

# Onion Foundation Arts Program Info Session

Thursday, February 1, 12:00 - 12:50

2024



# Welcome to the Onion Foundation Arts Program Info Session

We invite you to use the chat box to share your:

- Name and Pronouns
- Organization
- Where you are beaming in from today

We are recording this to share, so feel free to leave your camera off if you don't want to be seen. Recordings, transcript, and slide deck will be available on our website on the Arts Program page.

The Onion Foundation is committed to making our events accessible to everyone. If you require an accommodation or service to fully participate, please let Sally know with a message or in chat, and we make every effort to support your participation.



# Agenda

- Onion Foundation mission and history
- Grant criteria and eligibility
- Arts Program Overview
- Grant Opportunities and deadlines
- Timeline
- Evaluation process
- Grantmaking system
- Q & A



## Mission

To build a more equitable and healthy Maine by deepening the connection of all people to the arts and nature.

## History

Susan and Fritz Onion formed the foundation in 2014 and made the first grants in 2015 through direct outreach. Organizations began applying for grants in 2016.

The Onions chose to work in the arts and environment because both areas bring their family joy and fulfillment.

To date, the foundation has awarded more than 1600 grants to 514 organizations totaling nearly \$19M.



# Criteria and Eligibility

To apply for and receive a grant your organization\* must be a 501(c)(3) public charity as designated by the IRS, operating under a fiscal sponsor who is a qualified 501(c)(3) public charity, a public education institution, or a Maine municipality.

The organization and/or the project must be based in Maine, focused on benefitting Maine's people, and meet the mission and priorities of the Onion Foundation.

Requests may be for either general operating support or for project/program-specific support

\*For our purposes, organizations are generally groups of people working collaboratively towards offering programs to one or more communities.



# Arts Program

The Onion Foundation recognizes the arts' important roles in creativity and sharing of culture and different perspectives. The arts are essential for the development of our intellect, our capacity for joy and compassion, and our feelings of connection to one another. We seek to connect Maine residents to arts experiences as audience members and as makers to offer opportunities for expression, learning, and inspiration.

Funding is typically focused on the following disciplines: Music, Dance, Theater, Visual arts, Multidisciplinary programs.



# Arts Program Strategies

- STRATEGY I: Increase Access To Arts Education In Maine  
STRATEGY II: Support Public Engagement In Maine Arts Programs  
*STRATEGY III: Build The Capacity Of Maine's Arts Sector (invited proposals only)*

read more about them at [onionfoundation.org/arts](https://onionfoundation.org/arts)

We tend to focus on Arts organizations with ongoing programs, including small, mid-size and large organizations. Sometimes we support organizations with missions that span more than the arts and have strong arts programming.

We don't usually support community organizations who have a one-day arts event, or support non-arts organizations who want to start an occasional arts program.



# Arts Program Strategies

## STRATEGY I: Increase Access To Arts Education In Maine

When Mainers are supported in creatively expressing themselves and in experiencing creative expression and culture together, they will live more fulfilling lives. Learning includes skill building and technique, appreciation of art, and of the history of artists who have come before and are working today.

The Onion Foundation focuses funding on well organized educational activities with skilled teaching staff and planned curricula, with thoughtful attention to who has access to the programs.

We also consider racial, social, gender, geographic, and economic diversity.





# Arts Program Strategies

## STRATEGY II: Support Public Engagement In Maine Arts Programs

The Arts Program primarily supports arts-mission nonprofit organizations that offer ongoing events, in particular those that provide Maine residents free or low-cost experiences. We give priority to programs with strong public engagement and that show meaningful consideration of the communities where they take place.

When assessing proposals, we look for arts programming that includes underrepresented artists and stories, attention to marginalized audiences, and geographic diversity. We also look for concrete plans that are guided by a curatorial or programmatic vision and led by experienced staff who are, in turn, supported by their organizations through training and other resources.



# Arts Program Strategies

## STRATEGY III: Build The Capacity Of Maine's Arts Sector (invited proposals only)

The Arts Program recognizes that strong programs come from a healthy and connected sector engaged in intersectional practices and invested in its workers. The Arts Program will work closely with organizations to identify capacity needs and priorities, which include, but are not limited to, organizational development, financial stability, worker skills, governance, communications and marketing strategies, networking and collaboration, and advocacy.

Our current work in this strategy area includes our support of the Cultural Alliance of Maine and several technical assistance and capacity building supports we have offered to some of our grantee organizations.



# Open grant process

## **Award amounts:** \$1,000 - \$20,000

- ✓ For Strategies I + II
- ✓ General operating support if all activities overlap with the Arts Program strategies
- ✓ Project support for specific activities or program areas
- ✓ Multi-year grants, requesting up to three years of support – with accompanying plans+budgets

In 2023, we received 102 arts applications and awarded \$1,268,000 to 82 of the applicants.

*25 grants awarded up to \$5,000*

*24 grants awarded from \$5,000 - \$7,500*

*22 grants awarded from \$7,500 - \$15,000*

*11 grants awarded between \$15,000 and \$20,000*

53 of these grants were for one year, and 29 were multiyear grants, with funds supporting organizations in all 16 counties as well as statewide work.



## Tell us the basics about your work:

- What are you offering, how does it work, who is it for?
- How are you thinking about outreach, access, and goals?
- How does your work connect with the people of Maine?

## We will want to understand:

- ★ Who has access to the work / programs you do?
- ★ How are you engaging with people in your community / in Maine?
- ★ Do you ask your community for input on your programs?
- ★ If relevant, are you collaborating with key organizational partners?
- ★ Do diverse perspectives inform how you do the work?
- ★ Do you have clear goals?
- ★ How does your organization think about equity?



# Grants Timeline

Spring      open: January 17  
              deadline: March 13 @ 11:45pm  
              notification in May

Most of our calendar fiscal year grantees who receive general operating support apply in the Spring cycle, and report back to us in February, before the next Spring cycle.

Fall            open: July 24  
              deadline: September 18 @ 11:45p  
              notification in November

Most of our July-June fiscal year grantees who receive general operating support apply in the Fall cycle, and report back to us in August, before the next Fall cycle.



# Arts grant application preview

**View the application as a google doc [here](#).**

You can save a copy to make notes in and work on before registering in our system.

Before deciding to apply, please consider whether you've done enough planning to convey your idea and know what you need for support.

Please also consider the timing – you may have more (and better) information during the next application cycle, if your work will begin eight or nine months from now (i.e., in 2025).



# Grant evaluation process

We carefully read all applications, and sometimes we reach out for additional or clarifying information.

We look for connections to our mission and strategies during our review.

Our discussions bring in critical thinking about geographic diversity, overall impact on the sectors and the state, and how to fit as many awards as possible into our grantmaking budget.

Often the grant award amounts correlate to the size of the grantee organization, with larger grants going to larger organizations and smaller grants going to smaller organizations.



# NEW Grantmaking System

- **Returning Applicants** (who have previously applied for or received a grant award from the Onion Foundation) should contact Sally to request an invitation to apply. Please include your name, organization, and email address.
- **New Applicants** may register and apply here: <https://onionfoundation-portal.givingdata.com/campaign/artslarge>
- You can find a link to the application at <http://onionfoundation.org/arts>
- Step by step instructions are also available.

## Application Deadlines And Guidelines

### Applicants may request either general operating or project grants:

**General operating grants** offer unrestricted funds for your organization. If all of your organization's activities align with one or both of these strategies, you may request general operating support. General operating proposals may request multi-year grants of up to three years. We will consider awarding:

- up to \$20,000 per year (up to \$60,000 total over three years) for organizations with annual budgets over \$50,000.
- up to \$7,500 per year (up to \$22,500 total over three years) for organizations with annual budgets under \$50,000.

**Project support grants** offer funding for specific activities or programs, such as an ongoing concert series or an arts education department that's part of a larger organization. If your organization's work extends beyond our grantmaking strategies, you should request project support. All fiscally sponsored grants are project grants. Project proposals may request multi-year grants of up to three years. We will consider awarding:

- up to \$20,000 per year (up to \$60,000 total over three years) for projects with budgets over \$50,000.
- up to \$7,500 per year (up to \$22,500 total over three years) for projects with budgets up to \$50,000.

### All requests should be aligned with one or both of the following Arts Program Strategies:

- Strategy One: Increase Access to Arts Education in Maine
- Strategy Two: Support Public Engagement in Maine Arts Programs

### 2024 Due Dates for Arts Program Grant proposals:

- **March 13, 2024** (notification in May): *Application Opens January 17th at Noon*
- **September 18, 2024** (notification in November)

### To Apply for an Arts Program Grant:

- **Returning Applicants** (who have previously applied for or received a grant award from the Onion Foundation) should contact us via email to request an invitation to apply. Please include your name, organization, email address, and a brief description of your proposal.
- **New Applicants** may register and apply online during the application period. Step by step instructions for registering a new account and starting an application are available [here](#).

Preview the Application [here](#) on google docs.



# For More Information

Our website is chock full of good guidance and tips! Check it occasionally for updates.  
[www.onionfoundation.org](http://www.onionfoundation.org)

**If you have particular questions about your organization or eligibility**, you can contact us. We respond to email most quickly:

Arts Program: Nat May  
[nat@onionfoundation.org](mailto:nat@onionfoundation.org)

**For technical and process-related questions**, or if you are not sure, please contact Sally Struever (she/her/hers), Grants & Office Administrator.

Email: [sally@onionfoundation.org](mailto:sally@onionfoundation.org)

Phone/text: (207) 713-4121

## Questions

We invite you to use the 'raise hand feature' to ask questions or type them in the chat.

