

## **Boston Cultural Council** **Grant & Application Guidelines** *Fall 2022*

### **About the Boston Cultural Council**

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The Boston Cultural Council (BCC), under the umbrella of the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, helps to ensure that grant making responds to the needs of the cultural community and that best practices for grant solicitation, review and disbursement are followed. The BCC annually distributes general operating funds allocated by the City of Boston and the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, to support innovative arts, humanities, and interpretive science programming that enhances the quality of life in our city.

The council members are Boston residents appointed by the mayor for up to two consecutive three year terms. Council members are selected on the basis of their demonstrated commitment to Boston's cultural community and their knowledge of various arts disciplines. The BCC reviews applications to evaluate the quality of proposed programming and potential benefit to diverse audiences in Boston.

### **Boston Cultural Council Equity Statement**

To truly thrive, Boston must be an equitable city. For the Boston Cultural Council, equity means equal access to resources and equal value of all cultural traditions and expressions. Equity operates as an out-loud process of actively reflecting, including, and rewarding cultural, economic, and racial diversity in the arts.

The BCC actively encourages the creativity and engagement of all. We do this through our grantmaking guided by the Boston Creates cultural plan. Our grants emphasize fair opportunity, accessibility and understanding of Boston's arts and cultural communities. Our programmatic, financial, and informational resources also pro-actively encourage equity and inclusion within the organizations<sup>1</sup> we support.

### **BCC Grant Strategy**

Ensuring BCC grants contribute towards the goals above requires intentional effort to fund organizations that promote cultural equity in the Boston arts ecosystem. It is for this reason that the

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<sup>1</sup> The BCC uses the term "organizations" broadly in this document to refer to all eligible applicants to the BCC, which include non-profit organizations and groups using a fiscal agent including unincorporated entities or artist collectives.

BCC made a shift in its grant making strategy in 2019. Rather than grant to organizations within any budget range, the BCC will be more intentional in supporting small to mid-sized arts organizations in the Boston arts ecosystem by focusing on organizations with annual budgets under \$2 million. Click [here](#) to read more about the BCC's funding strategy.

Beginning in 2021, the BCC is further supporting small organizations by committing the majority of grant funds to those with the smallest budgets.

## **BCC Grant Categories and Eligibility**

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### **Grant Categories**

Organizations may apply for grants up to a set limit, based on their organizational size (total expenses from the most recently completed fiscal year). If an organization is selected as a recipient, they will receive the total amount they are eligible in their budget category. The categories are:

- Organizations with budgets less than \$100,000 may apply for a grant of \$5,000
- Organizations with budgets between \$100,000 and \$500,000 may apply for a grant of \$3,500
- Organizations with budgets between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000 may apply for a grant of \$2,000

### **Eligibility - *Who is Eligible to Apply?***

- Non-profit cultural organizations with budgets under \$2 million whose mission and programming is focused in the following disciplines: Music, Film and Video, Traditional and Folk Art, Visual Art, Theater, Dance, Humanities, Literary Arts, Performing Arts, Social/Civic Practice, Multidisciplinary Arts.
- Organizations not based in the City of Boston, but whose primary programming takes place in Boston, are eligible. Reviewers will be looking for specific examples of public benefit to the people of Boston.
- Unincorporated groups can apply with a fiscal sponsor as long as they meet the rest of the eligibility criteria. This includes: artist collectives, volunteer groups, publications, and any other group jointly working toward common goals.
- Organizations can submit only one proposal per funding cycle.
- Non-profits with L3C designations are eligible to apply.

### **Grant Fund Restrictions**

Grant funding may not be used for the following items:

- To pay salaries or stipends for employees of the Boston school system, library, parks department, or municipality.
- On capital expenditures for schools, libraries, and other municipal agencies.
- On programming that discriminates or discourages participation on the basis of race, gender, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, sexual orientation, or age.

The BCC does not award grants to:

- K-12 schools or K-12 school foundations
- Main Streets organizations
- Colleges or universities

- “Friends of...” organizations whose primary purpose is to support government entities

## How to Apply

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### Application Checklist

- Account registration with Submittable.com
- Most recent financial information like a board approved budget or a budget completed using the [BCC budget template](#)
- Financial documents such as Forms 990 or 1023 that contain your organization’s EIN, year of formation, and NTEE code (if applicable)
- Materials for the online application including your organization’s mission statement
- Up to three support materials such as brochures, flyers, images, testimonials, or other collateral that demonstrates your programming and mission

### Application Forms and Submission

BCC uses Submittable.com for all grant applications. If you are a first time applicant, you will need to create an account with Submittable. Grant updates and final reports will be made through this account, so we recommend using an email address that is generic for your organization - something that multiple people have access to. While we prefer to have all proposals submitted online, we also accept hand-written hard copies. Hard copies can be picked up in 1 City Hall Square, eighth floor room 802.

### Application Deadline

The BCC grant application opens on September 1, 2022. The application deadline is Monday, October 19, 2022 at 11:59pm. No late applications will be accepted, and MOAC staff may not be available after 5pm - please submit your application before the deadline to avoid technical issues!

### Review Process

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Once received, grant applications are initially reviewed for eligibility and completeness. If eligible and complete, they are then read and evaluated by MOAC staff as well as BCC council members, and scored against an evaluation rubric. Scores are then tallied, averaged, and applications are then discussed in meetings during the fall and winter. Awardees will be notified of BCC funding decisions in January and grants will be disbursed in Spring 2023.

### Evaluation Criteria

Once basic eligibility is met, proposals will be evaluated based on a set criteria. Please see the rubric on page 5 to view the evaluation criteria.

### Reconsideration

An applicant may request reconsideration of a decision on its application if the applicant can demonstrate that the BCC failed to follow published application and review procedures. Such

requests must be submitted in writing to the Boston Cultural Council within fifteen (15) days of grant notification. No reconsideration may be requested regarding the amount or a decision made about artistic quality or programming priorities.

**Grant Payment**

During the 2022-2023 grant cycle, all Boston Cultural Council grants will be made in full and up front. Due to COVID-19, grant reporting was waived in 2020-2021 and the BCC is evaluating whether there will be reporting requirements in 2022-2023.

**Conflict of Interest**

The Boston Cultural Council observes the Mass Cultural Council’s Conflict of Interest Policy regarding review panels. To ensure that all review panels are free from conflicts of interests, panelists are required to disclose any current or prospective affiliations they or their immediate family members have with an actual or potential applicant. “Affiliation” applies to employment, board memberships, independent contractual relationships, advisory or policy relationships, substantial contributor relationships, or other financial relationships. In addition, panelists are required to disclose any past or current adversarial relationships with actual or potential applicants. Panelists will not be permitted to participate in discussions or votes relating to applicants with whom they have an affiliation or relationship.

**Scoring Matrix for BCC Operating Grants 2022-23**

## 1. Organizational & Financial Eligibility

The applicant is a 501c3 or is fiscally sponsored. Their budget size falls into the grant program categories.

Yes / No

Questions:

- **The Facts:** Uploads, IRS Letter, Total Operating Budget, Other funding from City of Boston.

## 2. Meaningful Arts Work

### 2a. Arts Discipline

The organization is doing meaningful work in an area of the arts that aligns with BCC funding priorities in the City of Boston.

Questions:

- **The Facts:** Org. Type
- **The Basics:** Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs?

Criteria:

- Organization is based in the City of Boston and/or primarily provides clear impact to communities within the City of Boston, mission and work is arts + culture-based

0

(Fails to meet criteria)

1

(Meets some criteria)

2

(Meets criteria)

3

(Exceeds criteria)

### 2b. Authentic Community Roots

The organization has solid community roots, whether by being locally led (power and decision making are community-driven) and/or having authentic partnerships.

Questions:

- **The Basics:** Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs?

0

(Fails to meet criteria)

1

(Meets some criteria)

2

(Meets criteria)

3

(Exceeds criteria)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Equity in Boston:</b> Serves historically excluded communities?</li> </ul> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organization clearly communicates who it is serving and why, can describe the community in which it works and the role it plays in that ecosystem</li> <li>● Organization has opportunities for community-led decision making and input and/or can demonstrate how it has put community input into practice</li> <li>● Organization has authentic partnerships (multi year partnerships, partners who represent community interest, shared power with partners)</li> </ul>				
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**3. Unique Value to Boston Arts Ecosystem**

<p><b>3a. Serves Unique Gap/Need</b></p> <p>The organization fills an important gap in the Boston arts ecosystem.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Equity In Boston:</b> Present a unique artistic or cultural perspective?</li> <li>● <b>The Basics:</b> Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs?</li> <li>● <b>The Basics:</b> Budget for hiring artists?</li> <li>● <b>How do you know you will be successful?</b></li> </ul> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organization can state what unique role it plays in Boston or in its community</li> <li>● Organization can point to an evidence-based or experience-based community need that it is addressing</li> <li>● Organization has a cultural or artistic perspective that is underrepresented in the current arts ecosystem</li> </ul>	<p>0</p> <p>(Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>(Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>(Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>(Exceeds criteria)</p>
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<p><b>3b. Innovative Programming</b></p> <p>The organization offers interesting, creative and innovative programming in Boston that is arts-centered.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Equity In Boston:</b> Present a unique artistic or cultural perspective?</li> <li>● <b>The Basics:</b> Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs?</li> <li>● <b>The Basics:</b> Budget for hiring artists?</li> <li>● <b>How do you know you will be successful?</b></li> </ul> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programs continue to evolve/grow/iterate to best meet organization’s mission and goals</li> <li>● Arts and/or culture are central to mission and programs</li> <li>● Organizations receive positive feedback on the success of their programs</li> </ul>	<p>0</p> <p>(Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>(Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>(Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>(Exceeds criteria)</p>
<p><b>4. Equity Alignment</b></p>				
<p><b>4a. Diverse &amp; Equitable Employer</b></p> <p>The organization is an equitable employer, and has intentional plans and actions in regards to diversity.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>The Basics:</b> Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs?</li> <li>● <b>Your Mission &amp; Values:</b> How do your values and mission support DEI and belonging?</li> </ul> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organization has clear values and goals related equity, diversity, and inclusion within their organization</li> </ul>	<p>0</p> <p>(Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>(Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>(Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>(Exceeds criteria)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organization can meaningfully communicate how it is approaching being an equitable employer</li> <li>● Organization can communicate organizational demographics and how they're representative of their communities and/or Boston's historically excluded communities</li> </ul>				
<p><b>4b. Inclusive Policies</b></p> <p>The organization has an authentic commitment to inclusive organizational policies. They are on a journey and may have aspirational plans or have concrete examples and experience that they articulate in a meaningful way.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Equity in Boston:</b> What relevant experience, hiring, promotion practices and learning has your leadership committed to that enables you to serve Boston's historically excluded communities?</li> <li>● <b>Your Mission &amp; Values:</b> How do your values and mission support DEI and belonging?</li> </ul> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organization has plans, goals, trainings, or strategies in place to achieve organizational equity goals</li> <li>● Organization has demonstrated progress against their goals</li> <li>● Organization can share examples of policies or organizational changes it has made to better achieve equitable outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>0</p> <p>(Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>(Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>(Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>(Exceeds criteria)</p>
<p><b>4c. Removing Barriers</b></p> <p>The organization is intentional about removing barriers and/or expanding access to the arts.</p> <p>Questions:</p>	<p>0</p> <p>(Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>(Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>(Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>(Exceeds criteria)</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Equity in Boston:</b> In what ways does your organization expand access? Serve different abilities? Reach historically excluded communities?</li> <li>● <b>The Basics:</b> Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs?</li> </ul> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organization has clear examples of how it is removing barriers to the arts, including who is impacted and how</li> <li>● Organization has communicated a clear accessibility strategy for its programs and/or facilities</li> <li>● Organization is centering access and inclusion in program design (pay what you want, programs specifically for people for disabilities, etc)</li> </ul>				
<p><b>4d. Values</b></p> <p>The work they do is aligned with the BCC’s vision of equity.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Your Mission &amp; Values:</b> How do your values and mission support DEI and belonging?</li> <li>● <b>The Basics:</b> Mission, how long have you been doing this work, core programs?</li> </ul>	<p>0</p> <p>(Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>(Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>(Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>(Exceeds criteria)</p>
<p><b>4e. Reviewer’s Cut</b></p> <p>This is an opportunity for the reviewer to rate the overall application in case the questions have missed an important component the applicant shared. Please rate the organization and their work on a scale of 0 to 3 based on your overall equity impression, using the Boston Cultural Council Equity Statement (page 1). If reflective of information not captured by this matrix, please note in comments.</p>	<p>0</p> <p>(Fails to meet criteria)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>(Meets some criteria)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>(Meets criteria)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>(Exceeds criteria)</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Equity Alignment Subtotal</b> (up to 15 points)</p>				

Total (out of 27 points)	
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