



2026-2027 (FY27) General Operating Support Grant Guidelines

Welcome to the LexArts General Operating Support (GOS) Grant Program. GOS Grants provide unrestricted general operating support to arts organizations with a year-round program of arts and cultural activities and services.

GOS I awards support Lexington’s largest and most established arts organizations and are \$25,000 and above.

GOSII awards support Lexington’s growing and mid-sized organizations and are \$5,000 to \$25,000

The GOS application can be found at: LexArts.org. Please note that an invitation code is required to apply. All GOS grant applicants will use the same form and will be assigned to GOS I or GOS II review as appropriate.

Note: Meeting eligibility requirements does not guarantee that your organization will be recommended to apply for General Operating Support.

PROGRAM GOAL

Through its General Operating Support Program LexArts seeks to provide funding to, and work in partnership with, organizations that enhance the lives of Central Kentuckians through year-round artistic, cultural and educational programs and activities.

LexArts grant programs are guided by its purpose to promote, enhance, and contribute to the educational, artistic, and cultural lives of those living in Central Kentucky and to serve as a resource and supportive agency for organizations which affect or alter the cultural climate of the community; and by its organization values of collaboration; empowerment; innovation; generosity; innovation; and inclusion, diversity and equity. Applicants are encouraged to consider the purpose and values when developing their application.

The 2026-2027 (FY26) GOS Grant program will fund organizations for the period from July 1, 2026, - June 31, 2027.

DATES AND DEADLINES

Intent to Apply Deadline*	January 2, 2026 – January 9, 2026
Proposal review by LexArts Staff	January 2, 2025 – February 13, 2026
Application Deadline**	Friday, February 20, 2026
Public Program Review via Zoom	Monday, April 27, 2026 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Applicant Award Notification	June 19, 2026
Use of grant funds may begin	July 1, 2026
Use of grant funds must conclude	June 31, 2027
Final Report Due	30 days following completion of grant period

GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT I	GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT II
ELIGIBILITY	ELIGIBILITY
<p>All GOS I Grant Applicants must document the following in order to be eligible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit 501(c)3 organization • Arts focused mission • Annual budget must have exceeded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$250,000 for the last three consecutive years • Up-to-date profile on Guidestar.org with at least Silver transparency rating. • Paid professional, full-time management • At least three consecutive years of prior GOS I or II support • Based in Fayette County • Majority of work in Fayette and contiguous counties • Provides year-round programming. • Demonstrates ongoing fiscal responsibility through an audit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ conducted externally by an actively practicing certified public accountant (CPA) • Active participant in the annual Fund for the Arts Campaign • Received current year Kentucky Arts Council Kentucky Arts Partnership Grant • Compliance with past grant reporting 	<p>All GOS II Grant Applicants must document the following in order to be eligible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization • Arts focused mission • Annual budget must have exceeded \$50,000 for the last three consecutive years • Up-to-date profile on https://www.guidestar.org/ • Paid professional full- or part-time management • Three consecutive years of LexArts Community Arts Development (CAD) Program Support or previous GOS support • Based in Fayette County • Majority of work in Fayette and contiguous counties • Demonstrates ongoing fiscal responsibility through an audit, or financial review conducted externally by an actively practicing certified public accountant (CPA) as required by the Kentucky Arts Council to apply for KAP funding. • Active participant in the annual Fund for the Arts Campaign • Compliance with prior LexArts grants and reporting requirements

RESTRICTIONS

GOS Grants will not fund:

- Government agencies, public or private schools, or institutions of higher education
- Organizations receiving 25 percent of its total revenue from any single source
- Capital expenditures for equipment, or for facility construction or renovation
- Activities intended primarily for fundraising
- Regranting activities
- Debt reduction, penalties or litigation costs
- Programming not available to the general public
- Trusts or endowment funds

HOW TO APPLY

1. **Intent to Apply** - Organizations that did not receive GOS funds from LexArts in the prior fiscal year must complete an intent to apply form that will be used to determine eligibility.

Completed applications must be submitted via the electronic application at [lexarts.org](https://www.lexarts.org).

Notifications will be provided to applicants recommended to apply for GOS funding. If the organization does not qualify for GOS, they will be encouraged to apply for CAD Program or Project support.

2. Review the FY26 GOS Grant guidelines and application form. Applicants who have not previously received GOS support must submit an Intent to Apply Form by 11 pm, February 10, 2025. All applicants are encouraged to email LexArts Community Arts Manager Kay'mon Murrah at kmurrah@lexarts.org for technical assistance.

NOTE: The staff is not able to accept draft applications for preliminary review after February 13, 2026.

HELPFUL TIPS: Give yourself ample time to plan, write, re-write, and review the application with LexArts' Community Arts Services staff. This includes developing the application, gathering artistic documentation, and all supplemental materials. The application process will require the dedicated efforts of one or two individuals in your organization.

- Attend a LexArts CAD workshop and if so desired, schedule a one-on-one consultation for additional assistance.
- Write the application narrative sections in a Word document and then cut and paste into the online application.
- Format the narrative so that it is reader-friendly (e.g. space between paragraphs, bullets, etc. if space permits.)
- Check and double-check your application for spelling and mathematical errors.
- Have a reader not familiar with this grant application review it for content, clarity, and budget and other errors.
- Submit your application days before the submission deadline as technology challenges are possible and input errors occur more often when applicants are rushed.
- When preparing the application, save as you go. Although the application does auto-save your progress, please be aware that the program may time out.

3. Ensure your organizational profile on guidestar.org is up to date.
4. Applications are available online at lexarts.gosmart.org. Users must create a profile and contact LexArts Community Arts Staff to obtain an invitation code to access the GOS application. To begin the application, login and click on Current Programs and Applications. Go to FY26 General Operating Support and select “Begin Application.” Applicants who have started their applications and logged out will login and then select “Edit.”
5. Applicants must submit the Grant Application and all requested materials by February 20, 2026. All materials must be uploaded through the online application form at lexarts.gosmart.org. LexArts will not accept late applications or applications submitted via hard copy, email or fax.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Enter the following information in the application as indicated: ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

- Organizational Information
- Organization Name
- Primary Contact Name and Title
- Primary Contact email

APPLICATION NARRATIVE

Applications will be assessed using the following criteria:

Description of Core and Ongoing Programs

Briefly describe the organization’s core and ongoing programs. This information provides panelists with an overview of your organization and will not be used for scoring.

Delivery (40 points)

1. Describe how your organization plans and assesses its programs. Your response should include:
 - When and how programs are planned
 - Who is involved in the planning process, including relevant partners
 - How and by whom decisions are made
 - Criteria used to determine and ensure artistic and/or programming quality
 - How artists, particularly Kentucky artists, are involved and considered in this process
 - Strategies for measuring success and who is involved in the assessment of your programs
2. Describe your arts education programs or services
 - Include benefits to students and/or educators and any partnerships with schools, districts, home school groups, etc.
3. Describe your communications strategies. Your answer should include the following:
 - How you distribute information about your programs
 - Your marketing and branding
 - How you reach new or niche audiences

- Relevant partnerships in media, local tourism, etc.
4. Describe how your organization evaluates its delivery. Your response should include:
 - Audience, patron, and/or participation data collection tools and methods
 - Methods used to evaluate quantitative and qualitative data collected
 - Plans to respond to data findings

Capacity (20 points)

1. Describe your policies and procedures for ensuring fiscal controls and financial responsibility, including board involvement.
2. Describe your development strategy. Your response should include:
 - Consistent and reliable sources of funding
 - Efforts your organization will make to obtain new sources of funding
 - Planned fundraising activities such as benefit events, “gives days” participation and membership drives
 - Relevant partnerships and relationships that support your development strategy

Value and Role of the Arts (30 points)

1. Describe how the organization provides public value. Your response should include the following:
 - Your community’s arts-based needs and preferences
 - Your community’s non-arts needs, challenges and opportunities
 - Methods you used to determine these needs, challenges and opportunities
 - How you respond to arts and non-arts needs through your programs and services
 - Partnerships that that help maximize resources and fulfill needs
 - Specific example of your impact on the community in areas like cultural enhancement, community identity, economic development, etc.
2. Describe your organization’s arts advocacy strategy. Your response should include the following:
 - How your organization communicates regularly and effectively with local officials, especially state legislators
 - How you involve your public officials in the activities of your organization in ways that demonstrate your value to the community
 - How your staff and board stay informed about issues and public policy as they apply to arts and arts education
 - How you educate local officials about arts issues and public policy as they apply to arts and arts education
 - How your organization talks about and shares arts experiences with people whose support can influence positive change
 - Relevant partnerships and memberships with local, state and national arts advocacy groups that support your advocacy strategy.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (10 points)

1. Describe your efforts to build diversity within the organization and among program participants. (Diversity, as understood by the arts council, should promote positive relationships among the state's various communities and provide equitable arts program delivery to marginalized communities,

including, but never limited to: people of minority ethnic and racial groups; people with disabilities; geographically or economically isolated communities; vulnerable and at-risk people; older adults; institutionalized people; women; and LGBTQIA+ communities.) Your response should include the following:

- Process the organization used to develop its cultural equity plan, including any notable progress.
- Relevant arts and non-arts partnerships that help fulfill equity plan goals
- Board, staff, and volunteer representation of diversity
- Internal activities meant to grow cultural competency among the staff, board and volunteers, including trainings, facilitated conversations, etc.
- How the organization has promoted and will promote diverse arts and culture, including programming plans for inclusion of, and outreach to, underserved populations and people with disabilities.
- Specific examples of successful programs or services that took your artistic product to new or broader audiences (e.g., touring, partnerships, special programming, residencies, etc.).

REQUIRED SUPPORT MATERIALS

The following documents must be uploaded as either PDF or Microsoft Word files in the “Support Materials Document Upload” section of the application. Place the organization’s name and title of document in the upper right-hand corner.

- IRS Determination Letter
- Current W9 – Signed
- Current fiscal year annual budget with year-to-date actuals
- FY27 annual budget – include information on endowments and restricted funds
- Audit or Independent CPA review for last completed fiscal year (Please provide the same documentation that was provided to the Kentucky Arts Council for KAP funding)
- Board approved long range or strategic plan – and date adopted
- Fundraising Plan
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan (if in progress describe planning process)
- Current board list including professional and community/arts affiliations; length of time served on board; officer position held and membership on any board committees
- Current staff list including title/area of responsibility and length of time with the organization
- Current organizational chart, resumes or biographical information for key personnel
- Organization promotional materials - recent materials (brochures, programs, etc.) illustrating how LexArts funding support is acknowledged. Package as a single PDF.

OPTIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS

- Letters of commitment or contracts signed by proposed artists
- Letters of support – maximum of two
- Evaluation Sample
- Resume or biographical information for other key project personnel (artists, consultants, program coordinators, etc.)

REQUIRED ARTISTIC WORK SAMPLES

AUDIO / VIDEO

Panelists will review up to 5 minutes of video or audio. Indicate in the upload description both the cue point and the description of what the panel is viewing/hearing at the cue point. Links to material are also acceptable and can be provided via hotlink in a PDF.

IMAGES

Submit no more than 6 images.

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Panelists will read no more than 5 pages of material (8.5" x 11" single sided, single spaced, saved as a PDF and uploaded.)

GRANT REVIEW PROCESS

Phase 1 – Eligibility

All applications will undergo an eligibility audit by the LexArts Community Arts Services staff. If an applicant fails to meet the eligibility requirements, the application will not be forwarded to the panel. The staff makes no assessment of the review criteria.

Phase 2 – Panel Review

LexArts relies on arts, cultural and community experts both within and outside Lexington-Fayette County to review grant applications. Panelists are selected based on their knowledge of the non-profit arts sector and/or the community at large. The GOS Grant review process is open for observation by the public. Panelists review each application and provide comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the application based on the criteria.

Following this assessment, panelists will score each criterion on a 5-point scale (1 = low; 5 = high)

Phase 3 – Grants Committee

The Grants Committee of the LexArts Board of Directors reviews the panel's funding recommendations and allocates funding based on funds available.

Phase 4 – LexArts Board Approval

The Grants Committee's recommendations are submitted to the LexArts Board of Directors for its approval.

REQUIREMENTS AFTER FUNDING

- a. Grantees must sign the Grant Agreement Form and, if required, complete the Program Revision Form. Grant Agreement Forms must be signed and returned within 30 days of receipt.
- b. All grantees must attend the grantee orientation.
- c. If there are significant changes to the program, grantees must contact the Community Arts Services staff for approval, and the approved changes must be provided in writing.
- d. Grantees must acknowledge LexArts as the funding source for the program and include its logo in print, social media platforms, websites, press releases, and public presentations. Guidelines for acknowledgement of LexArts support.
- e. All public activities must take place in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- f. We will acknowledge LexArts' support in all printed and other promotional material as detailed in the LexArts Funding Credit Guidelines here <https://lexarts.org/brand-guidelines/>
- g. We will inform LexArts within 15 days of any alterations to our organization that substantively alter our mission or operations outlined in the grant application.
- h. We will make a conscious effort to expand diversity and outreach in programs and services to increase access and inclusion for participants and served audiences.
- i. We will provide content for our programs or projects, i.e., photos, videos, written content, etc., for use in LexArts marketing and informational material. It is the grantee's responsibility to provide materials free and clear of claim, and with all photo credits required.
- j. Complimentary tickets to activities funded through this grant will be provided to LexArts upon request.
- k. We will include all arts activities and events on the LexArts website by submitting them at <https://lexarts.org/discover/eventscalendar/>. For any questions, please contact Hannah Spahn at hspahn@lexarts.org.
- l. We will supply a staff and board list for the purpose of soliciting donations during the annual LexArts Fund for the Arts Campaign. Our organization's leadership will encourage giving to the campaign. Funding is not contingent on donations from staff or board. LexArts is simply asking for the opportunity to ask for support, but donations are not a factor in grant allocation decisions.
- m. We shall not discriminate in any of the services performed in connection with this agreement on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, creed, political affiliation, marital status, sex, or disabling condition.
- n. You must submit a final/impact report form and accompanying narrative detailing the use of these grant funds within 30 days after the completion of the grant period, but no later than June 30, 2026.
- o. LexArts encourages all grantees to actively participate in the LexArts Network. FY 2026 CAD project grants will include a complimentary one-year membership to the LexArts Network! This membership allows you to explore the numerous benefits of our network without any initial cost. Our meetings are held bi-monthly, on the first Wednesday of every other month. We will be sending you a detailed schedule soon.

ON-SITE EVALUATIONS - LexArts' Community Arts Services staff may attend funded activities to monitor compliance with the terms of the grant agreement.

NOTE: Evaluations include an assessment of the quality of work, strength of the program's arts focus, clarity and feasibility of the program's design and budget, qualifications of key personnel, success of the program in serving the target audience and enriching lives through the arts, and the quality and creativity of the program's design.