
LMCC

Creative Unrestricted

2027 PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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Grant Application Deadline: Thursday, November 12, 2026, at 6 P.M. EST

ABOUT THIS FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Creative Unrestricted is a Manhattan Arts Grants program that provides unrestricted funding to Manhattan-based individual artists, artist collectives, and small- to mid-sized arts organizations with annual operating budgets under \$250,000. The program is designed to strengthen long-term sustainability for artists and cultural organizations that play vital roles in local creative ecosystems.

The program welcomes applications from organizations and artists working within the performing arts field, including all cultural traditions and creative practices in dance, music, theater, and multidisciplinary performance. Funding is intended for artists and small arts organizations with sustained bodies of work who often fall between early stage project grants and the relatively small number of large scale institutional funding opportunities available in the field. Funds may be applied towards building organizational capacity, administrative infrastructure, or the broader conditions required to develop high-quality artistic work.

Creative Unrestricted funding is provided in part by the Howard Gilman Foundation and an anonymous foundation.

CREATIVE UNRESTRICTED AWARD AMOUNTS

Number of grants: 36 grants will be awarded.

Grant Period: January 1, 2027-December 31, 2028

Total grant amount: \$20,000 per awardee paid in two \$10,000 installments

- Installment #1 (\$10,000) paid out by June 30, 2027, supporting eligible 2027 expenses
- Installment #2 (\$10,000) paid out by June 30, 2028, supporting eligible 2028 expenses

More information about reporting requirements is available on page 6.

CREATIVE UNRESTRICTED APPLICATION TIMELINE

Applications open in Submittable	September 8, 2026
Applicant support available	September 8-November 12, 2026
Application deadline	November 12, 2026, at 6 P.M. EST
Deadline to provide edits, if requested	January 4, 2027
Panel review and Board approvals	January-March 2027
Notification of results	April 5, 2027
Feedback available for declined applicants	July 2027

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Review eligibility criteria to make sure this program is a good fit for your needs. If any of the requirements are confusing, please email creativeunrestricted@lmcc.net. We want you to feel clear, confident, and supported as you move through the process.

Preview the application questions [here](#). You can see what would be required of you before creating the application. We also have [FAQs](#) that provide guidance on all sections of the application.

- **Narrative questions:** The application provides suggested word counts to save you time in the editing process.
- **Artistic work samples:** You're required to submit one example of past work. A second sample is optional. The application accepts URLs or file uploads for audio, visual, text, and image formats. Let us know if you need help choosing or preparing your samples.
- **Project budget:** You'll need to provide information about expenses and any secured income. Submittable has a table to collect the numbers, so you don't need to create your own template.

Utilize applicant support resources early and often. The full range of options is listed [here](#). *Please be aware that if you don't seek help until the deadline on November 12th, we cannot guarantee the ability to troubleshoot your concern in time.*

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). LMCC allows applicants to use generative AI and other digital tools in preparing grant applications. Regardless of the tools used, applicants are responsible for ensuring that all information submitted is accurate, truthful, and appropriately represents the proposed work. Applicants should review and verify all application materials before submission and should not include fabricated information, statistics, citations, or other content they cannot independently verify.

The use or perceived use of AI should not influence a panelist's assessment of an application. Panelists may not upload, enter, or otherwise provide LMCC application materials or applicant information to external generative AI tools as part of the review process. More information about the assessment process and review criteria can be found on page 5-6.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

When you access the application, you will start with a basic eligibility quiz. Submittable will automatically move you to the rest of the application if your answers are eligible.

In the event of an award, the "grant recipient" is the individual, collective, or nonprofit organization that would sign the contract with LMCC, receive the funds, and hold responsibility for final reporting. LMCC pays the grant in full through ACH transfer directly to the grant recipient's bank account.

NONPROFIT GRANT RECIPIENTS MUST:

- be legally registered and have proof of address in Manhattan
- have proof of registration with the NYS Charities Bureau, in the form of a Bureau filing receipt dated within the last 24 months
- provide a copy of their 501(c)(3) IRS Determination Letter
- have a core artistic mission and/or history of performing arts programming
- provide a financial statement for the most recently completed fiscal year
- have an annual operating budget under \$250,000
- provide a projected FY2027 organizational budget

INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS AND COLLECTIVES MUST:

- have proof of address in Manhattan
- be 18 years of age at the time of submission
- not be enrolled in a full-time degree program
- complete a budget worksheet template spanning calendar year 2027 provided by LMCC
 - o Individuals submitting on behalf of a collective may upload the group's budget for calendar year 2027.

Individuals and collectives may be unincorporated, sole proprietors, LLCs, or S-Corps. They may opt to receive the funds directly or provide information in the application about their fiscal sponsor partner. Fiscal sponsors must be nonprofit organizations that are legally registered in New York City. A copy of the fiscal sponsorship contract or agreement must be provided.

LMCC's Artistic Programs team cannot offer tax advice, legal counsel, or financial planning. Before you apply, we suggest seeking a professional opinion about how an award could impact you.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Funds may be used at the recipient's discretion to support the affordability and sustainability of maintaining an artistic practice or small arts organization in Manhattan. General operating support uses include, but are not limited to:

- Staff salaries
- Artist/curatorial fees
- Project expenses
- Residential rental
- Healthcare
- Childcare
- Debt repayment
- Venue rental
- Equipment rental
- Marketing and outreach
- Accessibility services
- Technical support
- Materials and supplies

FUNDING CANNOT BE USED FOR:

- Capital improvements
- Building purchases
- Lobbying
- Political activities
- Scholarships or tuition assistance
- Cash prizes
- Fundraising events
- Religious worship services
- Activities completed before the grant period
- Expenses already reimbursed through another funding source

AFTER YOU SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

LMCC's Artistic Programs team reviews each application for the following:

- **Accessibility:** Do all of the documents, links, and work samples open or play as intended? Have passwords been provided?
- **Completion:** Is any important information or documentation missing that would render the application ineligible?
- **Project and funding source eligibility:** Does the application meet all required criteria?

If we have questions or concerns about materials in your application, we will email you no later than **December 18, 2026**. You will have until **January 4, 2027** to complete any requests. *If you do not hear from us during that time frame, your application was considered complete and ready to move forward.*

PANEL ASSESSMENT

Eligible applications are reviewed by panels whose members reflect expertise in the performing arts, breadth of backgrounds, and knowledge of Manhattan communities. They evaluate each application's alignment with the program criteria through independent assessments and group conversation. LMCC's Artistic Programs team facilitates the process, but does not participate in voting. Panelists are responsible for making the final recommendations as to which applications receive funding.

These criteria are not listed in order of priority; each is equally important. Please make sure your application materials, taken as a whole, address the following.

- **Artistic quality**, including the rigor, evolution, and commitment to the applicant's artistic practice over time. Panelists can easily appreciate the applicant's vision, cultural lineages, techniques, and craft in creating live performance work for the public.

- **Timeliness of support**, including how unrestricted funding would strengthen or sustain the applicant's organization or artistic practice. Panelists can easily recognize that this award will make a difference in the applicant's capacity, sustainment of practice through challenges, and career ambitions.
- **Community and field impact**, including the applicant's contribution to audiences, peers, and the cultural vitality of New York City. Panelists can easily perceive how the applicant is influencing the performance field now and into the future.

STATUS NOTIFICATIONS AND FEEDBACK

All applicants are notified of their status through the Submittable platform in April 2027.

Applicants who were not recommended for funding can seek feedback on their application. LMCC Artistic Programs team will deliver notes and comments from the panel and any relevant suggestions for creating a future application in July 2027.

IF AWARDED FUNDING

Grant recipients will receive a follow-up notification with the contract terms in April 2027. Contracts must be signed by **May 17, 2027**, without exception.

Upon mutual signature, receipt and verification of banking information, LMCC will remit **Installment #1** (\$10,000) via ACH transfer as quickly as possible before June 30, 2027. The funds may be applied to expenses incurred in calendar year 2027 at the grantee's discretion.

To receive **Installment #2**, grantees must schedule a brief interim conversation with the team. There are two options depending on the timing that best meets their needs:

- Between July and August 2027 to receive the funds before December 31, 2027
- Between January and February 2028 to receive the funds before June 30, 2028

All funds must be expended by December 31, 2028. A Final Report is due by August 31, 2029.

The 2027 grantee public announcement will take place in spring. We also host a community celebration of the grantees in the winter at the Manhattan Community Arts Breakfast.

SUBMITTABLE TIPS

LMCC's grant applications are hosted on the [Submittable platform](#). According to their website,

Submittable attained a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (or VPAT), affirming that their platform is accessible to a wide range of submitters with disabilities. Submittable's VPAT follows industry standards outlined in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

(WCAG) 2.0. WCAG is maintained by the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium). VPAT verifies that Submittable is accessible to a wide range of submitters with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity, and combinations of these. Submittable pages and forms are configured to be navigated using keyboard commands associated with a wide variety of browsers (Chrome, Safari, Firefox, Internet Explorer) and screen reader applications. Site pages and public-facing forms are built with ARIA labels, and the default settings for text, buttons, and hyperlinks follow WCAG guidelines for color contrast.

Once you have created an account, you will be able to complete the application. **Please connect the account to an email you check regularly.** LMCC staff will contact you with questions, follow-up requests, and official grant notifications through this portal.

Most people don't complete the whole application all at once. You can use the "Save Draft" button at the bottom of the form at any point and return to your work.

You will know that your submission was successful because you will receive a confirmation email. It will have a link to an optional survey about your experience. The survey is for us to learn about how the process went for you and how we can make it better. It is anonymous and fully separated from your application.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact creativeunrestricted@LMCC.net or call (212) 219-3138.