

Art for Social Justice Grant Guidelines

Art for Social Justice Grants will support projects that present the themes and ongoing work of social justice to the Cambridge public through the arts. Individuals and organizations can apply for grants of \$7,500 to support cultural projects that further racial justice.

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Art for Social Justice Grant Description

Art for Social Justice Grants will support projects that present the themes and ongoing work of social justice to the Cambridge public through the arts. We invite individuals or organizations to apply for grants of \$7,500 each for projects that creatively advance social justice and strengthen a sense of place wherever the project occurs. Projects must be designed to serve those living or working in Cambridge. We welcome arts in any of its expressive means or formats.

Social justice is a broad concept of equity that includes every realm of society, such as health, education, food, housing, laws, information and digital access, transportation, political and economic opportunity and agency, environmental health, safety, civic participation, or public spaces. We are seeking projects that reflect the interests, visions, and participation of those who have historically been underserved and underrepresented – this includes the participation of those who identify as Black, Indigenous, Asian American, or Pacific Islander, others who identify as people of color, as well as persons with disabilities. Cambridge Arts believes engagement with neighborhoods and communities is an important aspect to any project and encourages collaborative teams that speak to a particular social or physical place in Cambridge. Cambridge Arts believes that artists are uniquely suited to help us respond to the harm caused by systemic bias and racism. Artists can contribute to the collective ongoing work we as a community must do to build a genuinely inclusive society. The arts also celebrate and affirm the

presence of those often not seen in the public sphere. Artists can present a new perspective on or help us question common social, historical, physical, political, or spatial structures. Art for Social Justice grants are an opportunity to highlight the creative richness in Cambridge and a shared vision of a just and equitable society.

Art for Social Justice Grant Award Amounts

Grants of \$7,500 will be awarded to individuals and organizations to carry out cultural programs that present the themes and ongoing work of social justice to the Cambridge public through the arts.

Art for Social Justice Grant Eligibility

Artists and organizations based in Cambridge are eligible to apply.

Projects must have lead artists on board who work or live in Cambridge. All projects must take place in Cambridge, serve the public, and be integrated into the community. For example, an artist might collaborate with an organization addressing a need such as a housing or health agency, a transportation service, a school, an organization promoting parks and nature or greater healthy food access. It is also possible to partner with a city department, for which Cambridge Arts will assist the grantee. Please let us know before submitting an application if this is of interest.

- *Program Eligibility*

All approved projects must be completed within an 18-month window of eligibility, between the July 1st preceding the application deadline December 31st of the following year.

- *Public Benefit*

Projects must demonstrate a community benefit. Funds support activities that contribute to the cultural vitality of the community as a whole, rather than benefiting any one private individual or group. This does not mean that a large audience needs to participate in order to satisfy the requirement of community benefit.

- *Non-Discrimination*

Cambridge Arts will not fund projects that discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, creed, color, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or age.

- *No Substitution*

Cambridge Arts Grant Program funds are neither intended to replace nor supplement existing public funds for programs in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences, nor to be used as the sole source of project funding. Any item or activity that is generally considered the financial responsibility of the City will not be approved, even if funding did not previously exist for that item or activity.

- *Designing for Access*

Cambridge Arts believes a strong proposal will consider the concept of Universal Design – designing a program or project that can be enjoyed, accessed, and understood by the largest range of individuals possible regardless of age, size, abilities, or disabilities. We

abide by state and federal regulations which bar discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation, and which require accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Cambridge Arts and its grantees are expected to be in compliance with:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Other applicable state and local laws

Cambridge Arts aims to help grantees understand their obligations and recognize the opportunities that increasing access can provide for both the public and the grantee. Individuals and organizations funded by Cambridge Arts that present public programs or offer services to the public must make reasonable accommodations to ensure that people with disabilities have equal physical and communications access, as defined by federal law.

We want your project to succeed. If we can be of help with questions, feedback, connecting you with relevant resources, or framing your concept, please get in touch. The earlier the better. Contact: danderson@cambridgema.gov.

Art for Social Justice Grant Review Criteria

1. Quality and creativity of the project's design
2. Involvement from and significance to BIPOC communities
3. Key personnel
4. Clarity and feasibility of budget, timeline, and evaluation plans

1. Quality and Creativity of the Projects' Design
 - How does this project align with the goals of the Art for Social Justice Grant?
 - What are the motivations behind the project? How well outlined is the project's approach?
 - Does this project represent a particularly innovative or creative viewpoint?
 - Will this project make a strong impression on its viewership or the artist that is creating it?
2. Involvement from and significance to BIPOC communities
 - How readily available will this project be to BIPOC communities?
 - What can community members take away from this project?
 - Does this project explore any themes that are relevant to the surrounding community?
 - Does this project address specific needs/interests of BIPOC communities?
 - Are there letters of support from members of the community?
 - How will the target audience gain access to this project?
 - How well will this project engage a BIPOC audience?

3. Key Personnel

- Are their qualifications sufficient to complete project in the manner outlined by the proposal?
- Is there significant representation of BIPOC in the key personnel?
- What roles will key personnel play and how do these roles reflect their background?
- Are there any areas of expertise?
- Have there been any significant awards or distinctions given?
- Is the applicant an emerging artist or professional?
- How would this project elevate the applicant's professional status?

4. Clarity & Feasibility of Budget, Timeline, Publicity and Evaluation Plans

- Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the project's scope & scale?
- Does the budget clearly state how all funds will be utilized?
- Does the timeline adequately address the nature of the project?
- Do the evaluation plans consist of a comprehensive approach?
- Overall, how detailed are the budget, timeline, and evaluation plans?

Art for Social Justice Grant Application Instructions

All Applications must be submitted online via the Cambridge Arts link: [Art for Social Justice Grant Applications](#)

- The Art for Social Justice Grant applications must be submitted by 11:59pm on Oct. 15, 2026, via the Cambridge Arts online application portal.
- **Applicants who apply for the Art for Social Justice Grant will not be eligible to apply for the Individual Project Grants.**
- Hard copy applications will not be accepted.
- The Art for Social Justice Grant online application consists of three sections:
 1. Applicant Information
 2. Art for Social Justice Grant Questions
 3. Supplemental Materials

Application Steps

1. Answer the Applicant Information questions
2. Answer the following questions related to the Art for Racial Justice Grant
 - a. Program Name
 - b. Where will your project take place?
 - c. Individual website

- d. Project media
 - e. Project Description
 - f. List of participants or collaborators, and how they will be involved in your project
 - g. Describe how you and your collaborators would fulfill the grant program's goals.
 - h. Estimated Timeline for Program Activities
 - i. Evaluation Plan
 - j. Project Budget (upload) Include general estimated costs. Possible budget items include: artist fees, materials, staff time, documentation, accessibility services such as ASL interpretation or open captioning, equipment rentals, space rental, transportation, marketing or outreach, printing, technology, installation, maintenance, etc. Clearly note which item(s) of the budget this grant would support.
 - k. Letters of Support (upload)
Letters of support should confirm the commitment of collaborators to the project. Applicants are highly encouraged to include letters from community members showing support for their project.
Provide written confirmation that your project will take place at the proposed venue. This can be submitted as a letter from the venue, an email confirmation, a rental agreement, an official schedule of events including your project, or any other written confirmation that your project is scheduled to take place at your proposed venue. Organizations hosting the proposed project at their own venue are not required to submit this confirmation.
 - l. Public Art Projects Letters (upload)
Please see the Public Art Grant Application Guidelines document available on the Cambridge Arts Grants website.
3. Upload up to 10 additional media, in a single pdf format, that would support your application, including video, images, audio clips, news articles, etc.

Grant Program Timeline

Tuesday, September 1, 2026

Applications Open

Monday, September 21, 2026

Public Art & School Proposals Eligibility Due Date

Applications for public art or school related projects must have met with the appropriate approval parties by this time.

Thursday, October 15, 2026 @ 11:59pm is the Application Submission Due Date

All applications & support materials must be submitted online by 11:59pm.

December 2026 - January 2027

Review Panels Convene

February - March 2027

Applicants Notified of Decisions

July 1, 2026 – December 31, 2027

Projects in Progress

December 31, 2027

and final reports submitted.

Final Reports Due, **All projects must be completed,**

General Tips and Advice for Applicants

- Keep in mind that panelists read and review multiple applications. Be as clear and concise as possible.
- Late applications and supplementary materials will not be accepted for review.
- We're happy to help you work through questions and concerns you may have as you're preparing your application. If you're having trouble figuring things out, we'd like to help. Never applied before and need help decoding the application? We want to help! Sign up for our grant info sessions, September 14, 21, 28, and Oct. 5, 5 – 6 pm; reach out to Maura Mendoza at mmendoza@cambridgema.gov to register.
- Applicants can submit only one application to the Cambridge Arts Grant Program for the 2026/2027 cycle. If you need help deciding which grant opportunity to pursue, please reach out to us and we can talk through the options.
- The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) provides useful tools for ensuring accessibility for your planned program or event, including the Accessibility Planning and Resource Guide for Cultural Administrators.
<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/AccessibilityPlanningAll.pdf>

About Cambridge Arts

The Cambridge Arts Council is a city agency that funds, promotes, and presents high-quality, community-based arts programming for the benefit of artists, residents, and visitors to Cambridge, MA. Established in 1974, Cambridge Arts is one of the oldest and most dynamic arts agencies in the country. As a public nonprofit, Cambridge Arts operates with funding from local government, private foundations, corporate sponsors, and individual donors and delivers on its mission by fulfilling three primary roles:

- **Connector:** Through partnerships with artists, presenters, donors, and audiences, the agency operates as a vital cultural presence in the region. From connecting local youth with professional teaching artists to securing performance space for both emerging and established ensembles and introducing residents to local artists through Cambridge Open Studios, Cambridge Arts links people and resources from across the artistic spectrum to spark innovative collaboration.
- **Presenter:** In addition to exhibitions and educational programming presented in Gallery 344, Cambridge Arts stages high-profile events such as the Cambridge River Festival, a signature city celebration and regional event. The festival features a wide array of

music, dance, theater and visual art and attracts a robust audience of close to 200,000 visitors annually.

- **Funder:** Through the Cambridge Arts Grant Program, Cambridge Arts awards dozens of financial grants each year in support of high-quality, community-based art projects representing all artistic disciplines.

Cambridge Arts is located on the Indigenous homelands of the Massachusetts, Nipmuc, Pawtucket, and Wampanoag peoples. We are guests on this land. We honor the people who were here before colonization, are here now, and will be here in the future. In our work as a cultural organization, we are committed to doing whatever we can to dismantle harmful structures built from violent colonialism. Our work seeks to expand the visibility of and celebrate the histories, cultures, and stories of indigenous peoples, who are of this place.

Cambridge Arts embraces a vision that welcomes and supports everyone. Believing that a multiplicity of perspectives is essential to a strong society, we are committed, both in our policies and practices, to building participation in and awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the arts and all cultures. In our ongoing work to address cultural and historical inequities, we strive to be a community anchor that reflects the entire Cambridge community and expands access, opportunities, and inclusion in every form of creative expression. We value diverse voices and people of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities, gender identities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic situations, religions, citizenship statuses, and family configurations. The Cambridge Arts Council is supported in part by the City of Cambridge, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.