

2027 General Operating Support and Program Support I & II Grants

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

DECLARATION OF INTENT DUE:

August 11, 2026

APPLICATION DUE:

September 15, 2026

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Introduction

The Arts Institute of Middlesex County (AIMC) is committed to the vision that all residents of Middlesex County can access and participate in arts, history, folklife and culture that enrich their lives. One of the many ways it advances and revitalizes this mission is by developing and funding art, history, folklife and cultural programs that serve the residents of Middlesex County. By working in conjunction with municipalities and local nonprofit art and history organizations, AIMC delivers quality programming to the residents of Middlesex County.

Funding for these grants is made possible by the Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners. Middlesex County funding partners are the New Jersey Department of State - New Jersey Historical Commission and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

These guidelines are for General Operating Support Grants and Program Support I & II Grants. Middlesex County also offers Historic Preservation Grants and Capital Grants.

Grant Application Website: <https://middlesex.smapply.io/>

GRANT	GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT (GOS) \$10,000 – \$35,000	PROGRAM SUPPORT I \$5,001 – \$30,000	PROGRAM SUPPORT II \$1,000 – \$5,000
DESCRIPTION	<i>Two-Year</i> funding for existing nonprofits to ensure operating and administrative capacity. This ensures their ability to deliver programming.	Annual funding for existing nonprofits to deliver specific programming.	Annual funding for existing nonprofits to deliver specific programming.

General Operating Support (GOS)

GRANT REQUEST SIZE	CASH MATCH
\$10,000-\$35,000	Grant request cannot be more than 25% of operating budget

Program Support I

GRANT REQUEST SIZE	CASH MATCH
\$5,001-\$30,000	20% of the grant request.

Program Support II

GRANT REQUEST SIZE	CASH MATCH
\$1,000-\$5,000	15% of the grant request.

Key Dates

GRANT PERIOD	January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027
GRANT WRITING WORKSHOPS	June 23, July 9, July 30, August 5 – VIRTUAL Register on the Grants Homepage
DECLARATION OF INTENT DUE	August 11, 2026
APPLICATION DUE	September 15, 2026
INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL MEETS	October 2026
GRANTS AWARDED	January 2027
REPORTS DUE	Final Reports are due within 30 days of the end of your grant-funded project, or by January 15, 2028

Applicant Eligibility

Am I Eligible?

To be considered eligible for General Operating Support Grants and Program Grants, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Applicants must be a municipal agency or a nonprofit entity based in Middlesex County and recognized by the State of New Jersey, with IRS tax exemption as a 501c3 or 501c4 organization.
- Facility and grant-funded activities must take place within Middlesex County.
- All programming must be open to the public and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- Previous grantees must be in “good standing” with the AIMC, complying with all requirements of the grant contract.
- Organizations operating with a fiscal sponsorship agreement may apply, provided that the nonprofit sponsor is based in New Jersey and in good standing with the IRS. These will be considered on an annual case-by-case basis.

See individual grant categories for additional details.

Funding Priorities

- Increase participation in arts, culture, folklife, and history by eliminating/reducing barriers such as cost, awareness, and accessibility for populations who disproportionately face these barriers, including seniors, residents of color, low-income residents, people with disabilities, and students who lack robust cultural programming in their schools.
- Engage neighborhood and community partners to specifically target outreach and services.
- Advance the role that high-quality arts, culture, folklife, and history resources play as essential pillars for healthy communities by demonstrating positive community outcomes in areas such as wellness, economic development, education, career preparedness, and pride of place.

Available Grants

Please be sure to read the guidelines for each grant to which you are applying. Requirements vary based on whether your application focuses on arts or history.

General Operating Support (GOS)

A two-year General Operating Support Grant provides funding to established Middlesex County nonprofits that deliver arts and history programming to Middlesex County residents as a part of their primary mission. This support ensures that the established institutions have the operating and administrative funding needed to sustain valuable programs. GOS grants are awarded with a two-year commitment, subject to contract stipulations and available funds.

Applicant organizations must be at least five years old. Municipal or state agencies are not eligible for general operating support.

Grants are available in two different categories: Arts or History. Restrictions vary based on the type of grant being requested. General restrictions for all grant types follow, and specific restrictions limited to each type are listed under the appropriate category.

Restrictions (GOS)

An organization may apply for only one General Operating Support Grant per cycle. A General Operating Support Grant is combinable with a Historic Preservation Grant or Capital Grant, but an applicant may not apply for more than two grants in one cycle.

General Operating Support (GOS)

Additionally, grant money may not be used for any of the following:

GENERAL - ALL	ARTS	HISTORY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that utilized Artwork using artificial intelligence • Equipment or items with a life of 3 years or more • Maintenance, restoration, or renovation (see Historic Preservation & Capital Grants) • Deficits or losses from other events or projects • Any project or part of a project that is already completed • Fundraisers • Research when there is not an obvious public benefit • Paying individuals under age 18 • Scholarships & awards • Fellowships • Food and hospitality • Fireworks • Subgranting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of artwork • Out-of-state-travel • Student dance or music recitals • Projects with private arts studios or commercial entities • Martial arts or sporting events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coloring books, cook books or calendars • Construction, erection or restoration of monuments, preservation of gravestones, commemorative plaques • Re-enactors • Purchase of historic artifacts or replicas • Digitization of historic material already digitized and available to the public • Non-New Jersey History topics • Oral history projects without transcription

Program Support I & II

What is a Program?

A program is narrowly focused and must have a definite goal or theme. A program may be an annual event or an integrated series of events with a common theme, but there must be a specific start and end date. A program can include projects, such as research or a publication, and include professional or artistic services specifically associated with the project, such as a docent or archivist.

Program Support I & II Grants provide annual funding to municipal and nonprofit organizations for the delivery of specific projects and programs for Middlesex County residents. They support the program-specific costs and administrative support required to deliver those programs.

Organizations do not need to have arts, culture, or history as their primary mission, but they must have a strong record of producing arts, cultural, or history-focused programs. Applicants may also partner with an institution or engage an artist or professional who has a strong background in the arts, culture, or history.

Applicants can select **Program Support I Grant** or **Program Support II Grant** for Arts Programming, History Programming or a combination of both Arts & History Programming.

Program Support I & II

Restrictions (PS I & II)

An organization may apply for only one Program Support Grant per cycle. A Program Support Grant is combinable with a Historic Preservation Grant or Capital Grant. An applicant may not apply for more than two grants in one cycle. Organizations that have never previously received grant funding from Middlesex County may request up to \$10,000 maximum in their program Grant application.

Colleges, Universities, and Other Educational and Religious Institutions

Per guidelines from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, educational or religious institutions are eligible, provided:

- the project or program is marketed to and open to the general public.
- the project or program is supplemental to any curriculum and separate from any religious observance.
- neither the grant nor the matching funds are used to pay salaries of faculty or members of the clergy.

GENERAL - ALL	ARTS	HISTORY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that utilize artwork generated using Artificial Intelligence • Payment to board members • Equipment or items with a life of 3 years or more • Maintenance, restoration, construction or renovation (see Historic Preservation & Capital Grant) • Deficits or losses from other events or projects • Any project or part of a project that is already completed • Fundraisers • Research when there is not an obvious public benefit • Paying individuals under age 18 • Scholarships & awards • Fellowships • Food and hospitality • Indirect Costs • Fireworks • Subgranting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of artwork • Out-of-state-travel • Student dance or music recitals • Projects with private studios or commercial entities • Martial arts or sporting events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coloring books, cook books or calendars • Construction, erection or restoration of monuments, preservation of gravestones, commemorative plaques or statues • Re-enactors • Purchase of historic artifacts or replicas • Digitization of historic material already digitized and available to the public • Non-New Jersey History topics • Oral history projects without transcription

Application Process: GOS, Program I & II

The application process is a multi-step one. The following will guide you through the necessary steps to ensure that you and your organization submit a strong application.

Mandatory Workshops

All grantees are required to attend one technical assistance workshop during the grant cycle (January 1, 2027 through December 31, 2027). These sessions are free of charge but require registration in advance. AIMC offers a variety of technical assistance workshops each year in topics such as nonprofit management, fundraising, marketing and social media, strategic planning, emergency planning, ADA compliance, and more. Sign up for the AIMC email list to stay up-to-date on workshops offerings by visiting: <https://discovermiddlesex.com/arts-institute/>

Grant Application Process

- 01** Organization Submits Declaration of Intent
- 02** Division Staff Determine Eligibility
- 03** Organization Submits Application
- 04** Division Staff Review Applications/Completeness Check
- 05** Independent Panel Review
- 06** Arts & History Committee Review
- 07** Board of County Commissioners Approve
- 08** Middlesex County and Grantee Sign Grant Contracts
- 09** On-Site Evaluation
- 10** Grantee Submits Final Report

Declaration of Intent (DOI) - Due on August 11, 2026

Before completing a full application, each organization must fill out a *Declaration of Intent* (DOI) through the online grant portal, **Survey Monkey Apply**. A DOI provides AIMC with basic information about your organization and a brief description of why you are requesting funding.

Before filling out a DOI, please have essential information about your organization on hand: contact information, federal ID number, IRS Letter of Determination, Certificate of Incorporation, NJ Charities Registration number and status, independent certified financial audit/reviews for the last two fiscal years for GOS applicants, the most recently filed Form 990, budgetary information, plus a brief description of why you are requesting grant funding.

Organization Submits Application - Due on September 15, 2026

After your DOI is approved, your organization will gain access to the full application through the online grant portal.

A general application contains the following basic information:

- Organization Contact Information
- Organization History & Mission Statement
- Budget Information
- Audience Statistics
- Narrative Questions
 - ◆ Includes programmatic history, detailed project description, goals, community benefit, marketing plan, and professionals/artists engaged
- ADA Compliance Questionnaire
- Board Governance List
- DataArts Funder's Report
- Strategic and ADA Plans for GOS applicants
- Additional Supporting Materials (see next page for examples)

Before You Begin

General Operating Support Grants are divided into two options: **Arts** or **History**. Program Support Grants are divided into three options: **Arts**, **History**, and **Arts and History**. When applying for a grant, you will choose **one** of these options.

Basic general information will be pre-filled according to the information you provided on your DOI. (Please do not alter this information unless it has changed.)

Supporting Materials

At the end of the application, you will be asked to attach supporting materials. Supporting materials should showcase activities and programs that your institution has undertaken within the past two years. Materials need not be professionally produced but will serve as a representation of your organization’s work.

Required supporting materials vary based on the type of grant for which you are applying, and include:

GOS	PROGRAM I & II
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board List • Resumes of key personnel • Selected bios of artists or professionals (Limit 10) • Additional supporting materials (Limit 5) • Certificate of Incorporation • IRS Nonprofit status letter • IRS Form 990 • Independently certified financial audit for the most recently completed two fiscal years • Strategic Plan • ADA Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board List • Resumes of key personnel • Selected bios of artists or professionals (Limit 10) • Additional supporting materials (Limit 5) • Certificate of Incorporation • IRS Nonprofit status letter • IRS Form 990 or Independently certified financial audit for the most recently completed fiscal year • Statement of Financial Activity (Income & Expense Statement; P & L)

Additional supporting materials may include digital images, audio files, video clips, flyers, newspaper articles, or any other documents showcasing the artistic and/or historical merit of your organization.

Ready to Get Started?

Gather your organizational documents, project information, and supporting materials and begin filling out your Declaration of Intent at: <https://middlesex.smapply.io/>

The completed DOI application is due by **August 11, 2026 at 11:59 PM**. No DOI applications submitted after this date will be considered for grant funding

NO HARD COPIES OF THE APPLICATION WILL BE ACCEPTED.

If you are a returning applicant, please maintain the same account and login. If you are a new applicant, click “sign-up” to register. Check your e-mail and confirm registration before beginning a new application. If your organization is determined eligible for the grant application, you will receive an email and the full application will open up for you.

The full application is due **September 15, 2026 at 11:59 PM**.

Review Process

Division Staff Review Applications For Completeness

AIMC will begin reviewing grant applications on September 16, 2026.

Independent Panel Review

A panel of independent professionals with expertise in the fields of arts and/or history will evaluate your organization's proposal.

The panelists will rank applications with the following criteria in mind:

- Public benefit of the project - fulfills a need in the community
- Artistic and/or historical merit and excellence
- Organizational capacity to complete the project: budgetary and administrative
- Professional project planning and supporting materials
- ADA Compliance
- Evidence of strong past performance
- A record of "Good Standing" if a previous grantee
- Leveraging of County initiatives

Arts & History Committee Review

The Arts & History Committee will review panel recommendations and forward the recommendations to the Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners for their final approval.

Board of County Commissioners Grant Approval

Grants are approved at a scheduled meeting of the Board of County Commissioners.

- Grant awards are announced in January/February 2027.
- Grantees are not guaranteed the amount requested in their applications.

Middlesex County and Grantee Sign Grant Contracts

- Award letters will be mailed to organizations with a copy of the panel's comments/stipulations, which will be incorporated into the grant contract.
- Contracts will be e-mailed to organizations and must be signed electronically through DocuSign.
- Organizations whose grant award varies more than 50% from the grant request will be required to fill out a Budget Revision form.
- After contracts are fully authorized by the Commissioner Director, payment vouchers will be e-mailed to your organization through DocuSign.
- Payment will be issued in two installments.
 - ◆ The first payment is 75% of the total award and will be issued approximately 30 days after the voucher is signed.
 - ◆ The second payment is the final 25% of the award. It will be issued following the successful completion and approval of a final report and signature of a second payment voucher.

No final payments will be issued without the completion of a Final Report.

Grant Evaluation

On-Site Evaluation

An on-site evaluation may be conducted by an AIMC representative. This evaluation will serve to assess quality, public response, and ADA compliance. The County reserves the right to request two complimentary tickets for site visit purposes.

Organization Event Change

An Event Change Form must be used by organizations to report changes in dates, locations, artists or historians, or staff.

Technical Assistance

During the grant cycle, groups approved for funding must attend at least one technical assistance workshop offered by AIMC or a similar workshop offered by the State of New Jersey and recommended by AIMC staff. This is intended to strengthen grantees skill set and knowledge base.

Grantee Submits Final Reports

A final report is required for **all** grant recipients and must be filed by **January 15, 2028** Final payment will not be issued until a final report is filed.

What if an Applicant has been denied funding?

Applicants who have been denied funding, will receive a letter explaining why. Applicants may appeal, but only if they can demonstrate that the panel misinterpreted the application. Appeals cannot submit new information. Neither grant awards nor grant award amounts are subject to appeal. Appeals must be in writing. Applicants will be notified of the outcome.



Legal Notice

Applicable Law

Grantees must comply with all applicable state and federal laws and will be required to agree to the same in their grantee contract. Grantees shall remain in good standing with all state and federal filings, as required by law. Appropriate contract stipulations will be established in each individual grant recipient's contract.

ADA Compliance

Grantees must be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and as amended. Additionally, the grantee agrees to hold Middlesex County harmless from any and all violations of said ADA.

Note: Grant funding can be used to enhance your program's accessibility, such as open and closed captioning, sign language interpreters, and wheelchair ramp rentals.

Liability

Middlesex County and the Arts Institute of Middlesex County shall not be held liable for funded work that has been plagiarized, is fraudulent, or which contains inaccurate historical content. Middlesex County and its staff shall not be held liable for the safety, security, or comfort of persons participating in funded events. A grant award does not constitute the endorsement of the final product by Middlesex County. Grantees and their boards shall be held liable for any and all of the aforementioned. Grantees and their boards must carry proper insurance that names the County of Middlesex as an "additional insured."

Credit Disclosures and Additional Instructions

The required credits will be established in each individual grant recipient's contract.

Recognition of Middlesex County funding should be included in all marketing materials (media announcements and printed/digital materials – including but not limited to websites, newsletters, program booklets, brochures, posters, invitations, monographs, books, press releases, flyers, podcasts, social media, video, television broadcast or cable and radio PSAs). Credit must read exactly as follows and be no less than 10-point type:

"Grant funding has been provided by the Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners through a grant award from the Middlesex County Cultural and Arts Trust Fund."

Additional Instructions:

- All spoken credits by representatives of the Grantee appearing on radio and television for promotional purposes longer than 30 seconds must credit Middlesex County.
- Under no circumstances may the Grantee state or imply that their programs and/or activities are "sponsored" or "co-sponsored" by the County of Middlesex.
- While the proper funding credit must be used for all funded projects and programming, the funding credit statement may not be used for any programming which has not been grant funded.

Resources

Technical Assistance Workshops

Open to all, these seminars are given by recognized experts to help staff, boards, and volunteers to learn more about arts and cultural management, administration, and fundraising. Most sessions are free of charge but require advance registration.

ADA workshops are offered by the Arts Institute of Middlesex County or the Cultural Access Network (CAN NJ). Organizations with compliance issues are required to attend an ADA workshop during the grant cycle.

Middlesex County History Archives and Library

Middlesex County has a great history, and we are creating a place to tell that story. This online history hub connects people to our past using photographs, documents, objects, and reference books on Middlesex County history.

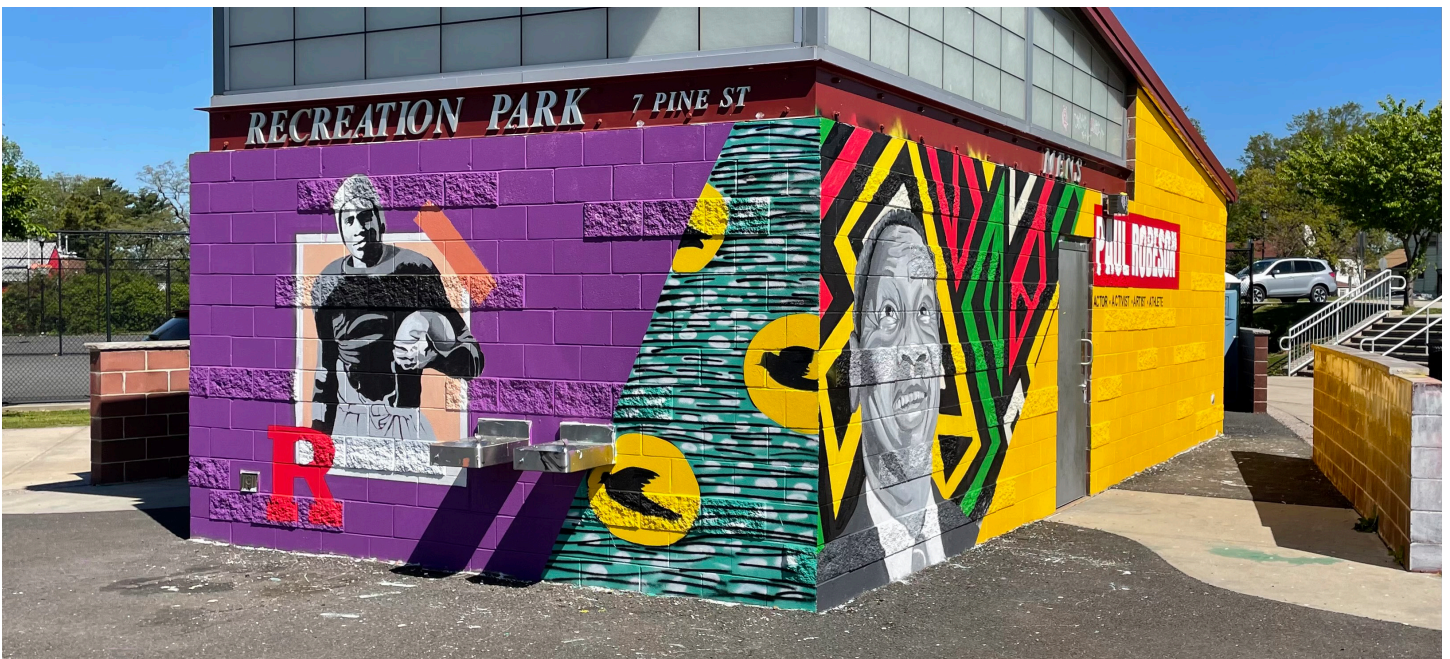
<https://ejotv.catalogaccess.com>

Stay Connected and Promote Your Events!

The Arts Institute of Middlesex County will **require** grantees to create an organizational profile and submit programs for listing on **MiddlesexCountyCulture.com**. This website is a comprehensive guide to Arts, Culture, Folklife, and History in Middlesex County.

Visitors can also access publications and resources by visiting www.middlesexcountynj.gov

To stay connected on programs and events presented by the Division of History and Historic Preservation, simply text “**culture**” to **732-978-9211** from a smart phone or tablet to start receiving text notifications.



Website

Visitors can also access publications and resources by visiting www.middlesexcountynj.gov

For Persons with Disabilities

For all workshops, events, and meetings, assistive listening services are available. Grantees may borrow assistive listening devices for their programs at no cost. Additionally, the services of a sign language interpreter or CART services are available upon request, provided two weeks advance notice is given. Guidelines and brochures are available upon request in large print and Braille. For translation requests for the grant guidelines, please contact 732-745-4030. AIMC will gladly assist persons with disabilities in grant application preparation. The use of a computer can also be arranged at AIMC or municipal libraries.

Frequently Asked Questions

I'm a new applicant. What are my chances of receiving funding?

New applicants and previous grantees have an equal chance of receiving funding. Since the intent of each grant is to encourage organizations to promote art, history, and culture to the community, any applicant showing initiative in this area will receive equal consideration. New Applicants may only apply for Grants of up to \$10,000.

Can I use grant money to pay students or give monetary awards?

No. Grant funds cannot be used to pay students under the age of 18, even when the young people present or perform in a theater, dance, or music program. However, you can pay teaching artists to work with young people, but only when the project is clearly a series of educational experiences.

Can I use my board member as a consultant?

No. No organization or municipal group may pay a member of its board, committee, or commission for any service, even when these services are provided as a component of a program. No exceptions will be made, as this is a conflict of interest.

When does AIMC deny funding?

Funding will be denied when a proposed project does not meet our funding priorities and/or meet the evaluation criteria. The written evaluation produced by the peer review panel usually provides the most direct explanation for a denial of funds. The panel comments indicate that all members of the panel agreed upon a variety of weaknesses found within a project, program, or organization.

If the applicant believes the panel has misinterpreted an application, applicants may appeal the panel's decision. Applicants must mark the panel comments they believe are in error and cite the contents of their original application as evidence to the contrary. **No new information can be introduced in the appeals process.**

For more information contact Richard Simon, Grants Administration Manager, richard.simon@co.middlesex.nj.us, 732-745-3052.



Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners

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John A. Pulomena, County Administrator

Sandy Castor, Department Head, Economic Development

Lindsay Erben, Director, Arts Institute of Middlesex County

Funding

Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners
New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State,
a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts
New Jersey Historical Commission, a Division of the Department of State



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