

NYSCA Reserve Fund Grants 2026 Guidelines

Application Deadline: Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 5:00 PM ET

NYFA accepts applications submitted online at apply.nyfa.org/submit

The NYSCA Reserve Fund Grants (RFG) will provide grants to NYSCA-funded organizations to establish a reserve fund or build on an existing reserve fund.

Questions? Check out the [NYSCA Reserve Fund Grants homepage](#) for more information!

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The NYSCA Reserve Fund Grants (RFG) will provide grants to NYSCA-funded organizations to establish a reserve fund or build on an existing reserve fund.

Given the volatility of the industry, including increased costs, decreased philanthropy, and unpredictable income, we recognize that each organization has varying needs for annual stabilization support. The benefits of establishing or adding to a reserve fund include, but are not limited to: the ability to weather new challenges, cover unexpected expenses, strengthen balance sheets to leverage new funders, and can be a key factor in strategic planning and capacity building.

Conceived by the New York State Council of the Arts (NYSCA) and in partnership with the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), this program is open to nonprofit arts organizations based in New York State who have received direct funding from NYSCA in the last three years, and have a current operating budget between \$150,000 and \$3 million. Individual grant amounts will be awarded in accordance with the applying organization's operating budget, up to \$50,000. Organizations that choose to use grant funds to start a reserve fund and do not already have one at the time of applying are prioritized. Rural and BIPOC-led community-based organizations are strongly encouraged to apply.

In addition to providing support through direct funds, the RFG will offer one year of supplementary technical services focused on organizational sustainability and financial prudence. Each recipient will receive:

- One virtual workshop dedicated to organizational reserve funding and strategies to support long-term sustainability
- One hour long one-on-one consulting session
- Monthly office hours to field pressing questions in a communal setting

For the 2026 cycle, the NYSCA RFG will award a total of \$1,760,000 in grant funding. Like last year, we expect major demand for this program making the NYSCA RFG highly competitive. We encourage organizations to apply and to take advantage of NYFA's information sessions. Please review all eligibility requirements in the guidelines.

GRANT TIMELINE

Applications Open: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 10:00 AM ET

Applications Close: Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 5:00 PM ET*

Applicant Notifications: Fall 2026

****Please note that the application form on Submittable will automatically close & stop accepting applications at this time.***

WHO CAN APPLY

Applicants must:

- Be a nonprofit organization with a primary mission to support arts and culture, either incorporated in or registered to do business in New York State, with a location in New York State, and recognized as tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Code section as a 501(c)(3).
 - Organizations that are fiscally sponsored by another 501(c)(3) are ineligible for this opportunity, as are organizations embedded in non-arts 501(c)(3) organizations.
- Have a current operating budget between \$150,000 and \$3 million.
- Have received direct funding from NYSCA at least once in the past three years (FY24 - FY26).
- Have not received a NYSCA Reserve Fund Grant in the past. The NYSCA RFG is a one-time grant.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Funding Tiers

- **Applicants are eligible for a grant amount based on their organization's operating budget:**
 - Operating Budget \$150K - \$500K: awarded up to \$20K
 - Operating Budget \$500K - \$1M: awarded up to \$35K
 - Operating Budget \$1M - \$3M: awarded up to \$50K

What to Submit

- **Organization Contact Information**
- **Organization History and Narrative** (all narrative answers are 250 words max)
 - Organization Type
 - Mission (250 words max)
 - Organizational History
 - Programs and Activities
 - Audience and Community
 - Supporting Documentation (optional)
 - Option to upload any supporting documentation that shows your organization's projects and programs to date as a single, combined .pdf.
 - This can include annual reports, press clippings, news articles, newsletters, and/or testimonials.
- **Reserve Fund Information**
 - Please select whether you are **Starting** or **Building** a Reserve Fund:
 - If Starting a Reserve Fund:
 - Describe your organization's reserve goals, plans, and policies related to use and replenishment by answering the questions within this section.
 - If Building on an Existing Reserve Fund:
 - Upload your current reserve policy as a PDF, and describe your organization's reserve goals, plans, and policies related to use and replenishment by answering the questions within this section.
- **Financial & Organizational Materials**
 - Current Annual Operating Budget
 - Organization Chart
 - List of Board of Directors
 - Documentation of Non-Profit Status
 - Proof of NYSCA Funding (FY24 - FY26)

Reserve Fund Requirements

If awarded, grants are paid in two installments after meeting the following requirements:

- **80% will be released after a copy of the organization’s Reserve Policy has been submitted to and approved by NYFA.**
 - As the governing body with fiduciary oversight to ensure the financial sustainability of the nonprofit, the Board of Directors of the organization must adopt a Reserve Policy affirming their commitment to using the funds appropriately.
 - An approved Reserve Policy must be submitted to NYFA by Monday March 1, 2027.
- **20% will be released after a Final Report is submitted, ensuring that the funds were retained.**
 - The organization must submit documentation that demonstrates that the first installment of grant funds were retained, in full, in an interest bearing account for a minimum of 3 consecutive months within one year of being awarded.
 - Final Reports must be submitted within one year of the award notification date.

Supplementary technical support and guidance will be offered to all recipients to assist in the development of their cash reserve policy and to help ensure that these requirements are met.

NYFA regularly revisits its grant guidelines and eligibility requirements to improve clarity and accessibility and reduce unintentional bias. We invite feedback and suggestions that we can consider within the parameters of the program funder’s goals and NYFA’s required processes.

REVIEW PROCESS

Eligible applications undergo a three-round review and elimination process.

- **Rounds 1 & 2:** The panel will carefully review and score assigned applications independently. The highest scoring applications will move forward into the next round of review.
- **Round 3:** The panel will meet as a group and collectively discuss the applications that have made it into this round, and conclude by recommending the final grant recipients.

All applicants will be notified, regardless of the outcome, by Fall 2026.

Evaluation Criteria

Peer review panelists will assess eligible applications according to the following evaluation criteria:

1. Demonstration of Organization Need:

- The organization is at a pivotal stage where there is a clear need to establish or strengthen a reserve fund.
- The reserve fund aligns with the organization's immediate and long-term financial needs, supporting the broader goals of the organization's mission and strategic plan.
- The reserve fund is positioned as a critical component of the organization's future success and sustainability.

2. Community Impact:

- The organization actively serves and engages its community through arts and cultural programming that reflects its mission and the specific needs of its audience.
- The organization demonstrates a long-standing, active, and mutual connection with a local or artistic community.
- The organization plays a key role in the arts and cultural ecosystem, contributing meaningfully to the field and community.

3. Feasibility & Readiness:

- The organization shows strong financial management practices, demonstrating the capacity of its staff and board to manage and oversee the reserve fund effectively.
- The organization provides a clear and detailed strategy for the reserve fund's growth, use, and replenishment, with a focus on long-term financial health.
- The organization demonstrates how the reserve fund will enable it to expand its programs, reach new audiences, or increase services over time.

HOW TO APPLY

We only accept applications via [Submittable](#). First-time users will need to register with the free Submittable platform to access the application portal.

Applications for the 2026 program cycle will open on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 10:00 AM ET.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted, and no exceptions will be made. We strongly recommend that applicants complete their applications in advance of the deadline to avoid potential technical problems.

Applicants will receive an automatic response from Submittable once their application has been successfully received.

Info Sessions

Links to recorded information sessions and live info session registrations can be found on the [NYSCA Reserve Fund Grants homepage](#).

CONTACT

For questions, please reach out to apply@nyfa.org.