Community Arts Partnership
Grants / Grant Writing Advice

Questions: Robin Schwartz, Program & Grant Director, programs@artspartner.org
For 30 years, our Grants, Programs, and Services have been a driving force behind the vibrant arts community of Ithaca and Tompkins County.

Connecting Artists and Audiences
Funding the Arts in Tompkins County
Artist Development
Grants are generally from government agencies, not-for-profits, or private business and family foundations. Program and project grants are the most common.

Every grant program you will come across will be different. Each has its own:

- Funding goals, mission, and criteria.
- Application platform, level of difficulty, length, and required supplemental materials.
- Availability of a grant administrator to answer your questions.
- Financial and record keeping requirements.
- Requirements for funder acknowledgement on awardee’s website and promotional materials.
- Contracts and agreements.
- Final and/or interim reporting requirements.
- Time limit for project occurrence.
CAP’s 2023 GRANT PROGRAMS

CAP’s five grant programs will distribute over $550,000 in 2023 for local music, theatre, dance, literary, & visual arts events. artspartner.org/content/view/CAPGrants.html

The three grant programs on this page are part of New York State Council on the Arts’ “Statewide Regrant Program” (SCR). Both “NYSCA” and the Tompkins County government provided equal amounts toward funding these grants. Applicants can apply for up to three requests for each or all of the following SCR grants, and can apply for and receive up to $5,000. (If an applicant would also like to sponsor an individual, or small group for their GAP grant application, that sponsorship would not count towards the three request limit or the award max. Contact Robin to discuss at programs@artspartner.org.)

- **Grants for Arts Programs (GAP Grant)** are for arts events open to the Tompkins County general public. Applicants must aTompkins County not-for-profit organization. Individuals can apply with a local n-f-p sponsor. Two annual funding cycles. **Due** January 9 and June 16

- **Artist in Community Grants** provide funds for local artists to create new artwork, and share that work in a significant and impactful way with a Tompkins County community of their choosing. Two annual funding cycles. **Due** January 11 and June 16

- **Arts Education Grants** are for in-school (public) or after-school program immersive artist residencies. Two annual funding cycles. **Due** January 13th and June 16th
More CAP Grants

**Strategic Opportunity Stipends (SOS)**
Funder: Anonymous foundation.
Available: $24,000
For: Specific and strategic career opportunities for active Tompkins County artists that can take place anywhere in the world.
Maximum grant: $1,000.
**Due** February 2024 for opportunities from February 2024 through January 2025.

**Arts and Cultural Organizational Development Grants (ACOD)**
Funder: Tompkins County Tourism.
Distributed: Over $280,000 annually to over 15 local major arts organization stakeholders. By invitation only.
CAP GRANT GUIDELINES/APPLICATIONS

All CAP grant information: Artspartner.org/content/view/CAPGrants.html

The guidelines for each grant provide information about:

• Specific funding goals and criteria.
• Who can apply.
• What can and can not be funded.
• Submission Instructions.

Each CAP grant has a different focus, application process, and application questions. Not all will require the following, but in general, you’ll provide:

• Applicant information.
• Brief summary of proposed project.
• Detailed description (who, what, when, where, why).
• Background and qualifications of artists and/or organizers.
• Community impact (What fabulous things will happen if project is funded?)
• Budget: expenses and expected income.
• Expected and targeted audience (numbers, demographics).
• Details about how the program will be promoted.
• Letter of support or confirmation from partner organizations (if applicable).
• Artistic resumes of participating artists.
• Work Sample (just Artist in Community Grant)
CAP GRANT TIMELINES

Each CAP grant has a different deadline. A typical timeline will include:

- Guidelines & application forms are posted on our website.
- CAP staff provides outreach and multiple grant writing workshops.
- CAP staff welcomes applicants to submit drafts for review and comments.
- Requests are submitted by posted deadlines.
- CAP staff selects separate independent panelists for each grant.
- Requests are sent to panelists.
- Panels meet, discuss, and score requests.
- Funding decisions are made.
- Applicants are notified of results.
- Funded applicants sign a Contract & Agreement. (plus W9 forms from individuals).
- Checks are mailed.
- Award announcements go out to local media, in CAP’s ArtsLetters, and are listed on CAP’s website.
- Grantees follow requirements such as funder acknowledgement, and reporting.
HOW FUNDING DECISIONS ARE MADE

- Each grant has a separate six or seven person panel who reads the requests, and receives an orientation from CAP staff. Panelists can be local community leaders, artists, and/or arts organization board and staff. (CAP staff does not make funding decisions.) (There are 8 panel meetings per year for all of CAP grants, and about 60 panelists are involved.)
- Each panel meets to discuss their specific grant requests. Meetings can be 3 to 6 hours, depending on the number of submissions.
- Panelists rate the requests after the panel meeting. The ratings are based on the criteria listed in each grant’s guidelines.
- CAP staff makes award recommendations,
- Recommendations are sent back to the panel for approval.

Not all requests will receive funding, and award amounts may be less than requested.

Award amounts are dependent on the applicant’s requested amount, the ratings the request received as compared to other perhaps higher ratings, the grant program’s available funds, and the number of applicants the panel would like to fund.
A Common Myth:

“If my request fits the guidelines, I’ll get funded.”

However, there are usually more fundable requests than available funds.

Once requests are rated, we’ll start at the top and assign awards until the fund runs out, often leaving good requests that didn’t have the highest ratings unfunded. These suggestions will help your request rise to the top of the pile.

It’s a Competition!
SAMPLE GRANT CRITERIA

The sample criteria below is from our “Grants for Arts Programs.” (Each CAP grant has different criteria.) Panel ratings for each grant are based on that grant’s listed criteria.

Community Benefit:
- Projects that demonstrate that they are providing successful access to as broad and diverse an audience as possible to include geographically, ethnically, racially and culturally diverse segments of the County’s population.
- Projects that support the development of local cultural resources responsive to community cultural needs.
- Requests that contribute to the artistic landscape of Tompkins County and its communities.

Artistic Merit:
- Artistic quality and program quality.
- Caliber and credentials of artists.

Guidelines and Application:
- Adherence to these guidelines, and alignment with funding preferences.
- Application clarity, completeness and neatness. Were all questions answered in full?

Feasibility:
- Clearly defined project objectives, budget, project implementation and management.
- Demonstrated ability of personnel to administer project.
- Demonstrated community interest, support & benefit, without duplicating existing programs.
- Effectiveness of proposed promotional efforts throughout the community.

Applicant’s History:
- Compliance and prior success with previous projects.
GRANT WRITING ADVICE

- Read the guidelines and submission instructions VERY carefully.
- Take note of each grant's criteria and make sure your proposal fits.
- Do not improvise. If the application asks for something, provide it exactly as requested.
- Read and answer each question carefully. (This is crucial - make sure your answers align with the questions.)
- Leave yourself plenty of time. Do not wait until the last minute.
- Take advantage of CAP’s draft review.

Panelists may be reading up to 50 requests, so please prioritize clarity. Make it easy for panelists to understand your request.
GRANT WRITING ADVICE

• Keep your narrative clear and factual.
• Avoid abstract or academic language. Requests should be easy to read and understand.
• Provide the essential facts about your project: who, what, where, when…
• Use full sentences (not bullets).
• Explain what you need funding for.
• Your written narrative and your budget provide the same information in two different ways. If you put a cost in the budget, explain it in the narrative.
• Don’t assume the panel knows who you are, or has knowledge of your references such as organizations you may be working with, or fellow artists. Provide this information.
• It’s great to convey excitement or enthusiasm about your project in your narrative. Heartwarming stories about the impact your program has on audiences (or students for the Arts Education grant) are great. Panelists are human. They will respond.
• Neatness counts. i.e. consistency of fonts, font sizes, etc.
• Separate long narratives into easily digestible paragraphs.
• Do not use bold type. Use black (not colors) font, at least 12 pt.
• Have someone else proof for grammar, clarity, completeness, or read it out loud to yourself.
COMMON MISTAKES

• Lack of clarity: After reading the narrative, panelist are confused about your project or what you need funding for.

• Sloppy writing: You don’t have to be a great writer, but you do need to make sure your presentation is neat. If you don’t take the time to do this, panelists assume you won’t take the time/do your due diligence for your project/initiative.

• Irrelevant writing: It is okay to provide information about other activities - just be clear what the requested funding will be for.

• Responses to questions that don’t answer the questions: Questions are asked for a reason. The answers are part of the rating process.

• Ineligible: The applicant didn’t read the guidelines carefully and the request is not eligible.

• Budget math is wrong; Expenses are exaggerated, or made up.
The following pages show an example of a poorly written grant, and then the same grant re-written.

Note that the sample questions below and the sample budgets are not the same as our actual CAP questions and budget forms. These examples are provided to show how details and clarity are important. The re-written grant provided below reflects the advice given in this handout.

Sample questions:

- Write a clear, concise, detailed description of your project.
- Provide names and tell us about the qualifications and experience of your proposed artistic personnel. (The caliber of the artistic personnel is a major consideration for the panel.)
- Describe and name the administrators of the project and their qualifications to administer.
- Describe the size of your expected audience, and audience make-up. Comment on community interest in your proposed project, and community benefit.
- How will you advertise your event(s)?
- Address your need for these funds.
Johnstown is a town that lost its industrial base twenty years ago, and suffered serious economic decline from which is never fully recovered. Not only has the town seen a loss of shops and municipal services, it has also lost population. In the 1970 census, Johnstown was listed as having over 30,000 people living within its town limits. Today, we have fewer than 22,000 people.

We have been presenting an important chamber music series in Johnstown since 1991, and regularly receive very positive press reviews for our efforts. Our exciting concerts are presented in the town’s high school auditorium and are sometimes attended by over 50 people. Our ten musicians are drawn from the faculty of the local junior college, which was founded in 1982 and has several professional and technical degree programs. We perform a variety of music, from chamber to the moderns, and vary the ensemble to include trios, quartets and the full chamber orchestra.

We are proud of our ability to publicize our concerts widely, including newspaper ad, local radio spots and a mailer to our membership. We hope the panel recognizes our significant accomplishments in this relatively poor community, and fully supports our request this year.
## Sample not-so-great budget

### PROJECT EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount (A. TOTAL EXPENSES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Personnel</td>
<td>5 x 3 x 100</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Personnel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space Rental</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equip. Rental Supplies</td>
<td>Music Stands</td>
<td>$350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising Promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Operating Expenses (itemize)</td>
<td>Rental Scores, recording space</td>
<td>$550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$2,975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PROJECT INCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount (B. TOTALINCOME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td></td>
<td>$850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership, Dues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops, Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Grants (not DEC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (explain)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$1,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why the narrative was not-so-great

The grant would receive low ratings, as the panel is left with too many questions.

• The first paragraph about the economic decline of the community is relevant, but the grant writer didn’t really tie that fact into the request. What point were they trying to make?
• They didn’t say how many concerts a year. (Two? Ten?)
• When are the concerts? (Weekends? Afternoons? Nights?)
• Are the concerts scheduled yet?
• What is the content of each concert?
• Is there an admission fee?
• Are these professional musicians? (It says the musicians are faculty, but are they music faculty?) The narrative just says “We.” Who is “We”? 
• It states that concerts are sometimes attended by 50 people. We wonder about the rest of the time.
• Who is the audience? Is it community members or students/fellow faculty from the college? (Without this information, the panel can’t determine whether the audience is from the County the grant is serving. The students may not be residents.)
• No social media? It mentions a mailer to membership. How many/who is that? It doesn’t seem like they are publicizing their event well.
Why the budget was not-so-great

Not only are there too many questions, but the costs mentioned in the budget are not explained in the narrative or in the “budget breakdown” column.

- What is 5 x 3 x 100? Five concerts, three people each? Or three concerts, five people each? The narrative mentioned ten musicians, so this is confusing.
- Why is there a cost for music stands? We wonder what they have done in the past. This seems made up, as musicians would have their own stands. If this is a legit cost, it needs to be mentioned in the narrative.
- What is the space rental for? The narrative didn’t explain that.
- Who is the $75 travel fee for?
- What is “recording space”? Are they recording the concert? Is the recording for public access or just their own archive? (The latter wouldn’t be fundable for a GAP grant.)
- According to the budget, they are charging admission. How did they end up with $850. 50 people at $17 each? Any sliding scale? A breakdown is not provided.
- The income adds up incorrectly.
The Johnstown Arts Group has been presenting chamber music concerts in Johnstown since 2015. Our 10 current musicians are drawn from the music faculty of the local Johnstown Junior College. We are a mixed group with regard to age, gender, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds. (See attachment for a brief paragraph about each musician).

“JAG” performs a variety of music for community performances, from classical to modern to many forms of jazz (mostly swing and bebop), and varies the ensemble to include trios, quartets, and the full group of ten. Many of us play multiple instruments and the ensembles can include strings, woodwinds, brass, guitar, bass, and percussion.

We enjoy making music together, and discovering and introducing new composers to audiences. Our mission is to share the music and our love for the music with the local Johnstown community. The community has been experiencing hardships with job availability at an all-time low, so our concerts are offered for free and are meant to be a happy, uplifting experience. There is not much arts programming available to the community outside of the college, so we feel that this series serves an important community need and fills a much needed gap.

The board of directors is made up of five of the musicians in the group that perform all tasks associated with the logistics of the concerts.

We have three concerts scheduled for 2023. Each concert will be on a Sunday and will start at 2pm. All will be held at the High School auditorium, a location that locals feel comfortable coming to, and has ample parking.

The first will be on Sunday, February 12th and will feature a quartet premiering a composition by New Mexico composers Momoko Kern and Darnell Bean. Their music is a fusion of classical and modern jazz, and is very exciting and challenging to play.
The second concert will be May 21st and will include five musicians, featuring segments of their favorite ensemble pieces from South American composers.

The last concert will be on October 15th and will include the full group of ten musicians. This concert will feature the work of Aaron Copeland. Copland was one of the most respected American classical composers of the twentieth century. He incorporated popular forms of American music such as jazz and folk into his compositions and his work is recognized as exceptional and innovative. For this concert, we will celebrate, honor, and invite our local community service workers and their families.

We advertise the concerts as free with a suggested donation of $5 (or more if possible). Our first goal for 2023 is to gain income of at least $225 per concert through donations and a GAP grant. (We find that the best time to ask for donations is during the applause at the end of the concerts and we have our musicians at the exits with empty drums for donations.)

Another goal is to increase attendance. Attendance at these concerts in the past has not been wonderful, although we have an enthusiastic core of followers. In the past, our concerts have been standard classical fare (Beethoven, Mozart…) and we haven’t done a great job of outreach. This year, we are not only changing up the type of programming we do, but are also reaching out to new audiences in very specific ways and increasing audience interactions.

With the requested grant funds, along with our new ideas and innovations, we plan to increase our audience size and visibility in the community. Our goal is to increase attendance from about 25 per concert to at least 85.

We will make a strong effort to interest families. One new initiative is to have some of the musicians visit our local library and rural community centers. For example, Jean Morrow (Youth Services and Community Engagement at the Johnstown Public Library) has invited our group to be featured in a family event at the library, where we will not only perform children-friendly work, but also show families our instruments and how they work. We will talk about what it means to us to be musicians in an effort to
inspire people to learn to play an instrument! We will personally (one-on-one) invite the people we meet to our concerts. We believe that these individual invites are a great way to gain fans and spread the word.

Another new initiative is to change the way we present our concerts. For 2023, we plan on beginning each concert with entertaining and interesting information about the composers and the work we will perform. We’ll tell them what styles and musical facts to look for as we play. JAG members will encourage audience members to stay after the concert to chat.

For the February concert, we hope to project (on Zoom) the two New Mexican composers for an introduction and talk about their work!

We would like part of the grant funds to help with the cost of publicity so that we can get the word out more effectively. We currently send out a mailer to our membership (150 people) and utilize whatever free print and online publicity the local media offer. This year we will (finally) create a website for the group, gather more names for our mailings, print and distribute posters, and put out road signage to inform everyone who drives through Johnston on Route 78 about our concert dates with our web address. (Everyone in Johnstown will see those signs!). We will send an e-blast using the college’s listserv and pay for three print ads in the Johnstown paper (one before each concert) and the local shopper newspaper. We will also boost Facebook events, and start using Instagram. Each JAG member will be asked to personally invite at least 30 people that they know.

We would also like to pay our musicians $200 each for each performance. This would include rehearsal time. It’s not much but it is much better than what we previously paid (i.e. $0.)

The high school does not charge us a fee, though we pay $150 per concert to the school for a custodian to open the building, etc. The musicians and volunteers help clean up after each event. ($450 total).

This year we are also requesting funds to recorded our concerts. We would like to pay local filmmaker Douglas Ikate $300 per concert to both record and do some editing. ($900). We will post the videos on our website, and promote them through social media.

Thank you for helping to support this wonderful concert series!
## PROJECT EXPENSES

**Provide Breakdown Below**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Breakdown</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Personnel</td>
<td>1st concert: 4 musicians / 2nd: 5 musicians / 3rd 10 musicians. Total 19 @ $200 each</td>
<td>$3,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Personnel</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space Rental</td>
<td>Custodian for three concerts @ $150 each</td>
<td>$450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equip. Rental, Supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising Promotion</td>
<td>3 display ads @200 each ($600) FB boosts $90, printing $45, mailing $144, 100 posters $40</td>
<td>$1,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Operating Expenses (itemize)</td>
<td>Recording and editing</td>
<td>$900</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$6669</td>
</tr>
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</table>

## PROJECT INCOME

**Provide Breakdown Below**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Breakdown</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Donations at three concerts</td>
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<td>Membership, Dues</td>
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<td>Workshops, Sales</td>
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<td>Contributions Ind</td>
<td>Annual Individual Donations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions Business</td>
<td>Johnston Bank Contribution</td>
<td>$500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Grants</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (explain)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$1,425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MOVING FORWARD

• A “no” is not necessarily a never. Each year there are different panelists, different applicants, and a chance to raise your ratings!
• Ask for advice and feedback.
• Keep your materials up to date.

THANK YOU!