



2020 Request for Proposals to Build the Capacity of Arts and Cultural Organizations with Budgets Between \$250,000 and \$1.5 million

Background

New York City is an international hub for arts and culture. Although the largest institutions tend to draw the most attention from tourists, donors, and the press, small arts and cultural groups nourish and develop artists while serving as research and development labs. Playwrights first hear their scripts read out loud on small stages; community galleries exhibit the early works of emerging visual artists, paving the way for future commercial success; and youth are often guided through their first arts experiences in neighborhood programs, centers, and schools.

These often unheralded organizational anchors bring arts and culture into every neighborhood. Despite their important role in nurturing and sustaining a healthy arts ecosystem, small groups struggle. They may have difficulty retaining staff, securing high-profile board members, marketing their programs, streamlining operating procedures, or managing cash flow.

Opportunity

The New York Community Trust will award two- or three-year grants to increase the capacity of arts and cultural groups with operating budgets between \$250,000 and \$1.5 million. Priority will be given to agencies created and led by African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American people, and to groups operating programs in neighborhoods that have historically had access to fewer resources. Grants will help groups facing a critical juncture—a leadership change, merger, space transition, or other rare but significant opportunity or challenge (excluding anniversaries)—to carry out a specific project designed to resolve administrative challenges, increase efficiency, start a new or expand an existing program, or explore other adaptive ways to sustain the organization in the longer term.

Note: Proposals seeking support for the following will **not** be considered: fundraising (e.g., hiring a grant writer or launching a giving campaign); capital projects/brick-and-mortar costs; general operations; and exhibitions or performances, or the creation of artwork for such presentations.

Electronic applications are due to The Trust no later than 4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4, 2020. Hard copies must be postmarked by the following day. All applicants will be notified about the status of their proposals in June 2020.

Eligibility

Applicants should:

- Be an arts or cultural organization with 501(c)(3) status, or an unincorporated group applying with a fiscal sponsor. Arts service and umbrella organizations are only eligible if they are proposing a project to help build the capacity of small arts groups.
- Located within the five boroughs of New York City.
- Have a board of directors with at least five members, with no more than one who is paid.
- Have an annual operating budget ranging from \$250,000 to \$1.5 million, as determined by an audit, CPA review, or IRS Form 990 tax filing for the most recently completed fiscal year. If a group is applying with a fiscal sponsor, the annual operating budget of the applicant (not the fiscal sponsor) should be in the \$250,000 to \$1.5 million range, demonstrated by actual income and expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year.
- Submit only one project proposal through this request for proposals.
- Not have an active grant with The Trust (excluding grants from funder collaboratives, such as the Mosaic Fund) that concludes after June 2020.

Review Criteria

Grant proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis using the following criteria:

- Clear and thoughtful articulation of:
 - The critical juncture the organization faces and its readiness for change;
 - The project it will carry out to build capacity and take advantage of the above; and
 - Its plans to sustain efforts beyond the grant period.
- A feasible timeline and reasonable budget that is consistent with proposed activities.
- Stable financial health. Groups with negative net assets will **not** be considered.

Application Materials

The **proposal narrative** should not exceed five pages and should address the following:

1. Brief overview of your organization's history, mission, and programs.
2. Population served by your programs, noting demographics where possible.
3. Description of the critical juncture your organization faces, how you have arrived at this moment, your financial position, and your readiness for change.
4. Description of the capacity-building project, specifying goals, the activities that will help you accomplish them, what will be changed as a result (noting indicators you will use to determine if the project has succeeded), and how you expect to sustain this change over the longer term. If a consultant is needed for assistance, a bid from that consultant must be included as an attachment to confirm scope of work and cost.
5. Brief timeline of activities, noting any potential obstacles that may hinder progress along the way.

The two- or three-year **project budget** should indicate annual and total expenses and income, including The Trust's potential contribution and other sources of support, if applicable, noting which sources are confirmed, pending, or projected.

Support materials should include the following:

1. The New York Community Trust proposal cover sheet, to be submitted through The Trust's grants portal at: <https://proposals.nycommunitytrust.org/Proposal/Create/?loiRespKey=0&rfpId=27>. **Note:** *You will be asked to upload a single PDF file of your application (proposal narrative, project budget, and items 2-6 below) to the proposal cover sheet online. Please have the PDF ready in advance.*
2. Bid from a project consultant confirming scope of work and fee for services, if the need for a consultant is specified in the proposal.
3. Operating budget for current year and projected budget(s) for the requested grant period.
4. List of current funders.
5. Latest audited financial statement (for groups with budgets of \$750,000 or more); CPA review report (for groups with budgets between \$250,000 and \$750,000); IRS Form 990 (all others). For unincorporated groups applying with a fiscal sponsor, please provide actual income and expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year.
6. List of your board of directors, including professional affiliations.

After uploading a single PDF file of your application (proposal narrative, project budget, and items #2-6 above) to the online cover sheet, please print the PDF cover sheet that is emailed to you and mail it alongside all other application materials to:

Ms. Sheila Dinkins
The New York Community Trust
909 Third Ave, Floor 22
New York, NY 10022

Electronic applications must be submitted to the grants portal by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4, 2020. Hard copies must be postmarked by Thursday, March 5. Applications that are incomplete or submitted after the due dates will not be considered. Please direct questions to Salem Tsegaye at snt@nyct-cfi.org.