancy of Savannah's neighborhoods, and the City of Savannah supports opportunities for art and culture to enhance and enrich the quality of life for Savannah residents and guests.

PURPOSE

Arts, history, culture, and creativity are recognized as vital contributors to the City's economic growth and community enrichment, as well as essential components in the development of Savannah's unique identity. To increase exposure to art and culture and enrich the lives of Savannah residents and guests, the City of Savannah awards contracts through the Arts & Cultural Enrichment (ACE) program to nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher learning to provide high-quality, innovative, and creative art and cultural programs. These projects improve the quality of life by expanding access to new and diverse audiences, increasing appreciation and exposure to art and multiculturalism, inspiring and engaging youth, growing and nurturing local talent, and improving the vitality of Savannah in a measurable and sustained way.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

The City and Cultural Affairs Commission is seeking proposals that strategically position the disciplines of the creative sector to address the following City priorities in a measurable way. The level of funding and contract awards is contingent on the annual availability of funds, and applying for funds does not guarantee a proposal will be recommended or a contract will be awarded.

- Increase economic growth through skill-building, employment, and entrepreneurship.
- Improving the aesthetics of built environments through creative programs.
- Expand art and cultural experiences to new and diverse audiences and participants.
- Build and reinforce a strong sense of community throughout Savannah.
- Engage, develop, and inspire young people through imaginative and innovative approaches.
- Reestablish, enrich, and/or preserve vibrant neighborhoods and the quality of life in Savannah.
- Increase access to art and culture in close proximity to where residents live.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applying organizations must meet **ALL** of the following requirements to be eligible for funding consideration. Please note: These criteria only determine the eligibility of organizations to apply for funding and do not guarantee that applicants will be recommended or receive funding.

*Applying organizations **must meet ONE of the following:***

- Be a cultural/art-focused organization that provides arts/cultural programming for community benefit as part of the organization's primary mission, OR
- Be a college, university, or other non-profit that is seeking to provide arts/cultural programming as part of its overall services to the community (50% or more of the audience/participants may not be students/faculty), OR

- Be a new or emerging organization with a documented history of previous community programs/events (reviews, articles, photos, videos, etc.), articles of incorporation, and proof of determination of tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Applying organizations must meet ALL of the following:

- Be a legally formed non-profit (not-for-profit) entity registered in the state of Georgia.
- Organizations must have obtained their IRS non-profit status prior to application submission.
- Have an independent functioning board of directors, reflective of the community it serves.
- Be located within the corporate city limits of Savannah and/or provide the majority of the non-profit programs in Savannah.
- Project/program manager must permanently reside within the greater Savannah metropolitan area.
- Provide financial information demonstrating ongoing fiscal responsibility and stability (e.g., income/expense statements, completed IRS Form 990/990EZ, financial audit).
- Be able to meet all insurance coverage requirements, including coverage that includes the City and its agents as co-insured parties for the duration of funded activities.
- Have successfully completed the requirements of past contracts with the City and/or be in good standing and compliant with the terms of existing City contracts (if applicable).

ELIGIBLE PROGRAMS

All programs must take place in Savannah, Georgia, and must be publicly accessible. Programs can encompass a variety of artistic disciplines and a range of formats, including visual arts, performing arts, literary, culturally based, and arts-integrated technology projects. Priority is given to programs that:

- Actively engage the community.
- Promote communication, skill development, entrepreneurship, and education.
- Have a realistic implementation plan.
- Are open and accessible to the public.
- Demonstrate a broad range of community support, whether financial or volunteer/in-kind.
- Collaborate and partner with non-art organizations as a strategy to broaden access, increase the impact of programs, and expand the pool of available resources.
- Provide multiple levels of community engagement (planning, performing opportunities, technical/arts administration training, audience/participant, etc.).
- Are designed specifically for youth and provide opportunities for youth to participate as stewards, creators, and spectators.
- Directly provide access to art, cultural, and educational programming to underserved communities and populations.

All proposals should strive to address access and equity in the planning and implementation of the proposed programs. Funded organizations are required to abide by federal regulations that bar discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity. The ACE program will prioritize programs that are equitable and reflective of the Savannah community. Proposals must address barriers to engagement and entry and ensure all individuals of the community and visitors have equitable access to cultural and artistic programming.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Applicants may request up to 50% of the cost for each proposed program up to a maximum of \$100,000 per application.

Funding **MAY** be used:

- To support direct project costs associated with the provision of contracted programs, such as artistic/technical/production fees, marketing costs, program/project supplies and materials, equipment rental, etc.
- To support indirect program costs, such as administrative office supplies or internal/external personnel costs associated with the program, up to a maximum of 15% of program expenses.

Funding may **NOT** be used:

- To reduce existing deficits or financial liabilities.
- To pay ongoing operating or administrative expenses unrelated to the proposed program.
- To hire subcontractors for the administration of a program.
- To provide scholarships, prizes, or stipends.
- To add to endowment funds.
- To support the costs of hospitality, such as receptions, food, and beverages.
- To support activities provided outside of the City of Savannah, Georgia.
- To pay space rental costs for facilities owned by the applicant.
- To purchase or improve capital, such as buildings/real estate, or depreciable assets such as printers, computers, etc.
- To support curriculum-based programs provided by academic teaching institutions (except in partnerships with community-based organizations that are the applicants).
- To support fundraising or other activities outside the scope of contracted programs.
- To support exhibitions at commercial, privately-owned galleries or private events that are closed to the general public; restricted to an organization's membership; or restricted on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- For re-granting programs that are essentially recreational.

- To engage in any activities that could be construed as endorsing or opposing any political candidate or party, or participating in any political campaign, including but not limited to, allowing elected officials to make campaign speeches or engage in campaign activities at the proposed services.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

All funded organizations are expected to track outcomes, which will measure the success of programming. The final report will include performance, marketing, audience, youth, community, and economic outcomes. Examples of expected outcomes include, but are not limited to:

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* # of services per program* # of attendees (audience/participants)* # of youth attendees* # of youth assisting in the planning/implementation of the program* # of services of the program in each aldermanic district* \$ dedicated to youth programs* # of volunteers utilized/hours* # and type of collaborations/partnerships* # and type of outreach efforts* cost per participant* cost per service

FUNDING LIMITS AND REQUIREMENTS

- An organization may apply for a total maximum application amount of \$100,000 for all program/project requests.
- An organization may apply for up to 3 programs/projects per application.
- Eligible programs may be recommended for funding in varying amounts from a minimum of \$7,000 to a maximum of \$100,000.
- All program costs must be disclosed in a project budget and submitted as part of the program proposal, along with the application and other supporting documentation.
- The program budget must be specific to the activities outlined in the application for funding.
- City-funded portions of the program must be free of admission charges.
 - The sole exception to this requirement is that organizations are permitted to offer fee-based tickets up to a maximum of 10% of the total audience, provided that the majority of access to free services remains open and unrestricted to the general public. This provision is only available to activities conducted at large outdoor venues such as Forsyth Park.
- The program cannot generate a profit (total project revenue must equal total project expenses).

Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions

Applicants are required to match requested funding on a one-to-one (1:1) basis from non-City funding sources. A minimum of 50% of the organization’s match must be cash, and 50% may be in-kind contributions.

- In-kind contributions are “non-cash” goods or professional services that are donated to the program for free, such as donated art supplies, free use of rental equipment, donated meeting or performance space, or free marketing services.
- The dollar value of cash and in-kind contributions must be reflected in the program budget, including a) the source of cash and in-kind contributions; b) the type of in-kind contribution; and c) how the dollar value of the in-kind contribution was determined.
- Volunteer hours cannot be included as in-kind contributions.

Example: Cash and In-Kind	Cash Value	% of Total
City funds:	\$50,000	50%
Match: 50% Cash	\$25,000	25%
50% In-Kind*	\$25,000	25%
Total Program Cost:	\$100,000	100%

} 50%

*In-Kind Contributions Summary
\$15,000 Top Acts Theater Rental: \$750 x 20 nights (twice per month for 10 months)
\$6,000 Go Live Co: A/V equipment cost estimate
\$2,000 Big Time Marketing Services; cost estimate
\$2,000 The Herald: free print ads; price listing
\$25,000 Total In-Kind Contributions

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION

Applicants are required to submit the organization’s financial information for the last completed fiscal year at the time of application. This may include an income and expense statement, the Internal Revenue Service’s 990 or 990-EZ form, or an audit performed by an independent accountant for the annual operating budget. The following table outlines the required financial documentation based on the size of the organization’s operating budget.

OPERATING BUDGET SIZE	INCOME/EXPENSE STATEMENTS	FORM 990/990EZ	ANNUAL AUDIT
Under \$500K	Required Certified as truthful/accurate and signed by Board Chair or Treasurer (May submit audit)	Required Most Recent submittal to the IRS	Not Required
Over \$500K	Not Required	Required The most recent submittal to the IRS	Required Most Recent fiscal year

- Income and Expense Statements must be certified as truthful and accurate by signature of the Board Chair or Board Treasurer for the most recently completed fiscal period.
- If the organization's audit is in progress, the applicant must submit a letter from the accounting firm indicating the date that the current audit will be completed and provide a copy of the most recently completed prior audit. The applicant must submit a copy of the current audit immediately upon its completion.
- If the applying organization has requested an extension on its IRS 990, 990 PF, or 990 EZ Tax Form, then the organization must submit a copy of that extension and a written, signed letter from the auditor/board treasurer indicating the date when the tax forms will be completed.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Organizations are advised that the City cannot execute a contract for programs until the required financial statements are submitted, and failure to comply with this requirement may result in the cancellation of the contract award.

SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

All proposals **must be submitted electronically on or before the proposal submission deadline.** If possible, applicants are urged to submit proposals prior to the deadline date to avoid being late. Proposals that are incomplete, submitted via fax, or submitted late will not be eligible for consideration.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- Organizations may submit only one application.
- Only one organization can request funding for a partnership. The organization that is the presenting or the producing organization should detail the nature of the activity for which funding is requested on behalf of the partnership.
- Proposals must be completed and submitted online using Neighborly, an online grants portal.
- To sign up for Neighborly, please use the following participant link:
<https://portal.neighborlysoftware.com/savannah/Participant>
- Complete all sections of the application thoughtfully, thoroughly, and accurately.
- Pay attention to word limits and ensure answers are clear and concise.
- Be sure to scan and upload copies of the organization's legal documents as required.

ORGANIZATION BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS

- The Organization Budget is included in the program application.
- Applicants are asked to submit a realistic and accurate organization operating budget that aligns with prevailing rates of pay and industry standards. Total Revenue should equal Total Expenses.
- The scope of the budget should clearly match the scope of programs offered by the organization.
- Round all budget figures to the nearest whole dollar.
- This is a cash operating budget; do not include in-kind or capital expenses. Organizations should only include cash expenses that fall within the organization's funding calendar. The appropriate place to address in-kind donations is in the itemization section of the Program/Project Budget.

PROGRAM/PROJECT BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS

- The **program budget** is a separate document that applicants will need to access, complete, and upload along with the application and other support materials.
- The program/project budget should only include revenue and expenses related to the program.
- Only cash revenue and operating expenses should be entered into in the Project Revenue and Expenses section.
- Round all budget figures to the nearest whole dollar.
- Listed expenses must be applied to the proposed program, in the proposed timeframe.
- Do not include in-kind or capital expenses in the budget. There is a separate in-kind section.

Revenue

- Revenue should include only committed revenue to the proposed program.
- Revenue that does not meet an existing category should be entered in the “Other” section.
- Total Revenue and related percentages will auto-calculate as revenue is entered.

Expenses

- Enter the expenses covered by City funds (if approved) in the City Share column.
- Enter expenses covered by other revenue sources in the Organization Share column.
- Total Program Expenses and related percentages will auto-calculate as expenses are entered.
- *Please itemize all sections with asterisks in the Budget Explanation section of the budget form (page 2 of the budget worksheet).*

Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions

- Applicants must match the requested amount of City funding on a one-to-one (1:1) basis.
- Refer to the “Funding Limits and Requirements” section of these guidelines to determine the percentage of cash contributions for paid versus volunteer organizations.
- In the In-Kind Contributions section of the budget worksheet, enter the names of in-kind contributors, the types of donated goods/services, the monetary value, and the method for determining this value.
- All contributions and related percentages will be automatically calculated.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The following information must be submitted electronically as part of the proposal packet.

- ACE Program – Application Form
- ACE Program – Program/Project budget form
- Organization Bylaws and Mission Statement
- List of Board of Directors (names, addresses, phone numbers)
- Letter/Certificate of Incorporation (State of Georgia registration)
- Proof of Tax-Exempt Status (IRS Letter of Determination)
- IRS Tax Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-N for the most recently completed fiscal year

- Income/Expense Statement (Operating Budget <\$500K)
- Certified Bound Audit (Operating budget >\$500K)
- Program-related contracts and agreements: venue contracts, letters of support, memoranda of understanding, fiscal sponsor agreement (if applicable)
- Miscellaneous (optional): representative photos (no more than five; jpeg or tiff), media reviews, etc.

PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS

Applications are reviewed for eligibility, accuracy, and completeness by the City's Cultural Resources Department prior to being submitted to the City's Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC). The CAC is appointed by the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah and provides expert peer review through its analysis of the organization's application, organization, and program budgets, financial statements, support materials, and on-site evaluations (where applicable).

The Cultural Affairs Commission reviews proposals in accordance with established criteria, identifies programs for funding, and makes funding recommendations to the Mayor and Aldermen as part of the City's annual budget approval process. All programs are individually evaluated with narrative comments and given numerical scores. The process is designed to ensure equity and fairness in the evaluation process.

PROPOSAL REVIEW CRITERIA

Proposals will be individually reviewed and scored according to the following criteria and point allocation up to a maximum score of 100.

Organization Management and Experience - 15 Points

- Well-articulated organization mission and goals.
- Effective administration, years in operation, and leadership among paid/volunteer staff.
- Level of experience delivering proposed or similar programming.
- Adequacy of program oversight and other planned support.
- Satisfactory program outcomes and compliance with the terms of past City contracts (if applicable).
- Overall quality of application preparation/completeness of information.
- Ability to sustain a program/project with limited or no City funding support.

Program/Project Design - 15 Points

- Clear program/project goals and objectives.
- Carefully planned with a realistic execution strategy.
- Exemplifies innovative and creative programming.
- Focuses on artistic quality.
- Presents effective and engaging programming.

- Utilizes appropriately skilled artists/educators and paid/volunteer support.
- Documented collaborations with Savannah's creative and social service agencies, businesses, education, and/or community development sectors.
- Effective marketing strategy to reach a wide segment of the Savannah community and visitors.

Community Benefits/City Priorities – 30 points

- Includes clear and specific benefits to program participants/audiences.
- Identifies the program's general benefits to the community as a whole.
- Enhances and fosters vibrant neighborhoods and enriches the quality of life.
- Expands art and cultural experiences to new and more diverse audiences and participants.
- Builds and reinforces a strong sense of community throughout Savannah.
- Develops and inspires young people through imaginative and innovative approaches and engages them as program audience, program stewards, and artists/performers.
- Increase access to art and cultural programming in new and underserved areas of the City.
- Strengthens Savannah's reputation as a cultural destination.
- Improves the aesthetics of built environments through creative projects.
- Increases economic growth through skill-building, creative sector jobs, and entrepreneurship.
- Integrates strategies to ensure equitable access to programming regardless of income or ability.
- Defines barriers to community engagement and presents a clear plan to address barriers and effectively reach and engage diverse audiences/participants.

Performance Outcomes - 20 Points

- Clearly delineates the number and type of specific programs to be provided.
- Identifies the number of participants to be served.
- Differentiates and defines an organization's free and fee-based programming.
- Provides programs that reach/extend to multiple aldermanic districts.
- Includes clear evaluation methods and indicators to measure program/project effectiveness and determine if program goals were met.

Budget Planning & Management - 20 Points

- Accuracy of budget and itemization.
- Appropriate and reasonable program costs based on the proposed services to be delivered and the planned outcomes/results to be achieved.
- Practicality/feasibility of budget projections for proposed activities and overall operations.
- Diversified revenue stream with emphasis on other sources of contributed and earned revenue.
- Accurate calculation of the cost per participant for each program.

NOTIFICATION OF FUNDING AWARD

Organizations approved for funding will receive formal notification from the Cultural Resources Department. Funded organizations must provide the following documentation prior to contract execution:

- Project Confirmation
- Financial Statements
- Certificate of Insurance with the City added as an insured party on the organization's liability coverage for City-funded activities
- Background Clearance checks (if applicable)
- Permits (if applicable)

Funded organizations must enter into a legally binding contract with the City of Savannah prior to delivery of the proposal and receipt of funds. The agency's performance shall be in the capacity of an independent contractor and not as an officer, agent, or employee of the City.

PROJECT/PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

- Projects/programs may be implemented after the contract has been executed by all required parties.
- Projects/programs must be completed in the year in which services are contracted (January 1 – December 31).

APPLICATION WORKSHOPS

Workshops provide in-depth explanations of programs, eligibility criteria, investment priorities, and application forms. The workshops will be held at the Otis S. Johnson Cultural Arts Center, located at 201 Montgomery Street, Savannah, Georgia. Workshop dates and times are detailed in the "Important Program Dates and Times" section below. Registration for workshops can be found at www.savannahga.gov/arts. Applicants who cannot attend the scheduled workshops may seek individual technical assistance by contacting the Cultural Resources Department's Contracts Coordinator at 912-651-6783 or SCACcontracts@savannahga.gov.

IMPORTANT PROGRAM DATES & TIMES

APPLICATION PERIOD OPENS	June 12, 2025, 8:00 AM
<p>Application/Proposal Workshops Location: Otis S. Johnson Cultural Arts Center 201 Montgomery Street, Savannah, GA</p>	<p>June 7, 2025 (8:30 AM -12:00 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to City of Savannah Grant Workshops • In-person Only <p>June 12, 2025 (6:00 PM-7:00 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person Only <p>Recorded Workshop Available Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.savannahga.gov/2720/Arts-Culture-Enrichment-Program
PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE	July 28, 2025, 5:00 PM
Staff application review	August
Cultural Affairs Panel review and deliberation	August
Funding recommendations finalized	September/October
Funding recommendations presented to City Council	October/November
Applicants notified of funding recommendations	November
Budget hearings & annual budget approval	November/December
Applicants notified of approved awards	December
Successful applicants begin the contract process	December 2025 – May 2026
Contracts finalized and executed	January - May 2026
Contracted programs are completed	January – December 2026