



Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission
FY 2020 Local Arts Program Grant Guidelines

Deadline for submission July 12, 2019

**Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission McDade Administration Building
640 South Broad Street PO Box 8068 Trenton, NJ 08650**

609-278-2712 Voice 609-278-6672 Fax

www.mercercounty.org

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes and the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders have made funds available for support of the arts through a State/County Block Grant Partnership for County Arts Agencies. The three-year block grant is an essential part of the State arts community and a most effective vehicle through which to promote the programs of local arts groups. Applications are carefully evaluated to insure programs of high quality, ethnic diversity and community participation with maximum availability and accessibility to all county residents. This Local Arts Program Grant (LAP) is administered by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission. The MCC&HC LAP Grant Program is intended to promote the growth and expand the public impact of community arts organizations and community arts projects.

County of Mercer

The Honorable Brian M. Hughes, *County Executive*

Board of Chosen Freeholders:

John A. Cimino (Chair) * Andrew Koontz (Vice Chair)
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Eligible Applicants

Mercer County-based nonprofit organizations, units of local government, libraries, and/or institutes of higher education that have been offering or presenting arts programming for at least the past two years are eligible to apply for Mercer County's LAP grant support. K-12 schools and school districts are not eligible, but may partner or collaborate with an eligible applicant group on a project.

At the time of application, an organization must be incorporated as a non-profit in the State of NJ and designated tax-exempt by determination of the Internal Revenue Service (in accordance with Sections 501(c) 3 or (c) 4). Organizations whose filings with the IRS for tax exempt status are in process and on schedule to be determined by July, 2019, may be considered for a LAP grant if they identify a current 501(c)(3 or 4) New Jersey non-profit to serve as a fiscal agent. In such a case, a letter of agreement from that fiscal agent must be included with this application, along with a copy of that agency's IRS determination letter.

Funding Categories

General Operating Support

General Operating Support grants are available only to non-profit organizations whose missions are exclusively devoted to the public presentation of, and/or education in, the arts. GOS funds provide support for the overall operations of these organizations for the calendar year. Although there are specific uses for GOS funds that are considered ineligible, GOS funds may be used for most activities that support the organization's arts mission.

Special Project Support

This category is open to any organization that meets the basic eligibility requirements (see Eligible Applicants).

A special project is a public arts activity or event that occurs during the grant year with specific start and completion dates. The project may contain multiple events or activities, but these must be clearly related by discipline or theme. The special project MUST be separate from the regular programming of the applicant organization and should have its own mission and goals. It may be considered a permanent "additional

project" within the sponsoring institution or it may be a one-time occurrence. The project should be wholly dedicated to the arts and the sponsoring organization should clearly demonstrate a commitment to support of the arts project through the allocation of resources and funds raised in the community.

Examples of a special project include a concert, an exhibition, a reading, a mixed media presentation, a "one-off" run of a theatrical production, a festival, or workshops, lectures and demonstrations in one of the arts disciplines.

All events funded through Special Project grants must take place within Mercer County and be open to the general public.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- capital improvements and acquisitions (including artwork)
- hospitality costs
- foreign travel
- deficits or replacement of funds normally budgeted for the activity
- fundraising events
- student-produced publications, scholarships or awards
- support for "The Nutcracker" OR any organization whose sole activity/season is based on "The Nutcracker"

Arts Disciplines

Arts programs and projects should fall under any of the following disciplines:

- dance
- instrumental or vocal music
- theatre or musical theatre
- visual and media arts
- folk arts and crafts if they reflect authentic traditions practiced by master artists
- literary arts
- composition
- multi-disciplinary
- multi-media projects

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Funding Request Cap

For General Operating Support the maximum amount of grant funds an organization may request is 25% of the average of last year and the current year total operating income, not to exceed \$7,000.

For Special Project support, the maximum allowable request would be 50% or less of the total estimated expense budget for that specific project. Project costs would be separate from the estimated expense budget for the applicant organization. The total amount requested for a Special Projects grant may not exceed \$6,000.

Applicants are encouraged to request the maximum amount of grant funds for which they can demonstrate the required cash match. Grant awards are based on the number of applications received by MCC&HC and funds available for the LAP grant program.

Grant Period

The Grant Period for all FY19 grants under this program runs January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Match Requirements

General Operating Support grants require a 1:1 cash match (if an organization is requesting \$1,000, for example, they must show at least a \$1,000 match in their budget.) Special Projects grants also require a 1:1 match, however up to 50% of the SP grant match may be from in-kind goods and services. New Jersey Cultural Trust and other MCC&HC grant funds may not be used to meet the match requirements. The match for GOS may be derived from the total income budget for the organization; the match for SP grants may derive from all contributed, earned or organization funds specifically allocated for the project or program.

Budget Documentation

Organizations applying for the first time to the county for grant funds must provide documentation of the organization's expenses in the form of

- an audit from an accountant
- copy of previous year's tax return to the IRS
- a letter from an accountant certifying the expenses for the previous year.

Organizations which received a grant in the previous year that are applying again do not need to supply these documents unless there are any major changes during recent years in organization structure and/or financials.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Applications for GOS and SP LAP funds must complete a Project Checklist for Accessibility ADA. Organizations applying for GOS funds may submit an ADA Plan in lieu of the ADA checklist. The ADA plan should be based on the comprehensive self-assessment survey tool developed by the New Jersey Arts Access Task Force. This survey is available on the NJSCA website at www.artscouncil.nj.gov. Organizations will be required to submit an updated board-approved ADA plan with each grant application submitted.

Evaluation Process

Grant applications are evaluated by two separate groups of independent arts and cultural activists. The first evaluation is done by a Grant Review Panel comprised of members of the arts community representing a variety of disciplines. Commissioners on the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission provide the second evaluation.

Evaluation Criteria

Review panels evaluate applications for:

- Administrative abilities and financial stability of the organization
- Reasonable budget, use of funds and ability to raise funds for a special project
- Planning and development, including long range planning strategies
- Cultural diversity of organization and audience
- Need, promise and potential of the organization or special project, and the capability of the organization to follow through
- Support materials that demonstrate ability to achieve artistic excellence, fulfill stated mission and/or meet the unique needs of the community
- Demonstration of ADA compliance or clear and concise plan to address non-compliance issues

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Priorities for Funding

In addition to the evaluation criteria, importance is placed on:

- Innovation in programming or projects
- Collaborations or partnerships, especially between culturally diverse organizations and artists
- Demonstration of benefits to culturally diverse or underserved populations
- Inclusion of and service to artists who are disabled
- Demonstrated efforts to expand outreach efforts and programming in order to attract new audiences

Narrative

The narrative is an opportunity to give more details about the applicant organization, background, programs, services, goals, plans, and benefits to the community. This is the vehicle to explain and describe any unusual or unique circumstances not addressed in the application form. The narrative and support materials should contain all relevant information necessary for a person unfamiliar with your organization, program or project to fully understand who it serves, its artistic vision or standards set for it, how artistic decisions are made, the qualifications of persons responsible for making those decisions, examples of recent work and accomplishments, and how the organization is managed and operates.

The narrative should:

- Begin with the mission statement and a brief history of the organization; the arts component of a non-arts-based organization; or the activities and goals relevant to the special project.
- Describe the Project or Programs to be funded. Explain how the project is to be carried out, specify the art forms involved, and include a schedule or calendar of activities. Include a brief explanation of how the project will improve the organization's artistic excellence and outreach. Explain how the successes and/or failures of the project will be evaluated.
- Provide a clear, detailed explanation of how the LAP grant funds would be used.
- Explain the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy of the applicant organization. Describe

progress the organization has made in making programming more accessible and inclusive. Discuss any barriers that still exist and outline goals and specific steps to address and remove barriers in a detailed timeline, with assignment of responsibility and consideration of costs necessary to implement each goal. Include attention to facilities, marketing, programmatic access, employment, and sensitivity awareness, and identification of the access committee, ADA coordinator, and a grievance procedure.

- List and explain partnerships or collaborations with other cultural, ethnic or historical groups.
- Discuss your publicity plan for grant-funded activity or project and your efforts to target audiences. Identify your audience and its potential size. Be as concise as possible and include methods employed such as cable or network community shows, newspapers, mailings etc.

Support Materials

Support materials for both GOS and SP grant requests should demonstrate the quality and illustrate the kinds of arts programming of the applicant organization and the project to be funded. It is only necessary to send one set of support materials, which will be made available to the review panel members at their request. Types of support materials might include a resume of artist, brochure, flyer, poster, program booklet, CD, videotape or DVD, photographs, published book, catalog or article.

Long Range Planning

Long range organizational or program planning is essential to the continued success of any organization. All GOS and SP applicants must submit a long-range plan for the operation or the program. The plan should include statement of goals and strategic steps to realize those goals, assign responsibility for implementation of tasks, consider the resources needed to realize goals, and be placed on a realistic implementation timeline.

The plan should cover all essential areas of the organization such as artistic vision, governance, human resources, audiences and all forms of public participation including artists and volunteers, fundraising, marketing and outreach, advocacy, educational activities, etc.

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Absent a formal long-range plan, or if organization is in between plans, the narrative should include information detailing the process for developing the long range plan, include a timeline for that process and its current status. The strength of an applicant's long range planning is considered in the evaluation process.

County and State Funding

Organizations may not apply to or receive grants from both the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts within the same funding cycle. In advance of submitting a Notice of Intent to Apply with the NJSCA applicants should discuss their situation with NJSCA staff to determine eligibility.

MCC&HC will not accept applications or award grant funds to organizations applying to or receiving grants from other county arts councils or county cultural and heritage commissions.

Required Documentation

Resumes of key staff and board members, as well as for artists/experts being hired for a Special Project, must be included. All **NEW applicants** must include a copy of the organization's Articles of Incorporation bearing the Date of Filing and IRS Notification of Tax Exempt Status; or proof that these two filings are in the process at the time of submission of the grant application. Units of government must include a copy of an authorized resolution from the governing body. Chapters of national organizations must include documents from the national headquarters showing the location and current officers of the local chapter, and a copy of the national organization's IRS letter of determination.

On-site Evaluation

Organizations receiving grant funds must furnish one ticket for at least one event/production to the MCC&HC. The Commission must also be sent all publicity announcements for any events occurring within the grantee organizations' grant period. [Site visits and program audits are done by Division staff to ensure that LAP grant-funded programs and projects are produced as represented in grant applications and that grantee organizations are in compliance with ADA requirements.]

MCC&HC Newsletter and Online Calendar of Events

MCC&HC produces a quarterly newsletter as well as Monthly E-blasts. These materials are distributed throughout the region, primarily to Mercer County residents and organizations. The Division also maintains an active FaceBook page. These tools are used to help publicize events and activities with no cost to our grantee organizations.

The newsletter, which features articles as well as calendar of events, highlights county-based organizations and programming for each season. Any organization producing a cultural, historical, ethnic or heritage-based event or activity or providing a service for the Mercer County arts and culture community may submit information to the newsletter editor, Cheryl Reed at chreed@mercercounty.org for publication. The quarterly Newsletter is emailed and also available online on the Cultural & Heritage pages on the Mercer County website: www.mercercounty.org

Deadlines for quarterly Newsletter submissions:

Spring (April / May / June) *deadline: 1st Fri/February*
Summer (July / Aug. / Sept.) *deadline: 1st Fri/May*
Fall (Oct. / Nov. / Dec.) *deadline: 1st Fri/August*
Winter (Jan. / Feb. / Mar) *deadline: 1st Fri/November*

If an event doesn't make the newsletter it may be added to the monthly e-blast and/or Division FaceBook page.

Application Deadlines

The deadline to apply for an MCC&HC LAP Grant in GOS or SP category is **July 12, 2019**. This deadline may be met by hand-delivery of materials (1 original application and narrative signed in blue ink and 10 copies) to the MCC&HC office by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) July 12, 2019; or by mail with a postmark by midnight (12:00 a.m.) of material to the following address:

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Extensions will be permitted only in extreme circumstances. **Organizations that are unable to comply with the deadline requirements should contact the MCC&HC office by phone 609-278-2712 at least two weeks prior to the deadline to request an extension.** Please be prepared to discuss the reason that the extension is necessary and provide a firm date that a completed application will be submitted. Late applications that do not have a pre-approved extension deadline may be disqualified.

Applicants who experience significant changes in staffing, programming or finances after submitting their LAP grant application but before grants are announced must immediately notify MCC&HC in writing of those changes. Failure to do so may result in disqualification of the grant application.

LAP Grant Application Assistance

The following assistance is available to applicants:

- Grant Writing workshops
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Workshops
- Individual appointments with staff (following workshops or schedule an appointment)
- Applicants may make an appointment to discuss any questions or concerns that might arise during the course of completing the application; as well as at any other time during the grant cycle.
- Staff members are available to answer questions by phone (609) 989-6418 or (609) 278-2712, fax (609) 278-6672 and e-mail (see Staff Directory, page 1)

Appeal Process

Organizations may appeal adverse grant decisions if they can demonstrate that their application was substantively misunderstood or misinterpreted, based on summary Review Panel comments. Appeals must be in writing, addressed to the Division Chief. All appeals will be reviewed by a three-member panel of the Cultural & Heritage Commission. Their ruling will be forwarded to administrative staff, and a written report on that ruling will be sent to the applicant.

Mercer County Legislative & Congressional Districts

Town	NJ Legislative District
East Windsor Township	14
Ewing Township	15
Hamilton Township.....	14
Hightstown Borough.....	14
Hopewell Borough.....	15
Hopewell Township	15
Lawrence Township	15
Pennington Borough	15
Princeton	16
Robbinsville Township	14
Trenton City.....	15
West Windsor Township	15

Town	U.S. Congressional District
East Windsor Township	12
Ewing Township	12
Hamilton Township.....	4
Hightstown Borough.....	12
Hopewell Borough.....	12
Hopewell Township	12
Lawrence Township	12
Pennington Borough	12
Princeton	12
Robbinsville Township	4
Trenton City.....	12
West Windsor Township	12