



We Still Dream a Future: Call for Downtown Activations & Exhibitions in 2026

APPLICATION OPENS: April 22, 2025

APPLICATION CLOSES: June 3, 2025

Grant Overview

The Seattle Office of Arts & Culture invites individual artists, cultural producers, arts administrators, creative workers, community groups, and arts and cultural organizations of all sizes to propose projects activating public spaces in Downtown Seattle in 2026.

With the unifying theme of *We Still Dream a Future*, this call invites arts proposals of two types:

- Exhibitions inside ARTS at King Street Station (KSS)
- Activations and installations at King Street Station Plaza, Union Station Plaza and other public spaces in the Chinatown-International District, Pioneer Square, and Stadium District

Grant funds **up to \$50,000** are available for creative worker wages and project expenses.

For information and assistance with the application, eligibility or online technical support, contact Kate Fernandez, Downtown Activations Supervisor, at 206-948-3059 or kate.fernandez@seattle.gov.

We have interpreters who can speak to you in your language, including American Sign Language (via video). Just call us and tell us what language you speak. Expect a short pause while we find an interpreter to join the call.

Unifying Theme

We Still Dream a Future is the marshaling of our collective imagination within and beyond our current circumstances, and despite the obstacles before us. It is the celebratory declaration of our communities that they are still here and will be for many years to come. In conversation with each other, we build upon the idea that our flourishing must be and is possible.

The arts are essential to creating what comes next. When we see what could be, hear it, touch it, experience it, then what we imagine becomes something more: Through art, all that is possible takes a step towards becoming real. *We Still Dream a Future*.

You are needed. Where does your work enter this conversation or diverge from it in important ways? A discussion of the future is also a discussion of our past and our present, of who we have been and who we might be. Is your work an exploration of identity? Do you reveal or reflect upon larger systems at work in our lives? Do you set forth visions of what lies just beyond the horizon of who we are? We can't yet see all that you imagine in responding to this theme. Show us what is possible.

Project Sites

Applicants are asked to develop a project proposal that speaks to the theme *We Still Dream a Future* with one of the following sites (and its conditions and restrictions) in mind.

ARTS at King Street Station Gallery

Timing: March – Dec. for exhibitions

Duration: 1-3 months for exhibitions

Location: indoor

Conditions + Restrictions: Housed in a historic train station, ARTS at King Street Station supports a 7,500-square-foot gallery and includes a studio for artists-in-residence. Additional [details about the ARTS at King Street Station facility](#) are available.

Funding: up to \$10,000

King Street Station Plaza + Union Station Plaza

Timing: year-round for installations and indoor activations, summer for outdoor plaza activations

Duration: ~3 months for installations; activations may be one-time or a reoccurring event

Location: outdoor + indoor

Conditions: King Street Station's north plaza features a 9,500-square-foot gravel area with some permanent planters in place. Union Station's north and east plazas are paved areas neighboring the C-ID light rail station. Installations at these sites may not use footings or attachments and must be fully reversible, returning these areas to pre-installation conditions. Outdoor activations and events may take place during May-Sep. Proposals for installations that can endure the elements, as well as indoor activations, are welcome year-round. Please refer to [KSS Facilities information](#) for more details about the interior space, including a list of tech equipment that can be provided free-of-charge by us for use in the gallery.

Funding: \$20,000-50,000

Chinatown-International District (C-ID), Pioneer Square, and Stadium District

Timing: June – Sep.

Duration: 3 months for installations, one-time or series for activations

Location: outdoor

Conditions: Sites in these neighborhoods may include parks, plazas, or other highly visible public locations, which may require you to acquire special permits. If selected, you are responsible for all aspects of event production.

Funding: \$20,000-50,000

Project Concept Examples

We encourage innovative ideas for engaging audiences outdoors or indoors, across various forms of media and structures. We invite ideas that push boundaries—whether you propose something entirely new or reimagine an existing project that aligns with the goals of this call. Below are examples of projects that may fit within this framework; however, funding is not limited to these examples as long as the proposed project meets the eligibility criteria. We look forward to seeing your fresh ideas!

- Performances of any genre (dance, music, cirque, puppetry, etc.)
- Cultural festivals, parades, block parties
- Walking and biking art tours
- Kinetic, interactive, lighting/projection installations
- Creative gathering spaces or other temporary installations
- Visual art, moving image media, interpretive exhibitions
- Salons, symposiums, convergence
- Markets with artist vendors

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Permits:** Depending on the size, scope and location of your event, there are a variety of [permits that may be required](#) to secure your location. You may seek guidance from our staff in determining what permits you need to complete your project and applying for those permits; however, please note that **receiving funding does not mean your project will automatically receive a permit for your desired location and dates**. You are also responsible for navigating approval of installations within the [historic districts](#) that would require a [certificate of approval](#) before installation.
- **Flexibility:** It is possible that your project plans may need to be adjusted slightly to accommodate location availability, traffic concerns, and to create a cohesive schedule of offerings. Additionally, as part of the panel award decision process, applicants may be asked to move or adjust their project's location in coordination with the greater programming efforts during periods with a high density of events and activities.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Our program staff will provide awardees with support in executing their projects. This support may include creating a detailed project budget, refining your project concept, identifying a

location and relevant permits, navigating insurance questions, developing partnership agreements, securing a Seattle Business License, and more.

Grant Purpose

Developed in partnership with [Mayor Bruce Harrell's Downtown Activation Plan](#), this call for proposals addresses key civic priorities by empowering creative workers to build community and spark new arts experiences downtown. By offering free, engaging programming throughout the year, especially during peak visitation periods, this initiative enriches the city's cultural landscape, providing inspiring experiences for residents and visitors alike.

This funding opportunity builds upon our ongoing artist- and community-led programming through [ARTS at King Street Station](#) and [Hope Corps](#). It expands on the Hope Corps framework, which fosters economic opportunity for Seattle's creative workforce, and aligns with ARTS at King Street Station's mission to increase opportunities for communities of color to create and present their work.

Beyond funding, awardees will benefit from a *Community of Practice*, a dynamic network offering regular workshops, social opportunities, and platforms to share their work and deepen their connections to Downtown Seattle and the arts ecosystem.

Application

Apply online through Submittable: <https://seattlearts.submittable.com/submit>.

If you don't have computer or internet access or would like to discuss alternative ways of applying, please contact program staff.

Due Date

Tuesday, June 3, 2025, 5:00 p.m. Pacific

Please allow ample time to complete your application. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

Eligibility

You are eligible to apply for funding if **you meet the following criteria**:

- You are an individual artist, organization, or community-based group located in, or presenting work regularly in, Seattle.

- Organizations and individual artists representing communities most impacted by systemic oppression including low-income, people with disabilities, immigrant and refugee communities, and communities of color are encouraged to apply.
- You have not received funding from us for a previous iteration of this proposed project within the last 3 years.
- You are not currently receiving Downtown Activation Plan-related funding from us for projects taking place in 2026.
- You may apply for more than one project type, for example, you may submit separate proposals for an exhibition at KSS and an activation outdoors. But you may not submit more than one proposal for an exhibition or an activation.

Your project must NOT:

- Directly sell materials or post prices (this is ONLY applicable to proposals for King Street Station and Union Station)
- Use ticket sales. All programs must be presented free of charge to the public.

Project Requirements

- Your project must occur between Jan. – Dec. 2026.
 - Exhibitions, indoor activations, and outdoor installations may take place year-round
 - Outdoor activations will predominantly occur between June – Sep.
- Your project and its associated public benefit must take place in Downtown Seattle within:
 - Chinatown-International District
 - Pioneer Square (including King Street Station + Union Station)
 - Stadium District
- Your project responds to the prompt: *We Still Dream a Future* (see the **Unifying Theme** section above).
- Your activation project must be promoted and made accessible to the general public – Seattle community members, workers, and visitors – to attend free of charge.
- You must ensure accessibility options for people who primarily speak languages other than English and people with disabilities, as applicable for your site and project.
- Your activation project may have a virtual component, but it must be *primarily* an in-person experience.
- If your activation project is a temporary art installation, it must be displayed for at least 3 months.

Funding

You may use the award funds for artist fees, marketing and promotional fees, project management and personnel costs, supplies, equipment rentals or other production-related costs, required insurance, and no more than 10% for food-related costs. Additional expenses may be allowed upon advance approval by the grant project manager.

The following are **not eligible for funding**:

- Permanent installations and mural projects
- Capital improvement projects
- Religious services
- Political events
- Fundraisers or private events
- Gifts
- For-profit or touring events/exhibitions

Please use the following framework as a guide for requesting funding amounts. These numbers are not requirements but should be used to help determine the scale of your project and your funding request.

EXHIBITION FUNDING

- **\$10,000** – 2-3 months of display, including 9-12 hours of public engagement in the ARTS at King Street Station gallery

ACTIVATION & INSTALLATION FUNDING

- **\$20,000-35,000 / Medium sized projects** – approximately 12-24 hours of public programming, supporting 3-6 creative workers
- **\$35,000-50,000 / Large sized projects** – approximately 28-40 hours of public programming, supporting 7-10 creative workers

We strive to fund selected projects at their requested funding amounts whenever possible. However, funding amounts for selected projects will be determined based on the peer review panel's evaluation and staff recommendation.

Information Sessions

Learn more about this grant and how to submit your best application.

Session 1 (Virtual)

Friday, April 25, 2025 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

[RSVP to 4/25](#)

Session 2 (Virtual)

Tuesday, May 13, 2025 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

[RSVP to 5/13](#)

Session 3 (Virtual)

Saturday, May 17, 2025 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

[RSVP to 5/17](#)

Session 4 (Virtual)

Thursday May 22, 2025 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

[RSVP to 5/22](#)

Evaluation Criteria

The Seattle Office of Arts & Culture is committed to reflecting the diversity and cultural richness of our city in the selection of artists and artworks. Artists will be selected by an independent peer review panel of artists, community representatives, and event producers who will evaluate applications in the following areas.

Advancing Equity (30%): Our mission focuses on racial equity and is dedicated to increasing opportunities for institutionally marginalized identities to generate and present their work. Your project directly represents the experiences of those featured in the work. Your proposal integrates plans to be accessible to people of many ages, dis/abilities, and languages.

Public Benefit (30%): Your proposal features new creative work to produce an event, experience or exhibition that is free and welcoming for visitors to enjoy, experience, or benefit from. Your project has the potential to draw community members and visitors to the chosen neighborhood and is thoughtfully developed with the site in mind.

Artistic/Cultural Contribution (20%): Your work samples and experience show an ability to successfully complete a compelling project. The project responds to the theme *We Still Dream a Future*, and uplifts stories, creatives, ancestors, and audiences from communities that represent Seattle's diversity.

Achievability (20%): You demonstrate the potential to complete the proposed project through relevant experience, capacity for growth, and/or with support from experienced partners or collaborators that will help you complete the project. Your proposal is technically and logistically feasible and the requested funding amount is appropriate for the project.

Selection

The selection panel will work with our staff to ensure that programming centers racial equity, represents and welcomes diverse communities, and showcases many creative disciplines. Panelists will review eligible applications according to the evaluation criteria to recommend applications for funding consideration. Panelists will also assess the thematic expression of individual projects and how they work together collectively within a curated framework and schedule.

Timeline

This timeline is subject to change.

- **June 3, 2025 (5 p.m. Pacific):** Application closes
- **Summer 2025:** An independent peer panel of artists, community representatives, and event producers will review applications according to the evaluation criteria. Recommendations for funding are reviewed by ARTS leadership.
- **September 2025:** Applicants are notified of funding decisions
- **October 2025:** Contracting with awardees
- **Jan. – Dec. 2026:** Exhibitions, installations, and activations take place downtown

Application Outline & Components

Please refer to the [Exhibitions Application document](#) or the [Activations Application document](#) for a complete listing of the application questions.

1. Eligibility
2. Applicant information and background
3. Narrative questions
4. Project logistics questions
5. Work samples: up to 2 media formats
6. Demographic information (optional)

Application To-Do

All funding programs are highly competitive. We encourage you to:

- **Read the guidelines**, check your eligibility and follow the instructions carefully.
- **Explore the online application early** so you can plan. Consider drafting application responses in a document outside of the online application form itself, so you don't risk losing any of your work and you keep a record for yourself.
- **Attend an information session** to receive guidance and hear other applicants' questions.

- **Talk with the project manager** about any questions or review your draft application as early as possible *before* the due date. Last-minute assistance to applicants is limited due to the volume of requests.
- **Be clear and concise in your application**, as panelists read and evaluate many applications. Panelists may not be familiar with you or your work, so be sure to provide essential information on who you are, your areas of expertise, or key accomplishments.
- **Submit your application before the due date** so you have time to deal with any potential technical issues.

Obligation of Award Recipients

If your project is selected for funding, you must meet the requirements listed below.

- **Acknowledgement:** Organizations and individuals receiving awards from the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture must acknowledge our support in printed materials, signage visible to the public, via social media, or in other ways appropriate to the project. We will supply preferred wording and logos in electronic format.
- **Seattle Business License Is Required for Payment:** Individuals and organizations awarded funds from Arts & Culture must have a [Seattle business license](#) prior to receiving any award payment. (The business license is NOT needed to apply for funds.)
- **Insurance:** Award recipients will be responsible for securing and providing proof of Liability Insurance for their project.
- **Taxes:** Award recipients are responsible for paying all applicable taxes. At the time of notification, awardees will need to complete appropriate paperwork and submit a current W-9.
- **Reporting:** We require awardees for all of our programs to evaluate and report on the impact of your awards (e.g. numbers of artists paid, audience information, experience working with our staff, etc.). This information will be collected after the project is complete, via a questionnaire included in the final payment request, supplied by us.
- **Community of Practice:** Participate in Community of Practice convenings and activities (workshops, community building), to take place throughout 2026.

Our Funding Policies

Commitment to Racial Equity

The Seattle Office of Arts & Culture commits to an anti-racist work practice that centers the creativity and leadership of people of color - those most impacted by structural racism - to move toward systems that benefit us all. We also acknowledge that we are on Indigenous land, the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

We envision a city of people whose success, safety and health are not pre-determined by their race. A city where all artists, performers, writers and creative workers have the freedom, agency and platform to share and amplify their stories, art, cultures and experiences. At the same time, we acknowledge that our actions - both conscious and unconscious, past and present - have benefited some communities while limiting opportunities and outcomes for communities of color. We work toward our vision by addressing and working to eliminate institutional racism in our programs, policies and practices.

In alignment with the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative, we seek new solutions that use arts as a strategy to drive not only our office, but the City as a whole toward racial equity and social justice. We will continue to break barriers and build arts-integrated tools that challenge the status quo and push us toward the inclusive society we envision.

If you have any questions about our commitment or would like to know more about the work we are doing, please call us at (206) 684-7171 or email at Arts.Culture@Seattle.gov.

Grant Appeal Process

You may appeal the recommendations of the independent community review panel. Appeals must be based solely on the information included in your original application.

Procedure:

- You must first contact the staff member responsible for the program to review the decision and hear a summary of the peer panel feedback: Kate Fernandez: kate.fernandez@seattle.gov, 206-948-3059.
- Your appeal must be sent in writing to the director of the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture within 30 days of formal notice of the decision.
- Our director consults with staff and/or members of the peer panel for input in making the final decision.
- If our director agrees that the award should have been given based on the merit of your original application, you will be awarded a grant.
- A rejection by our director is final and ends the appeal process.
- Our director will notify you of their final decision in writing.

Application materials are public information

Application materials submitted to the Office of Arts & Culture are governed by the Washington Public Records Act and may be subject to disclosure to a third-party requester. To learn more please see [Chapter 42.56 RCW](#) and the City's [Privacy Statement](#).

Discrimination is not allowed on City-funded projects

Applicants receiving funds from the Office of Arts & Culture must comply with Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 20.44, pertaining to prevention of discrimination in City contracts, and Chapter 5.44, pertaining to license requirements. The complete text of these City codes is available at the City Clerk's office and the Seattle Public Library.

Americans with Disabilities Act applies to City-funded projects

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law ensuring access to services and facilities for the differently-abled. The Office of Arts & Culture respects the needs of people with differing abilities and seeks to make available to applicants, participants and, all interested persons information regarding the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its applicability to the activities of our agency. For information about public meetings, accessibility, and auxiliary aids, please contact the Office of Arts & Culture at (206) 684-7171 (voice), or (800) 833-6388 (TDD Relay). This agency complies with all federal, state, and local laws that prohibit discrimination in employment and services.

Supports freedom of expression

The City believes a community that fosters freedom of speech and thought will advance as a society. Artists play an important role in reflecting and challenging the social concerns of the day. The strength of the United States as a nation rests in its tolerance of divergent opinions and ideas. Government support of the arts must similarly tolerate a spectrum of ideas and encourage freedom of thought.

For additional information about funding opportunities and the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, visit our website at www.seattle.gov/arts, and [subscribe to our email newsletter](#).