



2023 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 role in nurturing and sustaining a healthy arts ecosystem, small groups struggle. They may have difficulty retaining staff, securing board members, marketing programs, streamlining operating procedures, or managing cash flow.

Opportunity

The New York Community Trust will award two- or three-year grants—up to \$75,000 per year—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 people of color, 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; and exhibitions, performances, festivals, or screenings, or the creation of artwork for such presentations. Applicants may budget up to 25 percent of a grant or project for administration/general operations, but grants will not be made for general operating support in full.

Electronic applications are due to The Trust no later than 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, 2023. All applicants will be notified about the status of their proposals in June 2023.

Eligibility

Applicants should:

- Be an organization with 501(c)(3) status, or an unincorporated group applying with a fiscal sponsor.
- Primarily operate and be located within the five boroughs of New York City.
- Have a board of directors with at least five members, at least four of whom are independent. (This applies to 501(c)(3) organizations and fiscal sponsors only.)
- Have an annual operating budget ranging from \$250,000 to \$1.5 million, as determined by actual income and expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year. If a group is applying with a fiscal sponsor, the annual operating budget of the applicant should be in the \$250,000 to \$1.5 million range. The annual operating budget of the fiscal sponsor should be at least \$250,000 and can exceed \$1.5 million.
- Not have an active grant with The Trust (excluding grants from collaborative funds, such as the Mosaic Network and Fund) that concludes after June 2023.
- Submit only one project proposal through this request for proposals.

Review Criteria

Grant proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

- The critical juncture the organization faces and its readiness for change;
- The project the organization will carry out to build capacity and take advantage of the above;
- Plans to sustain efforts beyond a 2- or 3-year grant period, understanding that grants awarded through The Trust's arts capacity building program are typically non-renewable;
- A feasible timeline and reasonable budget that is consistent with proposed activities; and
- 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=62>. **Note:** *You will be asked to upload a single PDF file of your application (proposal narrative, project budget, and items 2-5 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 fiscal year. (This applies to applicants and fiscal sponsors, where applicable.)
4. Actual income and expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year. (This applies to applicants and fiscal sponsors, where applicable.)
5. List of board of directors, including professional affiliations.

Electronic applications must be submitted on the NYCT grants portal by 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, 2023. Applications that are incomplete or not submitted by this date will not be considered.

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The Trust will hold an information session via Zoom on Tuesday, January 24 from 1 to 2 pm ET.

If you would like to attend, please register [here](#) for the info session by Tuesday, January 17.

Confirmed attendees will receive a Zoom link via email the week before the session. A recording also will be made available online.