

# 2026 Cultural Grant Program: **General Operating Grant Guidelines**

Deadline: Monday, December 1, 2025 at 3 p.m. PST

These guidelines have been revised for 2026 – previous versions no longer apply.

If you have questions after reviewing these guidelines, you can obtain more information from Cultural Services staff. Please contact staff well in advance of the deadline:

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City of Kelowna Cultural Services Branch  
Smith Avenue Offices  
103-1360 Ellis Street  
Kelowna, BC V1Y 2A2  
HOURS: Monday to Friday, 8a.m. to 4p.m.

## CITY OF KELOWNA ACTIVE LIVING & CULTURE DIVISION

### CORE PRINCIPLES:

The City of Kelowna's Active Living & Culture Division administers a number of grant programs and services for the community which:

- encourage active healthy lifestyles
- build strong neighbourhoods
- nurture lifelong participation in sport
- enhance cultural vibrancy
- facilitate development of events
- enhance social sustainability
- support effective management and operation of sport, recreation, and cultural facilities.

Organizations seeking funding support from the City of Kelowna through any of the grant programs administered by the Active Living & Culture Division should be aware of and aligned with one or more these core principles.

### VALUES:

Any organization supported by the City of Kelowna Cultural Grants Program will commit to the following values:

- **Accessibility, diversity and inclusion:** we welcome everyone to engage in quality experiences that showcase the unique identity of our community.
- **Accountability and fiscal responsibility:** we use resources effectively to leverage opportunities that optimize value and create impact.
- **Innovation:** we support forward-thinking solutions that anticipate needs and brings together a range of experiences to see the future in a different way.
- **Partnerships and cooperation:** we achieve more through meaningful relationships of mutual respect and understanding.

The Cultural Grants General Operating Program is one of many grant programs provided by the City of Kelowna. Information about other grant opportunities is available on the City's website: [kelowna.ca/grants](https://kelowna.ca/grants)

## 1.0 GENERAL OPERATING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 Objectives:

This program aims to provide assistance to non-profit arts, culture and heritage organizations which provide impactful, quality programs and services, demonstrate sustainable operations and contribute to the realization of the City’s cultural vision.

The objectives for this program are to support organizations who are committed to the advancement of the 2020-2025 Cultural Plan goals and strategies. Goals of the 2020-2025 Cultural Plan include:

<p><b>STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS</b></p> <p><i>foster deliberate investments of time, money and people into demonstrated outcomes</i></p>	<p><b>Goal 1: Increase contribution of resources</b></p> <p>Develop a variety of approaches to increase support for the creative sector’s spaces, capacity, vitality and connections</p>	<p><b>Goal 2: Understand our impact</b></p> <p>Leverage the value that culture contributes to the community</p>	
<p><b>SPACES</b></p> <p><i>use new and traditional approaches for enhancing the availability, affordability and accessibility of spaces for culture</i></p>	<p><b>Goal 3: Optimize existing spaces</b></p> <p>Improve the use of existing space and allow for alternative solutions to meet community needs</p>	<p><b>Goal 4: Commit to developing new facilities</b></p> <p>Actively plan and seek opportunities for the advancement of new cultural facilities</p>	
<p><b>VITALITY</b></p> <p><i>animate the community with a blend of programs, services and events that promote artistic excellence and share Kelowna’s history</i></p>	<p><b>Goal 5: Learn from our past</b></p> <p>Engage the public in the protection and preservation of Kelowna’s human and natural history and bring stories about our past to the forefront</p>	<p><b>Goal 6: Boost vitality at the street level</b></p> <p>Create excitement and activity throughout Kelowna</p>	
<p><b>CAPACITY</b></p> <p><i>build on the creative sector’s ability to respond to changing demands and new opportunities</i></p>	<p><b>Goal 7: Support a viable creative sector</b></p> <p>Enhance administrative, financial, management and governance systems that create a strong foundation for the future</p>		
<p><b>CONNECTIONS</b></p> <p><i>promote ongoing interactions between people, sectors and disciplines</i></p>	<p><b>Goal 8: Share our story</b></p> <p>Celebrate local activities, initiatives and successes with the broader community</p>	<p><b>Goal 9: Broaden the reach</b></p> <p>Incorporate culture within other sectors as an integral piece of community growth</p>	<p><b>Goal 10: Convene and connect</b></p> <p>Bring the creative sector together for dialogue, exchange and action</p>

The 2020-2025 Cultural Plan can be found at [kelowna.ca/culture](http://kelowna.ca/culture).

Support provided by the City of Kelowna will assist organizations with operational sustainability and enable development and delivery of programs and services in the community. Organizations are eligible to apply annually.

General Operating grants are available for up to a **maximum of \$10,000**. Funding is not guaranteed from year to year and may vary dramatically.

**1.2 Organization profile:**

Organizations participating in this program are Kelowna-based, established, non-profit arts, culture, or heritage organizations that have a mission to:

- develop, create, produce, present and disseminate artistic work in any artistic discipline (Indigenous arts, community arts, dance, interdisciplinary, literary, media, multidisciplinary, music, theatre, visual arts or fibre arts);
- create, provide or facilitate events, materials, communications and/or services which interpret and convey the human history of Kelowna and/or foster preservation, stewardship and public interpretation and appreciation of heritage knowledge, assets, collections and sites;
- provide public education, programs, events or services focused on awareness, appreciation and celebration of Indigenous heritage and culture, multiculturalism, including language, traditions and artforms;
- develop and deliver programs and services which provide quality arts, culture or heritage experiences for participants living with chronic or permanent health conditions or disabilities which may limit their access to programs and services designed for the general population; or
- provide services or resources in support of artists and cultural organizations in the areas of research, information, professional development, networking, administration, audience development, marketing and communications.

The organization must demonstrate accessible, diverse and inclusive experiences, that use resources effectively, leverage opportunities, are innovative and forward-thinking, and highlight the value of partnerships and cooperation.

This program welcomes submissions from organizations representing under-represented artists of all backgrounds including, but not limited to, Indigenous People, Black and racialized persons; refugee, newcomer and immigrant persons, two-spirit, LGBTQ+ and gender non-binary persons, persons with disabilities and those on low-incomes or living in poverty.

The organization must have sound governance and are fiscally responsible, with diverse sources of revenue and good recordkeeping practices. They must demonstrate a need for financial support, and if they have a surplus or reserve, they have a plan for how that surplus or reserve will be used to improve their service to the community.

The organization must offer programming and/or services throughout the year.\*

\*Festivals will be deemed to offer programming and/or services throughout the year, if they:

- offer 21 or more days of programming;
- programming spans over a minimum of three months of the year;
- have a demonstrated impact on the development of local artists through direct participation;

- have regular meetings of their Board of Directors year-round; and
- have a Coordinator who performs duties related to planning throughout the year.

### **1.3 Eligibility:**

To participate in this program, the organization must:

- be a registered non-profit society or a registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and be registered for at least one (1) year at the time of the application deadline;
- be physically located, have an active presence and have the majority of its programs and services delivered within the City of Kelowna for at least one (1) year at the time of the application deadline;
- have a mandate and carry out activities which are consistent with the 2020-2025 Cultural Plan as articulated in a strategic plan. All organizations applying for \$5,000 or more in funding must provide their strategic plan to be eligible for funding.
- be committed to providing arts, culture or heritage opportunities to Kelowna residents without exclusion of anyone by reason of religion, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, language, disability or income;
- have an independent Board of Directors composed of volunteers and representative of its mission and audience. Directors must:
  - Meet the minimum statutory requirements imposed by the relevant incorporation statute (i.e. BC Societies Act); and
  - Not be remunerated for their services as Director (except for reimbursement of reasonable expenses) nor hold concurrent staff positions.
- have fulfilled all reporting requirements for any previous grants from the City of Kelowna; and
- demonstrate financial support from private or public sector sources other than the City of Kelowna.

### **1.4 Ineligible organizations:**

To participate in this program, the organization must not be:

- Publicly funded or private educational institutions (public schools, universities, colleges, training organizations), religious and political groups;
- Organizations whose mandates, operations and activities are not consistent with the program objectives, description and/or eligibility requirements;
- Organizations which receive City of Kelowna operating support through:
  - a Lease & Operating Agreement,
  - a Service Agreement,
  - directly by a budget line item, or
  - the Professional Operating program.
- Organizations which have outstanding indebtedness to the City of Kelowna or which have not fulfilled reporting requirements for any previous grants from the City of Kelowna; or
- Unincorporated committees, groups, collectives or individuals.

**1.5 Eligible activities and expenses:**

- Core operating activities and expenses that are used to support the organization's operational sustainability and enable the development and delivery of programs and services in the community and are not excluded expenses or activities as described in para 1.6.

General Operating grants are available for up to a **maximum of \$10,000**.

**1.6 Ineligible activities and expenses:**

- fundraising activities;
- projects which already receive financial or in-kind support (including site provision) from other City of Kelowna sources;
- retroactive funding for initiatives which have already occurred (prior to the date of application);
- deficit reduction;
- bursaries or scholarships;
- activities focused on politics, education, religion or advocacy;
- acquisition of real property;
- development of capital proposals or feasibility studies; or
- activities focused on attracting a limited or special interest audience.

**2.0 APPLICATION PROCESS**

The application process is online and can be found on the [City's website \(kelowna.ca/culture\)](http://kelowna.ca/culture).

Organizations considering submission of an application are encouraged to do the following prior to completing an application and well in advance of the application deadline:

- Review these guidelines;
- Attend an annual grant information workshop; and
- Contact City staff if you require more information
  - Sara Thirnbeck, [sthirnbeck@kelowna.ca](mailto:sthirnbeck@kelowna.ca), (250) 469-8474
  - Christine McWillis, [cmcwillis@kelowna.ca](mailto:cmcwillis@kelowna.ca), (250) 470-0640

Eligible applicants will submit the application form using the online system by the program deadline, 3 p.m. PST, Monday, December 1, 2025.

**Only online applications will be accepted.** If you are having problems with the online system, please contact [culture@kelowna.ca](mailto:culture@kelowna.ca) for support.

We are committed to ensuring equitable access to our submission process. Submitting organizations are invited to contact [culture@kelowna.ca](mailto:culture@kelowna.ca) with questions or comments.

Please ensure you receive email confirmation upon submission. Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. Submission of an application does not guarantee funding. Obtaining an operating grant is a competitive process and demand often exceeds available resources.

### **3.0 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

The criteria listed below and in Schedule 1 represent 'good' practices for non-profit arts, culture and heritage organizations. Assessment will be based on the degree to which organizations meet the criteria, based on the information they provide.

All organizations are unique, and will be at different stages in their lifecycle; there is no expectation that an organization must be demonstrating exceptional performance in all areas in order to receive funding support. However, the assessment criteria provide an objective framework within which the organization's overall performance can be considered, and form the basis for constructive feedback to the organization.

Criteria are grouped into five (5) categories:

- Program objectives (15%)
- Strategic Investments (30%)
- Vitality (10%)
- Capacity (35%)
- Connections (10%)

Detailed criteria for each category are listed in Schedule 1 of these Guidelines.

### **4.0 ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 *Review Process:***

##### **4.1.1 *Independent Evaluation:***

Applications in this program are adjudicated by a Cultural Grant Panel of peer and community representatives.

Panelists are selected to participate based on their experience, merit and familiarity with grantmaking practice and the local arts, culture and heritage community. To the extent possible, the panel will reflect the diversity of the community at large and the range of disciplines and activities in the list of applicants.

Panelists who have a real or perceived conflict of interest regarding any application will be required to declare that such a conflict exists and will not participate in discussions or decisions relating to that application.

Cultural Services staff will be present as observers during the adjudication process and to provide clarity on the General Operating program objectives and requirements as needed.

The Cultural Grant Panel will, within 60 days of the application deadline, provide its recommendations to City staff for final approval by the Divisional Director of Active Living and Culture.

**4.1.2 Staff Review:**

Some applications will be diverted into a streamlined process. Returning applicants requesting a General Operating Grant of \$5,000 or less and are not requesting an increase from the prior year funding, will be reviewed by Cultural Services staff. Any application could be moved to Independent Evaluation at the discretion of the Cultural Services Manager. The results of the staff review will be forwarded to the Divisional Director of Active Living and Culture for final approval.

**4.2 Interview:**

Following completion of the review process, applicants will be contacted to discuss the evaluation, build understanding about how the organization will address any concerns arising, and engage in a broader dialogue about the organization.

**4.3 Notification and Distribution:**

All applicants will receive an email confirmation detailing the outcome of their application, terms and conditions, feedback or follow-up items. Successful applicants will receive payment following notification.

**4.4 Request for Clarification/Request for Reconsideration**

Applicants who do not agree with a funding decision may request further clarification from staff. If still in disagreement after clarification is provided, applicants may make a formal request for reconsideration by the Divisional Director of Active Living and Culture, within 14 days of email confirmation. In the event of a formal request for reconsideration, the City may delay distribution of some or all of the funds in this program until all of the funding decisions have been resolved.

**4.5 Organization Development:**

Feedback from the Grant Panel and/or City staff may include recommendations for improvement to the organization's program delivery, organizational effectiveness or community engagement and impact.

Organizations returning to the General Operating Program in subsequent years will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the feedback and worked to make the necessary improvements. This information is part of the Final Report.

Lack of or an insufficient response will be considered in future applications and may result in a reduction or withdrawal of support, or the imposition of conditions for future program eligibility.

**4.6 Final Report:**

Successful applicants will provide a final report in a prescribed format to the Cultural Services Branch. Receipt of this report is a pre-condition for future eligibility in any City of Kelowna grant program. Final Reports will be considered part of assessment of any future applications by the organization.

Applicants will be required to provide 3 high-quality photographs with the final report. These images must be accompanied by photo release waivers from both the photographer and people in the photographs, giving the photo rights to the City of Kelowna which allows the City to use them in future promotional materials.

**5.0 TIMELINE**

A typical timeline appears in the table below. The timeline is subject to change.

2025 Final Report & 2026 Application Deadline	Application Review	Notification	Distribution	Final Report & 2025 Application
Dec 2, 2025 3:00p.m.	Dec 2025-Jan 2026	By Feb 2, 2026	By end Feb 2026	Nov 30th, 2026 3:00pm

**6.0 CONDITIONS OF FUNDING**

In addition to any specific terms and conditions which may arise from the annual review process, the conditions below will apply to any organization receiving funding from this program:

- Grant funds must be applied to current expenses and must not be used to reduce or eliminate accumulated deficits or to retroactively fund activities prior to date of application;
- The organization will make every effort to secure funding from other sources as indicated in its application;
- The organization will maintain proper records and accounts of all revenues and expenditures relating to its activities and, upon the City’s request, will make all records and accounts available for inspection by the City or its auditors;

- If there are any changes in the organization’s activities as presented in its application, the City must be notified in writing immediately and must provide approval for such changes;
- In the event that the grant funds are not used for the organization’s activities as described in the application, they are to be repaid to the City in full. If the activities are completed without requiring the full use of the City funds, the remaining City funds are also to be returned to the City;
- The organization must acknowledge the financial assistance of the City of Kelowna on all communications and promotional materials relating to its activities, such as programmes, brochures, posters, advertisements, websites, news releases and signs. Acknowledgement is provided by using the City of Kelowna logo in accordance with prescribed standards;
- The organization will be required to provide 3 high-quality, clear photographs that portray the programs and services you are offering to the community with the Final Report. The images must be free of copyright from the photographer (signed release waiver) and signed or written permission of any person included in the picture for unlimited usage rights by the City of Kelowna;
- The organization agrees to indemnify and save harmless the City and its elected and appointed officials, officers and employees, in respect of all claims for bodily injury or death, property damage or other loss or damage arising from the conduct of any work by or any act or omission of the organization or any directors, officers, volunteers or employees, of the organization;
- The organization agrees to not take any action, or permit any directors, officers, volunteers or employees of the organization; to take any action which is intended, or would reasonably be expected, to harm the City's reputation, or which would reasonably be expected to lead to unwanted or unfavorable publicity to the City; provided, however, the foregoing limitation shall not apply to compliance with any legal process or statements made in response to authorized inquiry from a court or regulatory body; and
- Receipt of a grant does not guarantee funding in the future.

## **7.0 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Grant applicants should identify any information in their submission, or any accompanying documentation supplied in confidence for which confidentiality is to be maintained by the City. The confidentiality of such information will be maintained by the City, except as otherwise required under the Province of British Columbia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or other legal disclosure process. Grant applicants are advised that their qualifications will, as necessary during the selection process, be disclosed on a confidential basis, to the City’s advisers for the purposes of evaluation, administration and analysis of their submissions. General information about the organization/project, including the funded amount and the organization being funded under the program may also be released.

## 8.0 CONTACT INFORMATION

### Cultural Services Branch

Address: 101-1360 Ellis Street  
Kelowna, BC V1Y 2A2

Phone: (250) 469-8650

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Email: [culture@kelowna.ca](mailto:culture@kelowna.ca)

SCHEDULE 1 – DETAILED ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	
	Description
<b>Program objectives</b>  15%	There is evidence of demand and participation in the programs or services through quantifiable data including level of activity, attendance, participation, membership and volunteers.
	There is evidence of change or growth in demand and participation and/or in the quality or quantity of programs and services offered.
	There is evidence of a healthy overall financial position with adequate resources to support the organization’s mission and goals.
<b>Strategic Investments</b>  30%	The organization has clear, strategic goals that are linked to the mission, provide overall direction for the organization and drive day-to-day operations.
	The organization embraces and demonstrates the guiding principles of the 2020-2025 Cultural Plan.
	The organization is committed to advance the goals and strategies of the 2020-2025 Cultural Plan.
	There is evidence of positive community impact to the program participants, organization volunteers and/ or the community at large.
	The organization has a way to gather feedback about its programs and services and regularly evaluates and improves its programs and services in response.
	Programs have evolved or are evolving to reflect changes in the community and in the creative sector as a whole.
<b>Vitality</b>  10%	Programs and services are aligned with the organization’s vision, mission and goals.
	The type and quality of programming is consistent with or exceeds industry standards.
<b>Capacity</b>  35%	There is an appropriate balance between administrative and program-related costs to enable fulfillment of the organization’s mission and objectives.
	Sound financial and budgeting practices are in place with expenses aligned to realistic revenue projections.
	Revenue includes diverse sources of support, including public sector, private sector, individual donations, self-generated revenue and in-kind support.
	There is evidence of financial planning for revenue-diversification, program support or growth, and to support long-term goals and strategies.
	Board membership provides appropriate expertise and relevant community representation to support the mission, goals, and strategies of the organization. The board composition is reflective of the diversity of audience they serve.
	There are appropriate positions and structures in place to support operations, programs or services and align with mission, goals and strategies.
	The organization invests in professional development for staff, board and volunteers in order to build on the organization’s ability to respond to changing demands and new opportunities.
<b>Connections</b>  10%	The organization has leveraged its human and financial resources by actively collaborating with other organizations to deliver programs or initiatives.
	There are effective strategies in place to create awareness of, build appreciation for, and drive participation in the organization and its programs or services.