**Marion Cultural Alliance**

**2025-2026 Cultural Grant Program Guidelines**

***Important! Read these guidelines carefully.***

**Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA) will award up to $30,000 for the 2025-2026 funding cycle.**

**THESE GRANTS SUPPORT SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND DOES NOT PROVIDE GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT**

**About MCA’s Cultural Grant Program**

Marion Cultural Alliance Cultural Grant Program was established in 2001 to support funding for projects and programming that:

* Increase access to and participation in arts and culture, history, heritage, or science programming in our community
* Act as a catalyst for positive change through arts and culture
* Since its founding in 2001, the amount granted will reach $613,000 for cultural grants to 45 arts organizations. This amount includes two rounds of funding by the National Endowment for the Arts of $40,000 and $30,000 respectively.

**IMPORTANT REMINDERS**

* The nonprofit ***must*** have a **Unique Entity ID (UEI)** through the Federal Government to receive funding from MCA. Applicants cannot receive a MCA Grant unless they provide a valid UEI. [About the UEI](https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/technology-transformation-services/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-id-is-here)

How to Apply for a UEI video [(336) Get a Unique Entity ID - YouTube](file:///C:\Users\trish\Downloads\(336)%20Get%20a%20Unique%20Entity%20ID%20-%20YouTube)

**(Applicants are not required to complete the full SAM registration to obtain a UEI)**

* ***Caution: do not wait until the grant deadline to register with SAM.gov to receive your Unique Entity ID.***
* The maximum award for successful applicants is $7,500/the minimum $1,000.
* Due to a change in funding cycles, MCA will not have the match from NEA for this cycle, however will apply for the dollar-for-dollar match for the 2026-2027 cycle.
* It is suggested to prepare responses to the narrative section in a word document, then transfer to the online application.

**Calendar and Process**

* + Application portal opens: May 5, 2025 mcaocala.org/mca-cultural-grant
  + Projects and eligible expenses must fall between: September 1, 2025-June 30, 2026
  + Courtesy Review by MCA Grant Chair: May 5-June 30, 2025
  + Application Deadline: July 18, 2025
  + Grant Committee Scoring: Week of August 4, 2025
  + Grant Funding Recommendation Presented to the Executive Committee-August 21, 2025
  + Grant Funding Recommendation Presented to MCA Board of Directors-August 27, 2025
  + Notice to Organizations funded/not funded: August 29, 2025
  + Organizations may begin execution of grant: September 1, 2025
  + Distribution of checks: November 15, 2025, at Applaud the Arts, Appleton Museum. Each awardee will receive *one* complementary ticket. Additional tickets are available for purchase.
  + Final report due within 30 days of completed grant activity (MCA will provide the template)

**GRANT AMOUNTS AND FUNDING CYCLE:**

* Grant awards may range from $1,000-$7,500. However, the grant amount requested may not exceed 50% of the total program or project costs.
* These grants support **specific projects** and do not provide general support
* The grant project *start and end* dates must fall within the period of September 1, 2025-June 30, 2026 during which grant related expenses may be spent
* Funding is competitive, it is possible that not all projects of merit will be funded
* MCA funds may be used to support eligible project related activities within the grant period
  + Applicants will be notified if they include ineligible expenses in their project/application

**ELIGIBILTY AND REQUIREMENTS**

**ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY**

Marion County arts and culture, history, heritage, and science nonprofit organizations **ARE** eligible to apply.

Projects/Programming based in arts and culture, science, or history that *take place* in Marion County and are open to the public. Exhibits, performances, festivals, arts education, outreach programs, and art-based community development are examples of typical projects*. It is recommended that professional artists or arts administrators be involved in the planning and execution of each project.* For arts education programming, teachers must have an arts background. Administrative costs can be included up to 15% of the project budget. MCA *cannot*support general operating expenses.

* Applicant organization must have a current 501(c)3 status for a minimum of *two* years as of the grant deadline, in good standing with the State of Florida Division of Corporations and IRS. MCA will verify the organization’s current 501(c)3 status.
  + The applicant must document they are one of the following:
    - A public agency governed by a county, municipality, school district, institutions of higher education, or an agency of state government
    - A not-for-profit, tax-exempt Florida corporation incorporated or authorized as a not-for-profit corporation, in good standing, pursuant to Chapter 617, Florida Statute. (Some private schools may be determined to be not-for-profits under Chapter 623, Florida Statute.
    - Designated as a tax-exempt organization as defined in Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Exemption must be issued in the name of the applicant organization.
    - Federally recognized Indian tribal governments
* The applicant must be in Marion County *or* the grant project must occur in Marion County.
* The nonprofit must have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) through the Federal Government to receive funding from MCA. To learn more about getting a UEI, <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/technology-transformation-services/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-id-is-here> *Caution: do not wait until the grant deadline to register with SAM.gov to receive your Unique Entity ID.*
* Organizations must submit prior two years’ budget
* The organization must have Arts and Culture, History, Heritage, Arts Education, or Science as the primary mission
* Local governing board that meets at least quarterly and operates under a set of bylaws
* An organization may submit only one cultural grant application each year
* The applicant organization must have established policies and procedures which address accessibility and the organization must provide equal access and opportunity in employment and services and may not discriminate on the based-on race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, ancestry, national origin, geography, age, varying disabilities, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, familial status, citizenship status, or socioeconomic status.
* Projects that may impact a historic property; and/or take place outdoors may be subject to additional staff review to ensure compliance with the State or Federal Historic Preservation Act or Environmental Policy Act. PLEASE CONTACT MCA’s executive director with any project concept that may fall under this provision for further instructions.
* No grant application or related materials will be accepted unless submitted before or on July 18, 2025
* Any publicity or publications related to programs or projects funded by MCA shall include the MCA Supported logo and/or the following statement: *Sponsored in part by the Marion Cultural Alliance*
* Applicant organizations must comply and be in good standing with any previously funded MCA grant
* All grantees **must submit a final report** that documents demographics served, program excellence and success to the Marion Cultural Alliance no later than 30 days after the completion of the grant.
* Four electronic images depicting the grant program activity and electronic documentation of credit line and MCA usage must be submitted with this report. Organizations must meet this final report requirement to be considered for future funding.

**ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILTY RESTRICTIONS-**Organizations are **NOT** eligible if they are:

* Other designated Local Arts Agencies
* Fraternal or sports organizations
* Political causes, candidates, organizations, or campaigns
* Media Companies
* Fiscal agents
* Organizations that are adjuncts to for-profits organizations
  + “Friends of organizations” are eligible to apply only in lieu of the parent nonprofit organization

In all cases, final eligibility decisions are made by the MCA Cultural Grants Committee and MCA’s Board of Directors. Approval of a previous project grant funding carries no assurance of continued funding in subsequent years.

**PROGRAMMING ELIGIBILITY**

The proposed project/programming eligibility must be arts, cultural, sciences, history, or heritage and occur in Marion County and open to the public. Examples include performances, festivals, arts education, and the commissioning of new works.

**Grant dollars cannot be** **used for any of the restricted activities:**

* Capital expenditures (including acquisitions or equipment), or any building renovation, or remodeling of facilities
* Deficit reductions, bad debts, contingencies, fines and penalties, interest payments, litigation costs, or any other comparable financial costs
* Contributions to reserves and/or endowment funds
* Lobbying or attempting to influence federal, state, or local legislation
* Fundraising events, activities, and related expenses (example: benefits, dinners, sporting events)
* Awards, prizes, or scholarships for use outside the applicant’s programming
* Tuition for academic study
* Food or beverage for hospitality or entertainment functions
* Regranting, contributions, or donations
* Projects benefits for-profit organizations
* Private events closed to the public and activities restricted to an organization’s membership
* Excessive administrative costs (15% max allowed for internal salaries, costs related to owned venue)
* Projects in the following areas: beauty pageants, cosmetology, face painting, karaoke, magic shows, mineralogy, gemology, quiz bowls, pyrotechnics
* Projects of a religious nature designed to promote or inhibit religious belief and/or practice and that have no basic underlying secular them or topics

**OTHER NOTES**

* Do not wait until the last minute to begin your grant application. Leave extra time in case of questions or computer issues. Missing fields or required documents will prevent the submission of the grant to the committee.
* Make sure to save the link to your application before closing the window.

A screenshot of a computer

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

* Do not wait until the last minute to secure your organization’s UEI number
* Contact and programming information for all grantees will be made available to the press, and MCA may use quotes or pictures from applications or reports publicly.
* MCA’s Grant workshop may be viewed on MCA’s You Tube posted 5 days following the May 7, 2025 workshop
* Contact for application questions or technical support: [jayebaillie@mcaocala.org](mailto:jayebaillie@mcaocala.org)

**EVALUATION AND DECISION PROCESS**

The Cultural Grants Committee will evaluate applicants based on the following criteria:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Definition** | **Score Impact** |  |
| [Artistic Excellence](https://www.arts.gov/grants/grants-for-arts-projects/review-criteria) | Quality of the artists, organizations, arts education providers, works of art, and/or services that the applicant will involve. | 30 Points |  |
|  | Innovation and creativity in programming and artist selection |  |  |
| [Artistic Merit](https://www.arts.gov/grants/grants-for-arts-projects/review-criteria)  *Community Outreach and Impact* | Importance and appropriateness of the goals to the organization’s mission, artistic field, artists, audience, community, and/or constituency. | 40 Points  30 Points |  |
|  | |  | | --- | | Fiscal Responsibility – the appropriateness of the budget (the clear and realistic presentation of the proposed budget during the grant period); demonstrated evidence of strong and/ or developing financial support from the community. | | Exhibited diverse programming that is reflective of the community.  Commitment.  Organization’s programming, facilities, related materials, and communications demonstrate full compliance with accessibility rights and Equal Protection rights as set forth in the United States Constitution. | |  | | Ability to carry out the operation’s work and mission based on such  factors, the quality and clarity of the activities and goals, the resources involved, and the qualifications of the organization’s personnel. | | Adoption and commitment to best practices in board governance  (term limits, separation of power, recruitment efforts, approving financial statements, adherence to bylaws). | | Appropriateness of proposed performance measurements. This includes where relevant, measures to assess student and/or teacher  learning in arts education. | |  |  |
|  | Potential to serve and/or reach individuals whose opportunities to  experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability, as applicable (increasing access to the arts)   |  | | --- | | Strength and impact of arts and culture-based partnerships and cross-sector collaborations (partnerships with organizations outside of the arts and culture sector). | | As applicable, engagement with the following constituencies:  • Historically Black Colleges and Universities,  • Tribal Colleges and Universities,  • American Indian and Alaska Native tribes,  • African American Serving Institutions,  • Hispanic Serving Institutions,  • Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and  • Organizations that support the independence and lifelong inclusion of people with disabilities. | |  |  |

**FUNDING DECISION PROCESS**

* Staff Review/due diligence: Staff may contact applicants for additonal materials (only the most critical information). Please watch for an email or call before the end of July
* Committee Review: Applications are reviewed and scored by the committee (using the rubric above). Scores are averaged, and written comments may be formulated. Funding recommendations are determined by the committee’s scores and available funding
* Applicants may receive feedback on their applications
* Board Approval: Committee recommendations are approved by MCA’s Executive Committee and Board of Directors
* Notification: The applicant’s CEO and Chair will receive their grant notification letter via email by the end of August
* Award: MCA makes a formal check presentation to grant recipients during the annual Applaud the Arts. Should funds be needed prior to the November event, coordination should be made with MCA. However, no project may start before September 1, 2025.

**AWARDED GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS (during the grant period)**

* *Request Permission for Changes:* Significant programming or budget changes must be requested in advance; changes may or may not affect the grant award amount. Grant funds that are not used by June 2, 2026 must be returned to Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA).
* *Notification:*Grantees must keep [jaye.baillie@mcaocala.org](mailto:jaye.baillie@mcaocala.org) on their email list, renew required insurance policies when they expire, and notify MCA of any contact changes or changes in IRS tax-exempt status. MCA will add grantees to its email list, including resources and grant opportunities. Grantees must provide information on planned events, programming, etc. to allow MCA to promote through its social media channels. MCA should receive an invitation, a minimum of two weeks prior, to view the grant program activity
* *Inclusion:* Grantees must provide equal access and opportunity in employment and services and may not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, ancestry, national origin, geography, age, varying disabilities, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, familial status, citizenship status, or socioeconomic status. The make-up of the staff, board, audience, volunteers, artists, scientists, historians, and other decision makers involved with the grantee organization should be inclusive of the diversity of the community and compatible with the organization’s mission.
* *Acknowledgement:* Grantees must acknowledge the grant in all publicity and materials using the MCA logo provided and/or verbiage like: Supported in part by a grant from Marion Cultural Alliance. MCA may publicize the grant using photographs from applications and reports.
* *Recordkeeping:*Grantees must keep information (including description and photos of the funded programming, press or publicity about the programming, including use of logos or acknowledgement statement and financial records for the final report for five years)
* *Data Collection:*Organizations must collect information on the number of attendees, survey of audience participants, demographics, and/or basic field observations of program participants such as tickets sold or counting the number of audience members. Zip code collection is encouraged as well.
* *Final Report:*An online form will be provided with the award agreement to document program excellence and success. A brief narrative, statistics/demographics, proof of acknowledgement of MCA, and four photographs (high resolution).This report is due within 30 days of the completion of the grant activities.

Grant Adminstrator: Jaye Baillie, APR

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