

Frequently Asked Questions

Version 2

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This list has been updated with formally submitted questions as of 5 p.m. October 19, 2024. Please read through carefully to see if your question is covered. If not, email sfac.grants@sfgov.org for additional clarification.

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Eligibility Questions

Can I apply if I live outside of San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency.

Can I apply if I just moved to San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency.

Can I apply if I live outside of San Francisco but work in San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency.

Can I apply on behalf of someone who lives outside of San Francisco?

No. The individual or organization doing the work must be the applicant. Please email sfac.grants@sfgov.org regarding collaborations or partnerships.

Can I apply if I live outside of San Francisco, but my fiscal sponsor is in San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency for the fiscally sponsored project as well as the fiscal sponsor.

Can I apply with a fiscal sponsor based outside of San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency. This includes fiscal sponsors.

Can I apply if one of my required good standing documents is pending (IRS, California Attorney general, etc.)?

No. Organizations and fiscal sponsors must be in good standing at the time of application.

If my San Francisco Artist grant term ends December 2024, can I apply this year?

No. San Francisco Artist grantees with grant terms that end December 2024 are not eligible for this round of funding.

If I close my San Francisco Artist grant with a grant term that ends December 2024 before the San Francisco artist grant deadline, can I apply this year?

No. No matter when the final report is submitted, San Francisco Artist grant terms end in December. San Francisco Artist grantees with grant terms that end December 2024 are not eligible for this round of funding.

If my Arts Impact Endowment grant term ends September 2024, can I apply this year?

It's possible that Arts Impact Endowment grantees with grant terms that end on September 30, 2024 could be eligible for funding. These grantees must submit a complete final report, have their final report approved and their payment process completed before November 13, 2024, to be eligible for this round of funding. Please email sfac.grants@sfgov.org to determine eligibility.

My organization has an open Cultural Equity Initiatives grant with a grant term end date of June 30, 2025 or June 30, 2026. Can my organization apply this year?

No. Cultural Equity Initiatives grantees with a grant term that ends on June 30, 2025 or June 30, 2026 are not eligible for this round of funding.

My organization presents arts or culture programming as part of its core activities, but arts and culture programming does not represent the majority of the organization's programs and services. Is my organization eligible to apply?

No, the organization's mission statement must be clearly focused on the development, production, presentation, and/or support of project-based artistic works and/or youth arts activities in San Francisco.

Are you able to make exceptions to your residency requirements for displaced artists or artists who are really worth funding?

No, we are legally bound by the requirements in our guidelines and cannot make exceptions.

Are you able to make exceptions to your good standing requirements for new organizations, or organizations that are waiting to hear back from external agencies?

No, we are legally bound by the requirements in our guidelines and cannot make exceptions.

I want to apply for an Artistic Legacy Grant, and I've been a practicing artist in San Francisco since 1990. Am I eligible? Yes, you are eligible because you are a San Francisco resident and you have been a practicing artist based in San Francisco for 25 or more years. Artistic Legacy Grant

applicants need to have been a practicing artist in San Francisco continuously since 1999 or before.

Added 10/11/2024

Can I apply if I live outside of San Francisco, but am collaborating with an Indigenous or Native community from San Francisco?

A person living outside of San Francisco cannot apply. Any member of a Native or Indigenous community living in San Francisco could apply. The San Francisco applicant can work with any partner or collaborator they choose.

If an organization is based in San Francisco, but the Artistic Director does not live in San Francisco are they ineligible? Or does that make an application less strong?

The entity receiving the funds must prove eligibility. In this case, the organization must prove eligibility. Where staff live is not reviewed as part of organization eligibility. Where staff live is not part of any grant category scoring criteria.

Is the eligibility restriction to San Francisco proper or can residents of the Bay Area apply?

All grants require two-year San Francisco residency, defined as those living within the City & County of San Francisco.

Does a physical address for an organization mean brick and mortar?

A physical address is an address where your organization conducts its business and operations. You must provide proof of business address, such as a bank statement or bill with the organization's legal name - within three months of the grant category deadline. The address must not be a P.O. box or your fiscal sponsor's address, unless you have a coworking agreement submitted at the time of application.

If my organization has a shared physical space, are we eligible?

If your organization has received mail - such as a bank statement or bill - within three months of the grant category deadline at the shared physical space and that document shows your organization's legal name, the physical address and a date within the last three months, that meets the eligibility requirement.

Can one-time construction costs be removed from the 2M budget cap?

Yes, one-time capital costs were added to the eligibility section on September 27, 2024.

“Organizations that exceed the \$2,000,000 budget cap due to re-granting or capital costs must verify their operational budget without passthrough funds at the time of application. Applicants must upload audited financials from the most recently completed fiscal year demonstrating the dollar amount of pass-through funds or capital costs.”

If myself or my organization receives funding from Grants for the Arts or the National Endowment for the Arts, are we eligible?

Yes, you are eligible. The Arts Commission does not consider or prohibit other sources of funding for eligibility. However, if the other source of funding requires residency in a location other than San Francisco, that may affect your eligibility.

If I or my organization received a grant from another government jurisdiction within the last two years that requires residency, am I eligible?

No, you are not eligible. If you received a grant from another government jurisdiction that requires residency in a location other than San Francisco within the last two years, that means you cannot demonstrate the required two-year continuous San Francisco residency.

LLCs are by definition for-profit entities. Can they or can they not be fiscally sponsored?

LLCs with a budget cap of \$500,000 can apply with a fiscal sponsor. They will need to show that their work is focused on arts and culture at the time of application. This is an equity measure to better support the full San Francisco arts and culture ecosystem.

Is "operating revenue" the same as "operating budget"?

Operating Revenue is what nonprofits report on their IRS 990s in the Total Revenue line. This is what staff review to determine eligibility. The operating revenue for a fiscally sponsored organization can be found in the Total Revenue line item on the fiscally sponsored organization's Profit and Loss Statement.

If my organization has a two-year track record of artistic activity that has not provided financial revenues to the organization, do we still need to provide tax forms relevant to these artistic activities?

Nonprofit organizations that haven't generated income or revenue are still required to file IRS 990s and should submit signed copies of their 990s with their application. If they are a fiscally sponsored organization, they should submit Profit and Loss Statements and Balance Sheets.

Is the Special Project Grants (SPX) category included in the one grant limit?

No. Special Project Grants (SPX) are funded by a different funding source. They are not part of the one grant limit for the Cultural Equity or Arts Impact Endowments.

What does alignment with Cultural District mean?

This question is to learn if you have any geographical, personal or professional alignment with any of the cultural districts. We track this data to ensure we are serving the cultural districts and also provide those districts with our data when requested. If you don't have any alignment with a cultural district, please check the not applicable box. This has no bearing on your application and is not a part of the scoring criteria of the application.

What is the definition of a "full-time student"?

The term "full-time" can vary between schools and universities, and they have their own definitions with specific credit hours per semester to qualify. If the school you are attending considers you a "full-time student" and not a "part-time student", that is what will be considered for your eligibility. You can check on your school's website to confirm your status, and feel free to reply to this email with additional questions about specific grants if you find you may be eligible.

Fiscal Sponsor Questions

How do I know if I need a fiscal sponsor?

Artists working with vulnerable populations and organizations filing taxes as sole proprietorships or LLCs with a budget cap of \$500,000 must work with a fiscal sponsor. Please email sfac.grants@sfgov.org to determine eligibility.

Can I add a fiscal sponsor if my grant is funded?

No. Fiscal sponsors must be included at the time of application.

Can a fiscal sponsor pay an artist to work with them on an Arts Commission grant?

No. An organization that hires an artist to do work is an employer not a fiscal sponsor. In this case, a third-party fiscal sponsor is required.

Added 10/11/2024

If I am older than 65 do I need to apply with a fiscal sponsor?

The age or ability of the applicant is not what triggers the need for a fiscal sponsor. A fiscal sponsor is required only if your project works directly with seniors (people over 65), youth (people under 18), or people with disabilities. If you are a senior working on your own without partners or collaborators that are seniors, youth or people with disabilities, you do not need a fiscal sponsor.

Are veterans or previously incarcerated individuals considered vulnerable populations?

Veterans and previously incarcerated individuals are not specified as vulnerable populations. However, veterans and previously incarcerated individuals may be seniors or people with disabilities. If your project specifies working with veterans or previously incarcerated individuals who are seniors or people with disabilities, you will need to work with a fiscal sponsor who can provide the Sexual Misconduct insurance.

If I am a past City & County employee, but previously received a grant without a fiscal sponsor, do I need a fiscal sponsor?

If you already have a City Supplier account that you are able to maintain and keep compliant, you will not need a fiscal sponsor. If do not have a Supplier account and are a past employee receiving any sort of retirement benefits, you will need a fiscal sponsor.

Does the fiscal sponsor need to be an arts organization?

The fiscal sponsor does not need to be an arts organization, but it does need to be based in San Francisco and meet the other eligibility criteria listed in the Fiscal Sponsors section of SFAC's FY 2024-2025 Grant Guidelines.

Is there a cap on fiscal sponsor fees?

No, there is no cap or specified amount for fiscal sponsor fees. Please review page 7 of the guidelines for what is required in a fiscal sponsor agreement or MOU.

Does the annual operating revenue cap of \$2,000,000 apply to fiscal sponsors?

No, for the FY 2024-2025 grant application cycle, the annual operating revenue cap of \$2,000,000 does not apply to fiscal sponsors. This also means that fiscal sponsors do not need to upload the fiscal sponsors' audited financials as part of the grant application because the fiscal sponsors'

audited financials are no longer needed to verify the fiscal sponsor's annual operating revenue.

Added 10/11/2024

Insurance Questions

Can the venue I work with provide the required insurance?

No, the venue is not the grantee. The grantee is the entity required to provide insurance. Most individual artists meet this requirement through general liability or special event insurance.

Does an organization need auto insurance if employees need to drive to different sites to teach and perform? What if the employees are using their personal cars with their own insurance?

Yes, the grantee organization must provide auto insurance if a car is required for the work. This is different from an individual's auto policy because the City requires a certain amount of coverage.

Added 10/11/2024

Technical Assistance Questions

When are the webinar recordings posted?

Webinar recordings are posted within five to seven business days after the webinar on this page: [Grant Information Sessions | San Francisco Arts Commission \(sfartscommission.org\)](#).

Who should we contact to find out which grant program our organization would be strongest in applying for?

The grant categories serve different purposes. It's up to the applicant to decide which category would work best for you or your organization. You can meet one-on-one with each Program Officer to discuss their specific category.

For the Arts-Impact-Endowment is there a prescribed number of awards that will be given to each of the three channels, individuals, or organizations? Are organizations, artists and all channels evaluated and scored alongside each other or are they separate?

This year's Arts-Impact-Endowment (AIE) funding is governed by the recent Cultural Services Allocation Plan (CSAP). [Cultural Services Allocation Plan | San Francisco Arts Commission \(sfartscommission.org\)](#) The plan does not specify or limit the number of grants in any specific funding channel. Panels are organized based on the number of applicants. We won't know what that looks like until after the grant deadline.

As an individual artist, what is the biggest difference between the Arts Impact Endowment (AIE) and the San Francisco Artist grant (SFA)?

The Arts Impact Endowment (AIE) is for \$50,000, requires a budget, and requires an applicant to choose a specific funding channel.

The San Francisco Artist grant is for \$30,000 and has no budget requirement.

As an organization, what is the difference between the Arts Impact Endowment (AIE) and Cultural Equity Initiative (CEI) grant categories?

The Arts Impact Endowment (AIE) grants are project specific and require an organization to choose a funding channel laid out via the Cultural Services Allocation Plan (CSAP). [Cultural Services Allocation Plan | San Francisco Arts Commission \(sfartscommission.org\)](#). AIE awards are \$100,000 no matter the size of the organization.

Cultural Equity Initiatives (CEI) grants fund general operating support. The grant award depends on the size of the organization and is determined via the funding table.

Operating Revenue (two-year average)	Eligible Request Amount
Less than \$100,000	\$50,000
More than \$100,001 but less than \$500,000	\$75,000
More than \$500,001 but less than \$2,000,000	\$100,000

If an organization is applying to the Arts Impact Endowment (AIE) and will be using the funds to supplement rent fees for artist studio space and provide artist workshops, is that considered "Resilience & Growth" or would it be a better fit for one of the other categories?

Rent is specifically listed under the “Resilience & Growth” channel in the Cultural Services Allocation Plan (CSAP) and Arts Impact Endowment (AIE) guidelines.

Resilience & Growth

Maintaining day to day operations or activities and building.

Providing tools to stabilize and thrive, potentially include:

This funding area is for **Individuals and Organizations** to address needs for physical spaces and materials (equipment, real estate, rent, supplies), Capital Planning, Professional Development, Training, Workforce Development, Specific overhead costs (not unrestricted), and other capacity-building activities.

Due to restrictive prevailing wage rates, laws and compliance, grant funds cannot be used for labor costs.

How accurate does our grant plan need to be? Do we need to demonstrate a lot of secured funding or can we have some unknowns?

The project budget is where to discuss funding. Any budget notes or line items should reflect the budget known at the time of application. Grant plans should focus on the activities required to complete the project.

When can I apply to the next round of Special Project Grants (SPX)?

The Special Project Grants (SPX) category applications were due 12 p.m. noon on Wednesday, October 9, 2024. There is currently no additional Special Project Grants (SPX) round scheduled.

Panelist Questions

If you write grants for organizations, can you be a grant panelist?

It's a conflict of interest to write grant applications that you could review as a panelist. It's a conflict of interest to serve as a panelist in a category for which you wrote an application. In order to avoid direct conflicts or the appearance of conflict, you would not be able to serve as a grant panelist in any category for which you wrote an application.

Grant Activity Questions

Can I apply to tour my project outside of San Francisco?

No. All grant activities must take place in San Francisco.

Can my project include activities outside of San Francisco?

No. All grant activities must take place in San Francisco.

Can I use my grant funds for travel?

You can use funds for travel within San Francisco. You cannot use funds for travel outside of San Francisco.

Can I use the grant funds to pay project personnel (i.e. artists, staff, contractors, consultants) who live outside of San Francisco?

While the grantee and all project activities need to be based in and take place in San Francisco, project personnel (excluding the grantee that must live and/or operate in San Francisco during their entire grant term), do not need to be based in San Francisco.

Content Questions

What types of work samples can I submit?

There is no limit to the type of work samples we accept as long as they are accessible via link or one of the allowed file upload types referenced in the instructions on page 16: pdf, doc, docx, mpg, mp3, mp4, vma, divx, mov, avi, wmv, wma, jpg. Please email sfac.grants@sfgov.org if you have questions about a specific work sample.

Do you fund film?

We fund every type of artistic genre or practice. There is no limit to the type of project that we fund.

Added 10/11/2024

Can I submit a video that shows more than five images?

Yes, you can upload video. Your video should be related to your project and demonstrate the category specific work sample criteria.

Can I upload videos as links via a .pdf document?

The form does not prohibit applicants from adding video links to an uploaded .pdf document. However, the table has specific fields to provide links. We ask that applicants use the table as intended whenever possible to minimize confusion for the panelists.

Are there set technical requirements for .pdf documents or other file forms?

No, there are no set technical requirements for work samples. We recommend that you submit files in formats that are the most universally accessible. Panelists will be using their own devices to access work samples.

Is video quality or the quality of the work sample judged?

Please review the category specific criteria for work samples to see how panelists will review and score. Additionally, panelists may use vocabulary and concepts from the Aesthetic Perspectives Framework and list of Aesthetic Attributes identified by Americans for the Arts [Aesthetics Short Take.pdf \(americansforthearts.org\)](#) to discuss work samples.

Can I upload a whole script but then signal which pages to read?

Yes, you can upload a large document and direct panelists to specific pages using the viewing cue section of the work sample table. We recommend giving directions on how and what to view for every work sample.

How do I link to a large file online?

You will need to link to a hosted location online. Please review the Work Sample webinar for suggested hosting locations. [Grant Information Sessions | San Francisco Arts Commission \(sfartscommission.org\)](#)

Does working with San Francisco residents affect my application review?

Eligible applicants may choose to work with any partners or collaborators they wish, either from San Francisco or elsewhere. Scoring criteria does not review partner or collaborator residency. Most categories ask a question regarding public benefit. Applicants will need to demonstrate how their work benefits the San Francisco public.

How does SFAC 'calibrate' the responses of different panelists. Are submissions reviewed by two or more panelists?

Most applications are reviewed by five panelists. Panels can range from three to five panelists who read, review, and score every single application. For more information on how panels work, please follow up with the Program Officer managing the category you are interested in.

What types of work samples are useful for writing projects?

Writing, of course. Many applicants have successfully paired written work samples with audio or video of the author reading the work. This helps give the panelists context on tone and intention.

If I'm applying with a script for a short film, but have experience as a dancer in San Francisco, would a dance work sample be relevant?

Work samples should be relevant to your proposed project. If your project is not about dance, a dance focused work sample may not be useful. Be sure to review the specific criteria for the category when choosing your work samples.

Is your application score affected by when it's reviewed? For example, the first versus the last application reviewed by a panel.

No, the scoring criteria does not consider timing or look at other applications. Each application is reviewed individually in accordance with the scoring criteria for that grant category.

Other Funders

The grant amount does not cover the full cost of my project, what other funders do you recommend?

Please see the Arts Funding Resources section of our website: [Arts Funding Resources | San Francisco Arts Commission \(sfartscommission.org\)](https://www.sfartscommission.org/arts-funding-resources)

I am not eligible for your funding. What other funders do you recommend?

Please see the Arts Funding Resources section of our website: [Arts Funding Resources | San Francisco Arts Commission \(sfartscommission.org\)](https://www.sfartscommission.org/arts-funding-resources)