

TORONTO ARTS _ COUNCIL

2026 CREATIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECTS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Application deadlines: March 16 and August 4, 2026

TAC is committed to equity and inclusion. We welcome and encourage applications from all Toronto artists, including but not limited to: Indigenous artists, Black artists, artists of colour, artists who are Deaf, have disabilities or are living with mental illness, artists who self-identify as 2SLGBTQIAP, newcomer and refugee artists, young and emerging artists and artists working outside the downtown core. Learn more about what we are doing to make TAC more accessible and inclusive in our Equity Framework

What does this program support?

The Creative Communities Projects program provides funding to Toronto based professional artists, artist collectives and non-profit organizations to pursue one-time or time-limited arts projects that enable public participation and engagement in arts and culture. The City of Toronto supports this program through a funding allocation approved annually by Toronto City Council. Creative Communities projects create a powerful sense of inclusion, understanding and the possibility of self-expression among participants. Projects can involve one or more art practices, such as music, dance, theatre, visual arts, and storytelling, but the collaborative involvement of professional artists with community members is required. Eligible projects must:

- highlight co-creative processes between artists and communities
- offer skill building experiences that can lead to presentation or exhibition opportunities for participants
- increase access to arts activity for the broader community

The maximum grant available in this program is \$15,000. Applicants may receive less than the full amount requested. TAC will fund 100% of the project budget up to \$8,000. For requests to TAC over \$8,000:

- the budget must show revenue from other sources.
- the TAC contribution may not exceed 50% of the project budget.
- in-kind contributions may not exceed 25% of the project budget.

Grants contribute to the costs associated with the proposed project, including artistic fees, production and technical costs, marketing and publicity costs, administrative costs, etc. Please note that artists' fees are the highest priority; this program requires the payment of artists' fees.

Applicants may apply in one of two categories:

- **Arts Engagement:** Projects in this category engage the community through their art form, work with community members to encourage maximum participation in the arts practice and the art making, and recognize that the process of collaboration is as important as resulting artistic products.

*Key Consideration – How does your project encourage maximum participation of your target community?

Examples:

- Arts programs in neighbourhoods and communities that help overcome barriers to participation in the arts. Examples of possible barriers are age, physical ability, health status, geography, or economic and socio-cultural barriers.
- Artists' collectives partnering with a community organization to undertake a project or residency. Applications relying on host-artist partnerships may include a Letter of Agreement between the host organization and the artist.

Arts Community Development: Projects in this category develop artistic communities through the development of art practices, art forms and/or emerging artistic voices. Eligible applications must define their artistic community and terms of engagement with one or more art forms.

*Key Consideration – How does your project preserve or develop an artistic community?

Examples:

- An artist who practices an ethnically specific, culturally diverse, or traditional art form works to increase their artistic skills, knowledge, range of creative expression and build a community of practice, with the aim to engage a broader community upon completion of the project.
- An artists' collective that is part of a specific cultural community seeking to work with artists who have experience working with that community to create and present work in one or more artistic disciplines, with the aim to develop emerging or under-represented artistic voices of community members and/or address issues relevant to their community.
- An arts organization or collective may hold an arts festival or event that celebrates a specific community. However, simply identifying as a community-based event does not of itself make the project eligible. The event must include participatory arts activities in which members of the community are engaged by Toronto-based professional artists.

TAC Accessibility grant

Projects involving Deaf artists and artists with disabilities may apply for an **additional TAC Accessibility grant** that will provide up to a maximum of \$5,000 towards accessibility costs for artists incurred during the project. Accessibility costs include but are not limited to: ASL interpretation, audio description, closed captioning, communications assistants, attendant care (including helpers for Elders), support workers and equipment rentals or other supports required to meet artists' accessibility needs.

Starting in 2026, the TAC Accessibility Grant will allow grant recipients to apply for an Accessibility Grant at any time during their project. The Accessibility Grant will be available to grant recipients as a separate application in 2026.

When can the project happen?

Project applications submitted to the February deadline must be for projects commencing after June 1. Project applications submitted to the August deadline must be for projects commencing after November 1. Projects must be completed within two years of the date of your Notification Letter.

Who can apply?

The project for which the funding is requested must take place in the City of Toronto. If you are a first-time applicant to the Creative Communities Projects program or if you have any questions about your project's eligibility, please contact Senior Manager, Arts Discipline Programs. Eligible applicants include:

- **Individual Professional artists** working on their own to execute a community engaged project.
- **Artist Collectives.** A collective is defined as two or more artists working together under a group name, either on a single project or on an ongoing basis. For collectives of two artists, both must be City of Toronto residents. For collectives of more than two artists, the majority of members must be City of Toronto residents.
- **Incorporated non-profit organizations**

***An applicant cannot apply as an individual and be part of an organization or collective applying in the same competition.**

A professional artist is someone who has developed their skills through training and/or practice; is recognized as such by artists working in the same artistic tradition; actively practices her/his/their art; seeks payment for her/his/their work; and has a history of public presentation.

Applicants must be located in the City of Toronto. A Post Office Box address cannot be used to meet this requirement. Organizations with a regional Toronto office must have operated in the City of Toronto for at least one year prior to the deadline.

TAC recognizes that due to systemic barriers within the broader arts community (e.g. limited mainstream presentation opportunities for artists from equity-seeking communities) that some flexibility may be required in interpreting eligibility criteria to take into account equivalent professional experience and contexts. Potential applicants from equity-seeking communities are encouraged to discuss their eligibility with the Program Manager in advance of submitting an application.

Applicants may receive only one grant per calendar year through the Creative Communities program and may not apply to other TAC discipline programs. However, TAC offers other types of granting opportunities through its Strategic Initiatives envelope, and you may be eligible to apply to one of these programs. Please note: if you apply for a Creative Communities project grant you cannot also apply to another TAC program for the same project. Please consult TAC's website for other granting opportunities.

This Program does not fund:

- Projects that have been completed prior to the announcement of results. Toronto Arts Council does not fund retroactively.
- Funding cannot be used to support an organization's ongoing staff or faculty salaries. Where a portion of permanent staff or administrative resources are dedicated to the project, you may estimate the value of these resources and include a detailed breakdown in the budget as in-kind revenue.
- This program does not support schools, tuition-funded training programs, curriculum-based programs, or research projects. Projects with a school as the venue cannot take place during school hours.
- Organizations or collectives that receive Operating funding from TAC
- Educational and religious institutions, unless there is a clear separation at both the program and budget level between their regular activities (i.e. religious/congregation activities or educational/student body activities) and their arts activities;
- Professional artists pursuing undergraduate or graduate studies may not apply for work related to their academic program of study.
- Schools that are part of Ontario's public or private education system;

- Costs related to equipment purchase, capital projects (e.g. building purchases, renovations, etc.), film/video production, archiving, publishing, awards and award ceremonies, art therapy, fundraising events/projects and deficit reduction are not covered by these grants. Costs related to activities occurring outside of the City of Toronto are also not covered (e.g. touring, travel, etc.).
- Arts-based research initiatives or arts enrichment programs for students.

How do I apply?

Applicants register and submit the application through *TAC Grants Online* (<https://tac.smartsimple.ca>). **Applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 pm on the deadline dates.** TAC does not accept applications by any other means of delivery. You will receive a confirmation email when your application is submitted. Check your spam/junk mail folder if it doesn't arrive in your in-box.

Application Accessibility Support For Deaf Persons Or Persons With Disabilities

Applicants who are Deaf or have a disability and need support to complete their grant applications can apply for funds to cover the costs of assistance from Application Support Service Providers. Up to \$500 is available per eligible applicant in each calendar year. Please contact your Grant Program Manager at least six weeks before the grant program deadline to determine eligibility, request application support funding, and to review the process for payment to be made to your Service Provider. Requests for application support require approval from the Grant Program Manager.

What do I need to prepare?

The three main parts to the application are: Project Description, Budget Information, and Support Material:

- The Project Description asks applicants to summarize their project, describe an artistic vision, outline artistic and community objectives, provide a work plan, describe the community being engaged, and list key contributors.
- In Budget Information you will fill out a table that shows the proposed Revenues (Earned Revenue, Private Sector Revenue, Government Revenue) and Expenses (Artistic/Production Expenses, Administration/Marketing Expenses) for your project. You will also need to upload a PDF file with supplementary budget information with a breakdown of donated goods and services and projected Artistic Fees.
- Support Material is a critical component of the application. All applicants are required to submit examples of the artist's recent work that are relevant to the project. At least one example must be from the past two years. Previously-funded applicants should submit new support material. The support material should illustrate both the quality and nature of the artist's practice, and the artist's capacity to work in a community context relevant to the proposed project.
- Due to the number of applications submitted to this program, peer assessors will normally spend 3 minutes or less per application viewing support material. Works, therefore, may not be seen in their entirety.
- You can upload your media files to TAC or you can provide a link to your files. If you provide a link, please also provide the password or any other instructions required to access the file.
- For uploading, the maximum file size is 200 MB and files are accepted in the following formats:
 - Video - QuickTime (MOV), AVI, JPEG, JPG, MPEG, WMV.
 - Audio – AAC, MP3, WAV, WMA.

Are there requirements and guidelines for paying artists?

Grant recipients are required to pay artists' fees for professional artists, and encouraged to bring these fees into line with sector standards or, at a minimum, living wage benchmarks:

- arts sector guidelines: [Carfac \(visual arts\)](#), Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists, Canadian Actors Equity – Independent Theatre Agreement, Canadian Federation of Musicians
- the Ontario Living Wage as a minimum standard for artists/arts workers' salaries and fees: [Ontario Living Wage by Region](#)

How is my application assessed?

This is a competitive program. Applicants should be aware that meeting the general eligibility requirements does not guarantee that a grant will be recommended.

Funds are awarded on a competitive basis by an independent review panel of peers. Peer assessors are practicing professional artists with experience working in community settings and neighborhoods across the city. Peer assessors are selected on the basis of their familiarity with and specialized expertise in a broad spectrum of artistic practices and to reflect the range of applicants and represent diverse mediums, genders, and cultural communities. The grant review panel's recommendations are approved by TAC Directors.

The Grant review panel makes an assessment based on the applicants' past and proposed work within the context of each competition. The grant review panel evaluates all eligible applications in a comparative context and makes funding decisions based on the availability of funds, the program objectives, and the following assessment criteria:

- the demonstrated involvement of both community members and professional artists in the design and implementation of the project;
- the artistic excellence of the proposed project and its innovation in form, interpretation and/or content;
- the quality of experience the project will provide to the participants and the benefits it will provide to the larger community;
- the quality and effectiveness of the applicant's community outreach and/or audience development strategies;
- the financial viability of the proposed project and the ability of the applicant to carry it out.

Included in TAC's [Equity Framework](#) is an **Equity Priority Policy**, which states that if there are multiple well-assessed applications of equal merit in an adjudication round but insufficient funds in the grants budget to support all deserving candidates, applications proposed by applicants that self-identify as belonging to one of Toronto Arts Council's equity priority groups will be prioritized.

Decisions of the grant review panel are final.

As the peer assessors and the applications change with each year, peer assessor evaluation of relative artistic merit will also vary. Unsuccessful applicants may succeed with another grant review panel and are encouraged to reapply.

How do I find out the application results?

TAC will send you an email when the results are available, and you will log in to TAC Grants Online to receive the results. Notification will be received within four months of the deadline date. For the February deadline, you will find out in **late May**; for the August deadline, you will find out in **late October**.

What if my project changes?

Grants may be used only for the purposes outlined in the application. Changes to the scale, activities and timeframe of the project must be reported promptly to TAC. In such cases, TAC may require full or partial repayment of the grant. Changes to project dates must be reported to Senior Manager, Arts Discipline Programs.

What do I do when I have completed the project?

Recipients are required to file a final report on their project. The final report is filled out and submitted online through TAC's granting portal. The due date for the final report will be included in the grant notification letter. Future applications to the Creative Communities, Dance, Literary Arts, Music, Theatre, and Visual/Media Arts programs will not be accepted unless reports on previous funding have been received and approved by TAC.

What are the rules or requirements for this funding?

- Successful applicants will receive a Letter of Understanding. The Letter of Understanding will detail the terms and conditions of the funding. The Letter of Understanding must be signed and uploaded to *TAC Grants Online* before funding can be released. The Letter of Understanding also describes situations that would require grant repayment.
- Grant recipients are required to acknowledge the support of Toronto Arts Council in all written materials relating to the activities for which funds are granted. The TAC logo is available on our website; specifications for the size and placement of the logo should be commensurate with that of other donors or sponsors that have provided similar financial support. In lieu of the logo, the recipient may use the phrase "produced with the support of the City of Toronto through Toronto Arts Council."
- Toronto Arts Council has moved to electronic payments. If your application is approved, you will be required to enter the bank account information of the grant recipient that corresponds to the Applicant Name on your Notification Letter. Bank information is submitted along with your Letter of Understanding and other Notification Letter Requirements.
- Grant recipients are required to maintain adequate accounting records as to the receipt of funds from Toronto Arts Council. A T4A form will be issued by TAC to Individual Applicants and should be retained for income tax purposes.
- The City of Toronto requires that all organizations and individuals adopt a policy of non-discrimination as a condition of receiving a grant from the City. All successful applicants will be required to submit a signed Declaration of Compliance with Anti-Harassment/Discrimination Legislation and City Policy. A copy of the following [City documents can be downloaded from TAC's website](#): *Anti-Racism, Access and Equity Policy Guidelines, Hate Activity Policy and Procedures* and *Human Rights and Harassment Policy and Procedures*.
- TAC staff attends client performances and events. Grant recipients are required to send TAC information on any public performances or events presented in the context of their grant-supported projects. This information should be emailed to the Grant Program Manager.
- In addition to the aforementioned general conditions of funding, TAC reserves the right to place other conditions on the release of the grant (such as confirmation of venue, programming, other sources of funding, etc.). Any specific conditions will be contained in the Letter of Understanding.

Further questions

Contact Senior Manager, Arts Discipline Programs

Kevin Reigh (he/him)

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