



2026 Guidelines

Strategic Opportunity Stipend (SOS)

The SOS grant is for Tompkins County resident artists with a consistent recent record of producing art can apply for a very specific and strategic opportunity that will take their career to the next level.

Deadline:
Thursday, February 19, 2026, 9:00pm
for opportunities from January 2026 through January 2027

Administered by:
Community Arts Partnership, ArtsPartner.org

Questions:
Robin Schwartz, Program & Grant Director, programs@artspartner.org

All CAP Grants: at ArtsPartner.org (grant tab)

Note: These Guidelines are very detailed!
If you have not applied before (or even if you have) it's always a good idea to run your request idea by Robin before starting the process.

Funding:
Funding for SOS comes from both a local private foundation, and the Tompkins Today and Tomorrow Fund & Maralyn W. Fleming Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County.



Recommended: Grant Writing Workshops & Advice

Free Grant Information & Advice Sessions: Live and Zoom (or Watch Recording)

November 2025 through January 2026 (Registration required)

- CAP hosts multiple Zoom and live workshops in Tompkins County locations. Visit ArtsPartner.org.
- There's also a recorded version you can watch anytime.
- Robin Schwartz, CAP Program & Grant Director, discusses CAP's grants and (mostly) shares grant writing advice to help your requests rise to the top of the pile!

Recommended: Advice, Questions, Draft Review

Advice, Brainstorming, and Questions

Email Robin Schwartz, CAP Program & Grant Director (see above) anytime for advice, to brainstorm, and/or with questions. Reading these guidelines before contacting Robin is recommended.

Grant Draft Review

Robin can review application drafts. The earlier the better (to make time for any recommended changes), but she can view or comment on applications right up through the day of the deadline.

Drafts can be sent as either a word document or a pdf saved from the application's online platform. Sending a draft budget form along with narrative is recommended.

Be advised that although Robin facilitates the grant panel meetings, she does not make recommendations or state her opinions to the panel. Any recommendations that she may make when reviewing a draft is based on her experience and does not constitute a guarantee of funding.

Accommodations

If an artist needs assistance with any aspect of the grant process, please email.

Previous Applicant Alert

Funding is never guaranteed. The number and variety of applicants, the people on the decision making panel, the funding rules and criteria, and the amount of funds available change from year to year. Each request is rated based on the criteria listed in the guidelines, and the process is competitive.

What is the SOS Grant?:

The Community Arts Partnership's Strategic Opportunity Stipend helps Tompkins County individual artists (or collaborations between artists) obtain funding for specific and strategic career opportunities.

- New and emerging artists are welcome to apply!
- Applicants can apply for \$100 to \$1,000.
- The opportunity must be one that will boost an artist's ongoing, active, and consistent artistic art career in a specified and significant way. See samples below.
- An SOS request must have as its core activity an art form that includes theatre, dance, music, visual arts, film, prose, poetry or creative non-fiction. Although funded projects can also have rehabilitative, educational, therapeutic, spiritual, or recreational aspects, the primary funded activity and intended outcome must be one of the art forms listed above.
- The applicant must explain and provide details as to how their opportunity will be used as a strategic step-

ping stone that will significantly impact their art career and bring it to the next level. The SOS grant is a growth opportunity.

- The project or opportunity can take place anywhere in the world.

Who Can Apply:

Individual artists who are residents of Tompkins County and live in Tompkins County for at least 9 months each year (from January 2025 through January 2027) can apply. Priority is given to long term residents who have lived in Tompkins County since January 2023 and plan on living in Tompkins County through at least 2027. (In some cases, proof of residency may be required, i.e. driver's license.)

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Expenses SOS Can Fund:

Expenses related directly to the strategic opportunity that will act as a stepping stone, such as:

- Artist fees for applicant, and/or participating artists for a planned opportunity.
- New opportunities: For example, if a visual artist has done group shows in Tompkins County, being invited to their first solo show is a good SOS request. If that artist has done multiple solo shows but never outside of Tompkins County, an invitation to do an exhibit in another city is a good SOS request. Having said that, there are opportunities that are not new (i.e. a musician production their third album) that can be considered! Feel free to email Robin.
- Taking workshops or classes to develop new skills without the inclusion of a very specific, detailed, and dated strategic opportunity.
- Technical support; rental of equipment, or materials for that opportunity.
- Purchase of equipment if the artist demonstrates the direct impact it will have on their career.
- Promotional expenses for opportunity.
- Filming, recording of work (if used for opportunity, not for personal archives only).
- Entry, exhibition, registration, or tuition fees.
- Professional assistance, or mentorships related to career.
- Travel costs.

SOS Cannot Fund:

- The creation of art or expenses not related to a specific, dated, strategic opportunity as outlined above.
- Opportunities which are not new.
- Food and drink.

Examples of SOS Awards:

- Author: funds for promotional U.S. book tour.
- Playwright: funds to stage a new play for development, with future performances clearly specified.
- Choreographer: first time commission to create dance pieces for an upcoming event.
- Musician: funds for promotion of new album.
- Visual Artist: costs related to their first solo show.
- Musician: cost of recording a music composition already accepted by major label.

- Theatre artist: filming of a former theatre piece to send to film festivals.
- Visual Artist: shipping of artwork to an invited exhibition in Europe.
- Filmmaker: flight costs to attend an invited overseas arts residency.

Request Amount:

We have at least \$23,000 to distribute. Requests can range from \$100 to \$1,000. We expect to be able to fund at least 25 requests and we usually receive about 45 requests.

How Does the Panel Make Decisions of Who To Fund?:

Proposals are evaluated by an anonymous review panel made up of Tompkins County artists, and arts and cultural community leaders who represent different art forms, cultures, communities, and viewpoints.

Panelists have 2 weeks to read the requests. The panel then meets to discuss and rate the requests using the following criteria from “5” (meets criteria 100%) to “1” (does not meet criteria). The scores are tallied and the top scoring requests will be recommended for funding. Funding is based on a) the ratings, b) the applicant’s budget, c) the available SOS funds. If funded, the amount may (or may not) be less than the request.

Rating Criteria:

- How well does the request fit the SOS guidelines?
- Does the artist have an active and ongoing art career?
- Did the artist follow the directions outlined in the guidelines and application? Were all questions answered as asked and in full? (Plain, detailed, clear, accessible and specific language is recommended.)
- Do the budgeted expenses align with and make sense for the stated opportunity? Is the budget realistic and clear?
- The merit of the strategic opportunity and its impact on the artist’s ongoing career trajectory.
- (Not required but considered) Funding priority may be given to local artists whose work has impacted or been shared with Tompkins County communities in the past few years through performances, residencies, art shows, workshops, and the like.

Funded Artist Responsibilities:

- Sign a funding agreement detailing the use and requirements of SOS funding.
- Upon receiving award notification, the artist may (or may not) be asked to show proof of residency.
- Provide a W-9 tax form to CAP if the award is \$600 and over. Artists will receive a 1099 for their taxes.
- Credit the Community Arts Partnership in all publicity and media materials related to the project as outlined in the funding agreement.
- Submit a SOS Final Report after project completion.
- Note: If the opportunity is a project and is not yet scheduled, CAP may hold the award until it is.
- Note that the SOS grant recipients will appear on the Community Arts Partnership website. The Community Arts Partnership reserves the right to describe or reproduce material from any funded request for publication or public relations purposes.

SOS Grant Submission Instructions

Due: Thursday February 19, 9pm

Robin Schwartz, Grant and Program Director

programs@artspartner.org / ArtsPartner.org

1. SOS BUDGET FORM - UPLOAD ONLINE

- The SOS grant budget form **is available as an .xlsx** on the ArtsPartner.org grant page in the GAP grant section) and also **as a download** from the online application.
- We highly recommend you fill out the budget form before you fill out the application as your budget needs will inform your writing.
- (Your completed **budget form is then uploaded** to the application platform).
- **If you need assistance** putting together a budget or understanding the budget form, we can help!
- Please use the form for cash expenses and income. Do not put non-monetary contributions in income.

2. FILL OUT SOS GRANT APPLICATION ONLINE

REQUIRED: WATCH 5-MINUTE INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO

(There are many clickable links on the platform that will not bring you to the right place, so it's not entirely user friendly. Watching this video will save you time and energy!

youtube.com/watch?v=b1TermKUhY8

FIND ALL of our GRANT APPLICATIONS at commongrantapplication.com

First time users **“Register”** or **“Login”**

Click **“Start Draft Application”** from dashboard

Find on List: “Community Arts Partnership”

(Don't click “Community Arts Partnership”)

Click the blue button **Select Programs**

Locate: which grant you'd like to work on.

(Don't click the name of the grant).

Click the blue button **Start Draft App**

NAVIGATING THROUGH THE APPLICATION

- You'll see the sections of the application you'll need to fill out on the left side of your screen.
- You can navigate through the sections by clicking there or by using the back and forward buttons.
- * indicates required questions.
- Most of the fields have **character limits which include spaces between words.**
- **“Save”** frequently! If a glitch happens or you accidentally close the screen you won't lose data.
- **“Pause”** when you wish to stop working. Your work will be saved and you can go back anytime.
- When you log back in: **“Resume Draft Application”**

NOTE: APPLICATION QUESTIONS ARE LISTED BELOW

if you prefer to fill out an application offline to then cut and paste into the application platform. You'll see **character limits with spaces** along with the questions. (When working in word or pages - there's a box at the bottom of your screen showing "characters with spaces" for your selected text.)

TO SEND ROBIN A DRAFT of an application in progress.

See **"PDF Download."** It's best to also send her your completed budget.

"SUBMIT" WHEN YOUR APPLICATION IS COMPLETE!

- If any fields were not filled out, you'll see **"Not Ready for Submission"** and a list of incomplete fields.
- When your request is complete, click **"Submit"** (Once submitted you can't access it again.)
- You will get a confirmation email and can see your completed application from the "Grants" tab on the dashboard. You can download a PDF.

TO WORK ON MORE THAN ONE APPLICATION AT A TIME

If you are submitting more than one CAP grant, you need to exit one be able to work on another.

"Pause" an application you are working on.

Then, from the dashboard, click **"Exit draft application."**

Then you'll see click **"Start Draft Application"** and follow the directions from above.

3. ARTISTIC RESUME - UPLOAD ONLINE

An artistic resume is a required which you will upload to the grant platform. If you do not have a resume and need to create one, or want to learn about what a resume is and the difference between an CV, Bio, and resume, check out this great post from New York Foundation for the Arts.

nyfa.org/blog/how-to-create-an-artist-resume/ . The resume can be quite brief and recent. We would like to see a list of (for example) recent exhibits, performances, readings, publications, etc. during the past five years or so. **If you are (for example) a working gig musician, you can summarize** i.e. 60 performances in Tompkins County and regional bars and festivals in 2024." and "Five National Festivals in 2024"

4. OPPORTUNITY CONFIRMATION - Email to Robin

If the request is for an opportunity to which you have been invited, include written proof.

This can be a forwarded e-mail or a copy of a letter to Robin's email.

Application Questions on Online Portal

Contact Information

- (Name, Pronouns, Email, Phone, Website)
- Have you been a Tompkins resident for at least 9 months a year since January 2024 (or earlier)?
- If you answered "no" to the above question, what month and year did you become a resident? (If you answered "yes," leave blank.)
- Are you 18 years of age or over as of 1/1/2026?:
- Will you be registered as a full time undergrad or grad student in 2026? If yes, name school.

- Do you have plans to continue living in Tompkins County through 12/2027?

Current work

- Briefly Describe your recent work (500 character limit)
Use one or two sentences (e.g. "I am a visual artist. My most recent work is mixed media sculptures using newspapers and recycled materials," or "I am a poet and am currently working on a series of poems based on my experiences while living in Mexico in 2024")

Opportunity Details

- Name of Opportunity e.g. "Brooklyn Film Festival Premiere"
- Date(s) or date Range of Requested Opportunity* *Provide a short answer, e.g. "May 16-25, 2026"*
- Have You Received an SOS Grant from CAP in 2024 or 2025?
- If yes, name the year and title of the funded project.
- Grant Amount Requested
- Summary Statement (750 character limit)
Briefly describe your opportunity in one or three sentences.
- Detailed Statement (4700 character limit)
Here's where you can provide a long description of the opportunity for which you are requesting funds. (Note that the next question will address the project's impact on your career.)
Be sure to address the following somewhere in your narrative:
 - Describe your project or opportunity (who, what, when, and where, if applicable).
 - Which expenses would you like SOS to cover?
 - Is this an invited opportunity? If yes, was the process competitive?
 - Is this project different or new for you? Have you done similar projects in the past?
- Project impact (30000 character limit)
Describe in great detail how this project or opportunity impacts your professional career moving forward. A timeline or well thought out future plan of action with specific examples is appreciated.
- Your Personal Tompkins County Community Impact (700 character limit)
Have you shown or shared your work in Tompkins County in the past few years? (i.e. exhibits, workshops, events, performances...) Describe briefly, using a max of four sentences.

Budget

- In-kind donations (500 character limit)
The required budget does not reflect in-kind donations. Are there any donations you are receiving for your project? If yes, list briefly, i.e. collaborating artists donating some of their time, donation of printing costs, donation of materials, etc.
- Potential Adjustments (500 character limit)
If the amount you need for your opportunity exceeds what this grant can fund (max \$1,000), can you make up the difference (or decrease costs? Explain.
- Potential Income (500 character limit)
If you list income in your budget below that you don't yet have in hand, what is the likelihood those funds will come through? (Skip this question if not applicable)

(Upload Budget and Resume)