Volunteer Based Arts Organizations

All disciplines
Dance
Film & video arts
Indigenous arts
Literary arts
Music
Theatre
Visual arts & new media
Organization

This grant provides annual funding to arts-based organizations that foster community connections and primarily rely on volunteers to carry out their mission and mandates.

Deadline information
December 1, 2026
Who can apply

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for Volunteer Based Arts Organizations operating funding, organizations must:

- have public programming and participation in the film and video, literary, visual arts, and/or performing arts (dance, music, theatre) as their primary purpose and principal mandate, as stated in their incorporation documents.
- be legally registered and operating in Alberta for a minimum of one full fiscal year, and in good standing, under one of the following Acts:
  Provincial Legislation:
  - Societies Act of Alberta
  - Companies Act of Alberta, Part 9 (Nonprofit companies)
  Federal Legislation:
  - Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act and registered in Alberta under Part 21 of the Business Corporations Act

- Special Act of the Parliament of Canada
- Income Tax Act of Canada, operating in the Province of Alberta as a charity

Eligible organizations must also:

- have an Alberta-based address
- have 50% or more of their board members living in Alberta
- demonstrate good governance principles, effective administration practices, and a commitment to fiscal responsibility
- operate as a stand-alone arts organization, at arms-length from municipalities, commercial enterprises, or organizations and institutions receiving annual operating funding from other Government of Alberta sources or their affiliates

First-time applicants:

If this is your organization’s first application for AFA operating funding, you must contact the AFA at least three months before the deadline for a preliminary eligibility assessment and program fit.

As a first-time applicant, your organization must provide board-approved financial statements that demonstrate the organization has positive net assets immediately prior to application.

Ineligible Organizations:

The following applicants are not eligible for AFA operating funding:

- municipalities
- for-profit organizations
- funding agencies or other funders
- organizations not registered under one of the above-mentioned Acts
- organizations that primarily benefit those outside of Alberta
- organizations engaged primarily in competition-based activities or events
- organizations focused on the applied arts including, but not limited to, gaming, architecture, interior design, commercial photography, graphic arts, and fashion design
- organizations that are eligible for operating funding under another AFA funding opportunity

- organizations with overdue or incomplete accounting/reporting related to any grant previously awarded by the AFA or Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women
- individual and collectives

What does this funding support?

This program supports arts organizations that foster a strong sense of community in the arts through the engagement of the voluntary sector. Funding supports a broad range of artistic activities, including the production, presentation, and dissemination of artistic works and/or providing artists with support in alignment with an organization’s mission and mandate.

This funding supports organizations that rely primarily on volunteers to foster a strong sense of community participation and shared purpose with minimal or no paid staff.

Acceptable use of funds:

AFA operating funding supports expenses including, but not limited to:

- fees for artists, curators, and technicians
- cultural protocol, including honoraria, tobacco offering and fees for Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural Advisors
- production and programming
- marketing, communications, and promotion
- salaries and professional fees
- rent, utilities, and insurance
- maintenance of equipment, fixed assets, and costs for facility operations
- other expenses as required to fulfill your organization's mandate

Unacceptable use of funds:

AFA operating funding cannot be used for expenses including, but not limited to:

- scholarships, prizes, gratuities, and awards and payments for individual benefit
- endowment funds
- third-party funding to another organization, including donations, grants, scholarships, or prizes

- consignment fees
- capital costs for renovations or facility improvements, land or facility purchase, and major equipment and/or vehicle purchase
- bad debt or debt reduction
- other expenses deemed unreasonable by the AFA

How to apply

The AFA only accepts applications through the Grant Administration Tracking and Evaluation (GATE) Front Office online application system.

Applications must be received through GATE Front Office no later than 11:59 p.m. Alberta Time on the deadline date. If the deadline falls on a statutory holiday or a weekend, it will be extended until the next working day. Late applications will not be accepted.

Applications will be ineligible for consideration if incomplete, or the applicant has overdue or incomplete accounting/reporting related to any grant previously awarded by the AFA or Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

GATE Front Office username registration

Applicants will require a GATE Front Office username and password. If you are a first-time applicant -- or your organization requires updates to registered users -- requests for usernames and passwords must be received at least five business days prior to the application deadline.

Please complete the GATE Front Office Registration form. Return as an email attachment to registrationAFA@gov.ab.ca, quoting the funding opportunity or grant program to which you are applying.

What to include in your application:

- **Contacts:** Includes a primary contact and secondary contact for your application that will be the point of contact for any communications regarding your application or application status. Also includes the signing authority of the organization.
- **Address:** Includes street and mailing address.

- **Organization information:** Includes your organization's legal name, Alberta Registration number, incorporation date, and fiscal year-end.
- **Applicant Agreement:** All sections of the application must be completed before your application can be submitted. A user with signing authority for the organization must log into GATE Front Office to sign the Applicant Agreement.
- **Current Board List:** Includes a list of all board members for the applying organization, as well as their position titles, cities, term start dates, phone numbers and emails.
- **People:** Includes a tallied summary of staff and volunteers engaged by your organization. Does not include artists or artist groups paid for performances, presentations, exhibitions, workshops, etc.
- **Previous Artistic Programming:** Includes a tallied summary of public programming and events, participating artists and artists fees paid, attendees and program participants, and event revenue (when applicable). Samples of previous promotional materials demonstrating use of the AFA logo must also be uploaded into the Attachments section of your application.
- **Revenue and Expenditures:**
  - Includes a summary of revenues according to earned revenue, net investment income (when applicable), public funding, private sector/fundraising/donations, and other revenues. Revenues must match total revenues as reported on your included financial statements.
  - Includes a summary of expenditures according to artistic programming, facilities, marketing and communications, fundraising, and administration expenses. Expenses must match total expenditures as reported on your included financial statements.
  - Includes a summary of ineligible expenses that will be deducted from your total expenses used to determine your eligible grant request, as outlined in the ***How will my application be assessed*** section of the program guidelines.
  - Your organization’s most recent, board-approved annual financial statements must also be uploaded into the Attachments section of your application. See note below on Acceptable Financial Statements.
- **Diligence Questionnaire:** Includes brief questions on successes, changes to finances, programming objectives, and changes to banking information (when applicable).
- **Planned Activities:** Includes a summary of upcoming artistic programming and activities

- **Attachments:** Includes promotional materials, Financial Statements, and a signed Board Approval Signature form as mandatory requirements, as well as Electronic Payment forms (when applicable).

Acceptable financial statements:

For returning applicants, the level of financial statements required are determined by an organization’s prior year AFA grant. Financial statements must include a Balance Sheet, Statement of Revenues and Expenditures, and Statement of Cash Flows. If the prior year grant was:

- $25,000 or less include, at minimum, a financial statement approved and signed by the treasurer and two additional board members
- $25,001 to $50,000 include, at minimum, a Notice to Reader or Compilation Engagement financial statement provided by an independent, professionally designated accountant
- $50,000 to $100,000 include, at minimum, a Review Engagement financial statement provided by an independent, professionally designated accountant
- $100,001 or higher include a full Audited financial statement provided by an independent, professional designated accountant

For first-time applicants, board-approved financial statements should comprise a Balance Sheet, Statement of Revenues and Expenditures, and Statement of Cash Flows. The level of financial statement is determined by your organization, but future applications must meet the conditions outlined above.

How will my application be assessed?

Funding awarded through this program is determined based on an organization’s most recent, board-approved financial statements and according to:

- total eligible expenses to a maximum of 10 per cent
  - organizations located outside the Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan regions may be eligible for an additional 2 per cent subject to available funds
- equitable distribution of available funds to all eligible applicants

For the purposes of your grant request, total eligible expenses exclude any costs associated with:

- amortization or depreciation expenses
- capital expenses
- third-party funding
- consignment fees paid to artists
- public sector in-kind or non-cash contributions

Funding for Volunteer Based Arts Organizations is established by the AFA Board of Directors based upon the annual AFA budget allocated by the Government of Alberta. Department staff evaluate applications according to eligibility criteria and prepare recommendations to the board, which reviews and approves all funding.

All decisions are final and no appeals will be considered.

When will I hear?

Applicants will receive email notification upon AFA board approval, generally between four to six months from the application deadline.

Conditions

Organizations are only eligible to receive support from one AFA operating grant stream at any given time. Multiple applications to the Volunteer Based Arts Organizations program or to other AFA operating grant programs will not be accepted.

Funding is intended for the activities planned for your organization’s current or next fiscal year, based on information provided in your application, and in accordance with the acceptable use of funds.

The AFA or its authorized representatives may examine your financial and other records to ensure funding is used for its intended purpose:

- Recipients must return unused portions of the grant to the AFA

The AFA Fair Notice Policy applies to this grant program. The AFA may cancel, suspend, reduce, or demand repayment of the grant in circumstances where the AFA is concerned with the viability of the organization.

Funding Acknowledgement:

Organizations that receive operating funding must credit the AFA for financial support in any publicity prepared in relation to their activities, including in electronic, print, or visual materials.

- If your organization fails to satisfy AFA recognition requirements, it may be subject to a 10 per cent funding reduction in subsequent grant applications.
- Continued failure to meet recognition requirements may result in ineligibility to apply for future AFA funding.

Download versions of the AFA logo and guidelines for usage.

Reporting

Reporting is not required for Volunteer Based Arts Organizations funding.

Helpful resources

Visit the Help and Resources section of our website to:

- Download the new Front Office User Guide
- Find additional resources for organizations

You may wish to download resources to include as attachments with your application.

- Financial Statement Board Approval Form
- Direct Deposit Form
    - Please note that void cheques must include the legal name and address of the organization.

Apply Now

Arts Development Consultant - Sector Support

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