
**FY2027-2029 Sustaining Impact
General Operating Grant Program
Letter of Intent Application Instructions
For NEW ORGANIZATIONS**



FY2027-29 General Operating Grant Program Letter of Intent Application Instructions

Overview

The purpose of ArtsWave's Sustaining Impact grant program is to provide general operating support to arts and cultural heritage organizations whose programming supports the building blocks of ArtsWave's Blueprint for Collective Action to ensure their ongoing capacity to drive community impact.

Who May Apply

ArtsWave believes that strong arts create strong communities and actively seeks to promote access, equity, and inclusiveness in its grantmaking. ArtsWave will not award grant support to organizations that, in their constitution, bylaws, or practices, discriminate against a person or group because of age, race, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or religious belief. In doing so, we seek to promote respect for all people.

To be eligible for FY2027-29 General Operating support, an organization must meet all the following requirements:

- Have a primary mission to provide programs or activities in areas directly concerned with arts or cultural heritage for the public demonstrated by 51%+ of the operating budget directed toward those areas;
- Be based in ArtsWave's 16 counting funding region, including: Brown, Butler, Clermont, Hamilton and Warren Counties in Ohio; Boone, Bracken, Campbell, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, and Pendleton Counties in Kentucky; and Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio and Union Counties in Indiana;
- Have a 501(c)3 tax status for five or more years for organizations with annual operating budgets (expenses) less than \$1 million OR 10 or more years for organizations with annual operating budgets (expenses) more than \$1 million;
- Employ at least 3 FTE paid and/or contract professional and/or administrative staff (Full-time Equivalent is defined as an average of 30 hours per week);
- Manage a board with at least 3 board members who have an active role in the organization; ensure compliance with both the state and federal guidelines for a nonprofit;
- Have received some form of funding support from ArtsWave in at least three of ArtsWave's last five fiscal years (Five-year period = Sept. 1, 2020 – August 31, 2025); this does not include pass-through CARES Act or ARP Act governmental funding;
- Have maintained a balanced budget over the organization's past three fiscal years OR have less than 10% accumulated deficit of annual operating budget, and;

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- For organizations with annual operating budgets (expenses) more than \$1 million ONLY- have maintained a current ratio of 2 or greater over the past three fiscal years. (See appendix for explanation).
 - Have no outstanding (overdue) report from previous ArtsWave grants or other commitments;
 - Current financial position to create community impact, knowing ArtWave's Sustaining Impact grant is impact-based and not need-based.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

All LOI materials must be submitted via the online grantmaking system, Submittable.com. We strongly recommend that you begin your online application well before the due date to familiarize yourself with the online system and to address any technical concerns.

While completing your application, remember these tips:

- Be brief, clear, and direct in your narrative. Focus on what is most important.
- We recommend that you prepare your responses offline in a word processing program and then copy and paste them into the appropriate sections of the online application.
- Add impact@artswave.org to your safe senders' list to ensure that you receive all communications from the online grantmaking system.

The LOI for FY2027-29 General Operating support can be accessed using the following link:

<https://artswave.submittable.com/submit>

The LOI consists of the following sections:

A. Organization Information

Some of this information will prepopulate if you have provided it to ArtsWave through previous applications.

- A. Organization Contact Information
- B. Organization Leadership (Board and staff)
- C. CPO and Grant Contact
- D. Organization Overview
 - Year organization was founded
 - IRS Determination Letter
 - Organization primary art form
 - Organization's mission (100-words)
 - Description of target audience (100-words)
 - Endowment info
 - Work Samples

- Provide up to three samples of the artistic programming provided by your organization in the past.

B. Community Impact

- A. Is your organization in a financial position to create community impact, knowing ArtsWave's Sustaining Impact grant is impact-based and not need-based?
- B. Select TWO AREAS within the Blueprint for Collective Action and describe your organization's capacity to deliver impact. The narrative should include examples of the programs and activities that are most central to your organization's core mission and allow for the opportunity to use your artistic discipline to deliver impact in our community. Include relevant outcome measurement data to demonstrate past success in these areas. *Organizations with budgets greater than \$1 Million should provide a narrative addressing ALL FIVE AREAS of the Blueprint. (500-word limit)*
- C. One of the requirements of being a part of the sustaining Impact Cohort is ensuring that 51%+ of your budget is dedicated to the arts or cultural programming. Please explain how your organization fulfills this criteria.
- D. Please explain why being a part of the Sustaining Impact cohort is the right fit for your organization.

Financial Reporting Form

Upload the Financial Reporting form, which is an Excel spreadsheet that can be found on the ArtsWave website and will be uploaded as part of your LOI. When preparing the Financial Reporting form, please be sure to:

- Provide the organization's name and the dates of your fiscal year at the top of the form.
- Use an accrual basis.
- Do not consider temporarily restricted funds, in-kind revenues/expenses, and depreciation expense.
- Refer to the definition of each revenue, expense, transfer line, and ratio item to ensure consistent reporting among applicants.
- Provide FY2022-2024 actuals and FY2025 and FY2026 up-to-date year-end projections
- For both columns on the Financial Reporting form containing the phrase "% change," provide a written explanation in the Variance Explanation form for each of the following categories that vary by +/- 10% or more in any fiscal year:
 - TOTAL Operating Revenues
 - TOTAL Operating Expenses
 - CURRENT RATIO

This explanation should describe how the variance(s) relate to the organization's overall strategic plan.

*** See Appendix A for the Financial Glossary**

C. Statement of Assurances

An authorizing official will certify that s/he is authorized to submit the application on behalf of the organization and that the information submitted in the application is true and correct to the best of his/her knowledge.

LOI Submission

All LOI application materials must be submitted via the online grantmaking system by, **November 28, 2025 at 5:00 pm EST. Late LOIs will not be accepted.**

LOI Review Process

All LOIs will be reviewed in December and January using the following criteria:

- Strength of alignment to ArtsWave's Blueprint for Collective Action
- Breadth and depth of the intended community impact
- Financial capacity
- Adherence to ArtsWave's eligibility guidelines

Invitations to complete a full application will be sent at the end of January 2023 by invitation only.

Key Dates: Note that dates are subject to change.

LOI Due	LOI Review	Invitations to Apply	Full Application Due
November 28, 2025 by 5pm EST	December/January	End of January 2026	April 3, 2023

Contact ArtsWave

Additional questions may be directed to Ray Gargano, Vice President of Community Investments, at ray.gargano@artswave.org.

Appendix A: Financial Glossary

The following are descriptions/definitions of items that should be included in the respective lines of the financial information form:

ArtsWave Grant(s)

Total restricted and unrestricted grants received from ArtsWave for support of operations. This should include endowment income from ArtsWave's Alter and Mid-Sized Arts Organization endowments.

Government Grants

OAC, IMLS, City of Cincinnati, etc. grants (exclusive of services-required grants)

Contributions/Sponsorships/Memberships

Gifts and grants (exclusive of ArtsWave and government grants) from individuals, corporations, and trusts/foundations; program and exhibit sponsorships; and memberships.

Admission/Performance Income

Ticket sales, admission fees, and performance commissions/fees.

Tuition

Fees charged for classes and/or camps.

Sales to Public

Gross sales of gift shop, facility rentals, concessions, catering, parking, etc.

Investment/Endowment Income

Investment income is income earned on checking, savings, and investments of unrestricted operating assets (excluding unrealized gains and losses but inclusive of realized gains and losses). Endowment income is either the board-approved spending rate or the actual dividend and interest income earned if an organization does not have a spending policy. Endowment income should include endowment income on Funds Held for the Benefit of or Funds Held in Trust by ArtsWave.

Special Events Income, net

All revenue and direct expenses related to fundraising events

Artistic Expenses

Includes artistic director, curators, individual performers and artists, exhibit contributors and speakers, guest lecturers, exhibit installation costs, contract services (including orchestra fees), artist lodging/housing, art transportation and art insurance. The salaries and benefits of individuals fulfilling these roles should be included.

Programming

Performance and non-exhibit-related costs, such as set design and construction, costumes, non-capitalized publication costs, hall rental, stage crew, and educational programming costs. The salaries and benefits of individuals working on performances and exhibits should be included.

Marketing/Promotion

Includes all advertising, design, and promotional expenses as well as the costs associated with visitor services and box office. The salaries and benefits of individuals working in advertising, design, promotion, visitor services and box office should be included.

Development

Includes all expenses the development office controls. The salaries and benefits of individuals working in the development department should be included.

Merchandising/Concessions

The direct cost of goods sold as well as all other costs related to the operations of the gift shop, facility rentals, concessions, catering, parking, etc. These other costs would include the salaries/benefits of individuals working in these departments, rent of such facilities, supplies, management fees, etc.

Facilities

Operating costs of facilities and physical plant, such as utilities, general maintenance, maintenance personnel, office rent, security, groundskeeping and cleaning, etc. The salaries and benefits of individuals working in the facilities and physical plant area should be included.

Administrative Expenses

Costs of all administrative departments including finance, information technology and communications, personnel, governance, and executive management. The salaries and benefits of individuals working in these departments should be included.

Capital Improvements/Purchases with Operating Funds

Transfer of unrestricted operating assets made for items that are additions to property, plant and equipment, net of restricted funding. Transfer should always be out of operations and therefore treated as an expense.

Transfers (to)/from Board-Designated Funds

Transfer of unrestricted operating assets (i.e., unexpected gifts or bequests, current year surplus, etc.) for investment in board-designated endowment or reserves. (These types of items would reduce the bottom line.) Transfer from board-designated endowment or reserves to operating assets (i.e., special project or bridge funding, operating deficits, additional draws from endowment beyond the board-approved spending rate, etc.) (These types of items would increase the bottom line.)

Net surplus/ (deficit)

Total operating revenues less total operating expenses plus total transfers.

Current ratio (unrestricted)

Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities. Determines the organization's ability to pay current debt using current assets. Ideally, this number should approach 2 which indicates ample short-term liquidity to obviate the need to borrow or sell assets.

- Example: \$100,000 in assets divided by \$50,000 in liabilities = 2

Current assets typically include cash and cash equivalents, grants, and pledges receivable (current portion), prepaid expenses, other assets, operating investments (level 1 and level 2), and board-designated endowment funds (level 1 and level 2).

Current liabilities typically include accounts payable, the current portion of long-term liabilities, accrued liabilities, and deferred revenue.