

Arts & Social Cohesion (2026) Letter of Interest

Vermont Community Foundation

Guidelines

The sense of belonging and connection that people feel in their community has a powerful influence on mental and physical health. At a time of polarization, disruption, and disconnection, the arts can help bring people back together to work, play, create, and solve problems at the community level—which has meaningful impacts on belonging and wellbeing.

The Community Foundation is seeking Letters of Interest (LOI) for projects and events in the visual, performing, music, and literary arts that create opportunities for positive social interaction, engagement, and collaboration. Projects should strengthen belonging and community cohesion in ways that are likely to persist and grow.

Here are some examples of what the program will fund:

- participatory mural projects;
- artist residencies that connect artists with community members for co-design and co-creation;
- public arts installations with community engagement elements;
- interactive musical or dance performances;
- new choral collaborations;
- talent shows;
- hands-on workshops;
- free public classes and events.

Successful projects will:

- Reach broad and diverse audiences, including those who may feel marginalized in their community
- Engage people as participants, co-designers, and co-creators
- Feature diverse artists as leaders and facilitators
- Create a safe, inclusive environment for creative expression
- Build new connections between neighbors
- Foster trust, fun, and resilience

Guidance for Proposals

Letters of Interest should describe the project concept and the intended audience, as well as an

explanation of how the project will create connection and belonging in the community. A budget estimate and draft project timeline are also required. LOIs that focus on planning for a future project that requires longer lead times or complex collaboration will be considered.

What We Don't Fund

- Capital costs and campaigns
- General Operating Support
- Performance ticket subsidies or scholarships that are not directly connected to community-building work
- Events and performances that do not have any components of audience or community participation
- Debt reduction or deficit funding
- Individuals (applicant should apply as part of a nonprofit organization, community group, municipality, or similar entity)
- Expenses that have already been incurred
- Programs with religious instruction
- Indirect expenses unrelated to the project such as fiscal sponsor fees, rent, or financing costs.

Who May Apply

Eligible applicants must be nonprofit organizations, municipalities, religious institutions, or public schools whose primary service area is in the state of Vermont. These might be arts organizations, libraries, museums, community centers, senior centers, youth programs, therapeutic programs, cultural organizations, or other entities. Projects without 501c3 status who have a fiscal sponsor are eligible.

We especially encourage LOIs from community-based organizations serving low-income youth, older adults, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ Vermonters, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

All applicants to programs at the Vermont Community Foundation must meet these guidelines.

Grant Size

Grants will be awarded up to \$12,000. We intend to fund a range of project types and sizes in communities across the state with an average grant size of \$7,500.

Deadline & Notification

LOIs will be **accepted between April 6 and May 11**. LOIs must be **received by 5PM on Monday, May 11** to be considered. Following a review of all LOIs received, a smaller number of

organizations will be invited to submit a full application for funding consideration.

Organizations will be **notified regarding the status of their LOI by May 18.**

You may view the full program guidelines online here.

Helpful Hints

- Character limits include spaces and punctuation.
- Be sure to save your work frequently by clicking the "Save" button at the bottom of the page as the system will log out after 90 minutes of inactivity.
- The size of text boxes can be adjusted by dragging on the lower right corner.
- Create a PDF version of your application via the "Application Packet" button at the top of the page. All content and attachments will be included.

All letters of interest must be submitted electronically to the Vermont Community Foundation through the LOI form in the Online Grants Manager, which can be accessed at www.vermontcf.org/OGM. LOIs will not be accepted by mail or email. If you have questions about the Online Grants Manager, please send an email to grants@vermontcf.org, or call Karen Scott (kscott@vermontcf.org) at 802-828-7893. With questions related to the Arts and Community Cohesion program, please contact Andy Barker at abarker@vermontcf.org or 802-995-2268.

Organizational Questions Part I

Please share the mission of the organization.*

Character Limit: 500

What is your organization's annual operating budget?*

Character Limit: 20

What status best describes the applicant?*

Our grants must be paid to a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, place of worship/religious group, or town/municipal agency. If your organization or group does not fall into one of these categories, you will need to use a fiscal sponsor. If you have questions, please contact 802-388-3355 opt 6, or email grants@vermontcf.org. We are happy to talk through your options.

Choices

Municipal entity (i.e., town, public school, or other municipal department or agency)

Registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit

Place of worship or religious group

Other - Please provide details in your answer to the next question.

Use this space to provide additional information about the applicant's status. (If Applicable)

If you have a fiscal sponsor—or if you operate under the umbrella of a larger registered nonprofit—provide their name below.

Character Limit: 200

LOI Questions

Project Name*

Character Limit: 100

Project Description*

Please provide a brief description of your project concept (2-4 sentences).

Character Limit: 1000

Who will be involved in this project, as lead artist(s), participants, and/or audience members?*

A general answer is acceptable.

Character Limit: 750

Geographic Area Served*

Where will your project happen? Provide town names and/or counties.

Character Limit: 250

Timeline*

When will this project be created and/or presented in the community? A general answer is acceptable. The grant term begins September 1, 2026.

Character Limit: 1000

Draft Project Budget*

Please outline the primary project expenses you anticipate. Revenue estimates are not needed.

Character Limit: 750

Optional: Additional information you would like to share about this project.

Character Limit: 500

Total Amount Requested*

Maximum grant amount: \$12,000

Character Limit: 20

Save and Submit

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By submitting your application to the Vermont Community Foundation, you give us permission to share your application and information about your project with other potential funders, both individuals and foundations.