



2027 PROGRAM GUIDELINES

UMEZ Arts Engagement is administered by Lower Manhattan Cultural Council in partnership with the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation.

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

ABOUT THIS FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

UMEZ Arts Engagement is a grant program designed to support Upper Manhattan artists, arts groups, and arts nonprofit organizations in accessing Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) funds for presentations that enhance the diversity and frequency of cultural presentations in Upper Manhattan. **Upper Manhattan** is home to a remarkable concentration of artists and arts organizations, including one of the largest concentrations of culturally-specific groups in the country, and **is defined here as north of 98th Street on the east side of Fifth Avenue; and north of 110th Street on the west side**. Through UMEZ Arts Engagement, UMEZ invests in artists and cultural organizations as part of its long-term strategy to strengthen Upper Manhattan neighborhoods, expand access to arts and culture, and support the vitality of the community's creative economy.

UMEZ Arts Engagement invites proposals from artists and arts organizations of diverse disciplines, practices, cultural backgrounds, and career stages that are 1) based in Upper Manhattan and 2) presenting arts projects or programming in Upper Manhattan, making their work more widely available to the public. LMCC will provide funding to projects in the performing, literary, media, and visual arts, ranging from folk/traditional forms to contemporary and socially-engaged artistic practices. Supported activities include concerts, performances, public art installations, exhibitions, screenings, festivals, readings, and more. The program encourages artistic presentations that respond to the current needs of Upper Manhattan's local communities and amplify the cultural expressions of its diverse population.

LMCC encourages projects that are generated within and serve communities that may have limited access to art programs, services, or resources due to location, race, language, economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion and disability to apply. LMCC also highly encourages individuals and organizations whose work is rooted in the lived experience of Upper Manhattan's Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities to apply for funding.

UMEZ ARTS ENGAGEMENT AWARD AMOUNTS

You may request a grant amount between **\$1,000-\$20,000** that would allow you to pursue the project as planned. The budget template in the application will calculate expenses minus secured income, which should inform your grant amount decision. **We encourage you to select the real number that you need for your work.** While funding at the requested amount is not guaranteed, LMCC will fully fund as many projects as possible.

UMEZ ARTS ENGAGEMENT 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
Appeals Period	April 5-16, 2027
Feedback available for declined applicants	July 2027

We recommend that you apply with projects taking place between January and April 2027 if you can cover costs upfront and receive a reimbursement. Otherwise, we suggest applying for activities that take place after May 2027 when grant funds become available and we can play a role in promoting funded projects.

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 umae@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.

Figure out who would be the best “grant recipient” for your application. The grant recipient is the nonprofit organization or individual who would sign the contract with LMCC, receive the funds, and hold responsibility for final reporting.

- **Required documents:** Grant recipients must submit proof of address or residence in Manhattan. Nonprofit organizations must also provide proof of NYS Charities Bureau registration and incorporation status. More about this on pages 5-6.

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 pages 7-8.

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.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS MUST:

- be finished or complete works that will be promoted and presented to the public in Manhattan
- take place between January 1 and December 31, 2027
- guarantee a fee for participating professional artists, indicated in the project budget
- have at least one artist confirmed as a creative leader or significant contributor to the project

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS:

- do not offer presentations, exhibitions, performances, or experiences open to the public
- focus on arts education or training for people preparing for or pursuing careers as professional artists, rather than the creation and public presentation of artistic work
- focus on recreational, therapeutic, rehabilitative, religious, or social services, rather than the creation and public presentation of artistic work

FUNDING CANNOT BE USED FOR:

- general operating support or non-project related administrative expenses
- payment for facilities, purchase of capital equipment, or acquisition of works of art
- offering payments, fellowships, cash prizes, scholarships or other awards to students, non-professionals, or individuals under the age of 18
- lobbying expenses
- entertainment costs, such as opening parties, receptions, or fundraisers

PREVIOUS UMEZ ARTS ENGAGEMENT GRANTEES (ANY YEAR):

- must submit any outstanding final reports by January 31, 2027 to be considered eligible
- may be funded a maximum of three consecutive years, and then must skip one funding cycle
 - *If you received **UMEZ Arts Engagement** funding in 2024, 2025, and 2026, you may only apply to **Creative Engagement**, **Creative Learning**, or **Creative Unrestricted** in the 2027 funding cycle.*

FUNDING SOURCE ELIGIBILITY

This application serves two distinct grant programs: **UMEZ Arts Engagement** and **Creative Engagement**, each with its own eligibility requirements and funding partners. You only need to submit one application, and LMCC will determine which funding opportunities you are eligible for based on your responses.

This chart outlines the funding sources and their baseline eligibility rules for all applicants.

FUNDING SOURCES	Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ)	New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)	The Howard Gilman Foundation (HGF)	New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA)
ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES	All	All	Performing Arts <u>only</u>	All
GEOGRAPHIC REQUIREMENTS	Grant recipients must have proof of residency or address in <u>Upper</u> Manhattan; Community Districts 9, 10, 11, 12 Projects must take place in <u>Upper</u> Manhattan; Community Districts 9, 10, 11, 12	Grant recipients must have proof of residency or address in Manhattan Projects must take place in Manhattan	Grant recipients must have proof of residency or address in Manhattan Projects must take place in Manhattan	Grant recipients must have proof of residency or address in Manhattan Projects must take place in Manhattan

GRANT RECIPIENTS

In the event of an award, the “grant recipient” is the organization or individual who 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.

IMPORTANT: You cannot switch grant recipients after you submit the application. Who you choose determines your eligibility for each funding source. 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.

The charts on the next page provide each funding partner’s requirements. **You don’t need to memorize this information.** It’s provided here as a reference to help you choose the best option available to you. The application automatically tracks what’s needed for all sources.

ORGANIZATIONAL GRANT RECIPIENT OPTION	UMEZ	DCLA	HGF	NYSCA
NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS located in Upper Manhattan Must have a core artistic mission and/or history of arts programming. Cannot be NYC agencies or departments.	✓ Eligible Operating budgets under \$750K only; <u>Cannot receive funds directly from UMEZ</u> Must have 501(c)(3) IRS Determination Letter and Financial Statement	✓ Eligible Operating budgets under \$100K only; <u>Cannot receive funds directly from DCLA</u> Must have 501(c)(3) IRS Determination Letter and Financial Statement	✓ Eligible Operating budgets under \$250K only; <u>Cannot receive funds directly from HGF</u> Must have 501(c)(3) IRS Determination Letter and Financial Statement	✓ Eligible Operating budgets any size; <u>Cannot apply to or receive funds directly from NYSCA</u> Must have proof of NYS Charities Bureau Filing (Email) Receipt and Financial Statement

NOTE: Organizations with operating budgets above \$100,000 must submit a complete list of board and staff members and a projected organizational budget for the fiscal year in which the project takes place.

INDIVIDUAL GRANT RECIPIENT OPTION	UMEZ	DCLA	HGF	NYSCA
INDIVIDUALS located in Upper Manhattan with Fiscal Sponsor (FS) located in Manhattan	✓ Eligible Must have 501(c)(3) IRS Determination Letter and copy of Sponsorship Agreement *May use LMCC as fiscal sponsor if you don't have one, or don't have one in Manhattan	✓ Eligible Must have 501(c)(3) IRS Determination Letter and copy of Sponsorship Agreement	✓ Eligible Must have 501(c)(3) IRS Determination Letter and copy of Sponsorship Agreement	✓ Eligible Must have proof of NYS Charities Bureau Filing (Email) Receipt and copy of Sponsorship Agreement FS <u>cannot</u> apply to or receive funds directly from NYSCA

NOTE: Individuals must be 18 years of age at the time of submission and must not be enrolled in a full-time degree program. Individuals may apply on behalf of themselves or a collective. They may be unincorporated, sole proprietors, LLCs, or S-Corps.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

For the **UMEZ Arts Engagement** program, individuals and collectives must have a fiscal sponsor to receive funding. Those applicants who do not have a formal fiscal sponsorship may opt to use LMCC as their fiscal sponsor for the purposes of this grant. This choice can be indicated directly in the application. Fiscally sponsored applicants will provide nonprofit documentation about the fiscal sponsor, and a copy of the fiscal sponsorship agreement.

AFTER YOU SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

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

- **Accessibility:** Do all 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 a variety of artistic genres, breadth of backgrounds, and knowledge of Upper 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 goals:** Applicant effectively expressed the artistic intentions, creative process, and ambitions of the project. Panelists can easily imagine what the public might experience and understand why the work is important to the creative team.
- **Community impact:** Applicant clearly identifies the intended audience or public for the project and presents a thoughtful and realistic plan for reaching and engaging that audience. Panelists can easily understand why the project will be meaningful and relevant to those it is intended to serve.

- **Viability:** Applicant effectively expressed a clear plan to bring the work to the public. Panelists have confidence in the timeline, budget, and creative team's experience to achieve their ideas.

LMCC's Artistic Programs team determines award amounts and seeks final approval from LMCC's Board and funding partners in March 2027. ***The goal is to fund as many applicants as possible at their full request amount.***

STATUS NOTIFICATIONS, APPEALS, AND FEEDBACK

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

Applicants who were not recommended for funding may appeal decisions in writing within ten (10) days of funding notifications should they believe an error in the review of their application has taken place, effectively arguing the case for appeal based on the criteria below. Dissatisfaction with either an unfavorable decision or the recommended level of support is not grounds for appeal.

Grounds for appeal are limited to the following:

- **Misrepresentation of information:** an applicant's information was improperly presented by the LMCC staff in a way that may have adversely affected the review process
- **Non-presentation of information:** the applicant's information was not presented by the LMCC staff as part of the jury's decision-making process
- **Improper panel procedure:** conflict of interest or biased decision

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 final award amount and contract terms in April. Upon mutual signature, receipt and verification of banking information, LMCC will remit grant payments via ACH transfer as quickly as possible. The distribution timing is subject to LMCC's receipt of all funds from our funding partners. Contracts must be signed by **May 17, 2027**, without exception.

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.

Grant recipients must complete a Final Report in Submittable within 30 days of their public event. More information about managing an award can be found [here](#).

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 umae@lmcc.net or call (212) 219-3138.