

Frequently Asked Questions

Version 2

Posted October 10, 2025

This list has been updated with formally submitted questions as of 5 p.m. October 8, 2025. Please read through carefully to see if your question is covered. If not, email sfac.grants@sfgov.org for additional clarification.

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Added 9/9/25:

Advance Payment Policy Questions

What is the goal of this policy and who was it issued by? [Combined Question]

The goal of this policy is to meet the requirements of the ordinance passed by the Board of Supervisors in March 2024, which required the City to issue new policies and reports guiding the City’s work with nonprofit contractors, Executive Directive 24-04 on Nonprofit Grant Administration Reform issued by Mayor London Breed’s Office in September 2024, and the updated Accounting Policies & Procedures issued in August 2025 by the Controller’s Office that regulates advance payments to community based organizations.

[Ordinance 055-24](#)

[Executive Directive 24-04 Nonprofit Grant Administration Reform](#)

[New Policies and Tools Issued by City Controller to Improve Oversight of Nonprofits](#)

[City & County of San Francisco - Office of the Controller August 2025 Accounting Policies & Procedures](#)

Does the advance payment policy apply to individuals or is it for non-profits only?

The advance payment and quarterly reporting policy applies to all grantees, individuals and nonprofits receiving funding from the City and County of San Francisco.

Can our organization continue to only request funds by reimbursement (and not advance payments)? If so, are quarterly reports only needed for advance payments, or for reimbursement as well?"

Quarterly reports are required for all grantees, whether or not they request an advance payment or reimbursement.

What other funding sources can a grantee use to cover the other 50% of the grant? [Combined Question]

Grantees can use funding from any source to cover the 50% of the grant amount paid via reimbursements. This could be from other grant funding, loans, credit card payments, or other resources.

How should I cover costs not covered by the advance payment? Does this mean I will need to issue IOU's? [Combined Question]

The grantee is responsible for managing cashflow in conjunction with the reimbursement schedule included in the grant agreement. Applicants and grantees may work with Arts Commission staff for technical assistance in support of this process.

If I receive a \$25,000 advance and during the first quarter I only spend \$10,000, will I submit an initial quarterly report showing that \$10,000 has been spent but not receive any additional funds?

Correct, you will not receive additional funds from the City until the entirety of the advance payment has been spent. If your advance payment was \$25,000 you must spend the entire \$25,000 and additional funds in order to receive reimbursement for the additional funds. Quarterly reports are required whether you are submitting for reimbursement or not.

Is there a limit to the amount that can be requested on the next quarter for reimbursement?

There is no limit to the amount disbursed through quarterly reimbursements. If the grantee has spent the entirety of their grant amount by the second quarter, they can request to be reimbursed for the entire remaining amount of the grant and will be able to close their grant once the final report is approved. Quarterly reports will be required until the grantee submits a final report and closes out the grant.

If I as an individual artist use a fiscal sponsor like Intersection for the Arts, do I apply for advances and reimbursements through Intersection?

The advance payment and reimbursement policy is separate from any MOU agreement an artist or group may have with a fiscal sponsor. The entity completing the advance payment request letter is the subgrantee, not the fiscal sponsor. The approved advance payment request and information will be included in the grant agreement, which is signed by the fiscal sponsor. Both parties should work together to best manage the advance payment process and quarterly reporting.

These SFAC grants are such large dollar amounts. A monthly invoicing process would be more equitable, versus artists needing to fund such large amounts of the grants themselves.

The application funding request should reflect an amount manageable by the potential grantee. If a grantee cannot manage a \$50,000 grant, they can and should request a smaller grant amount. Grantees are not required to request the full amount.

Where do we need to advocate for a change on this policy?

The Arts Commission cannot assist with advocacy measures undertaken by the community.

Eligibility Questions

Can I apply if I live outside of San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency.

Can I apply if I just moved to San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency.

Can I apply if I live outside of San Francisco but work in San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency.

Can I apply on behalf of someone who lives outside of San Francisco?

No. The artist or organization doing the work must be the applicant. Please email sfac.grants@sfgov.org regarding collaborations or partnerships.

Can I apply if I live outside of San Francisco, but my fiscal sponsor is in San Francisco?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency for the fiscally sponsored project as well as the fiscal sponsor.

Can I apply with a fiscal sponsor based outside of San Francisco?

No. The fiscal sponsor organization must have a physical San Francisco address (not PO Box) and must have been in operation in San Francisco for at least two years.

Can I apply if one of my required good standing documents is pending (IRS, California Attorney general, etc.)?

No. Organizations and fiscal sponsors must be in good standing with all required entities at the time of application.

If my Arts Impact Endowment grant term ends June 2026 or June 2027, can I apply this year?

No. Arts Impact Endowment grantees with grant terms that end June 2026 or June 2027 are not eligible for this application cycle.

If I close my Arts Impact Endowment grant with a grant term that ends June 2026 or June 2027 before the Arts Impact Endowment grant deadline, can I apply this year?

No. No matter when the final report is submitted, the grant term ends June 2026 or June 2027. Arts Impact Endowment grantees with grant terms that end June 2026 or June 2027 are not eligible to apply in this application cycle.

My organization has an open Cultural Equity Initiatives grant with a grant term end date of June 30, 2026 or June 30, 2027, Can my organization apply this year?

Yes. Organizations with open Cultural Equity Initiative grants who do not have open Arts Impact Endowment grants are encouraged to apply to the Arts Impact Endowment categories.

My organization presents arts or culture programming as part of its core activities, but arts and culture programming does not represent the majority of the organization's programs and services. Is my organization eligible to apply?

No. The organization's mission statement must be clearly focused on the development, production, presentation, and/or support of project-based artistic works and/or youth arts activities in San Francisco.

Are you able to make exceptions to your residency requirements for displaced artists or artists who are really worth funding?

No. All Arts Commission grants require two years of San Francisco residency and there are no exceptions.

Are you able to make exceptions to your good standing requirements for new organizations, or organizations that are waiting to hear back from external agencies?

No. Organizations and fiscal sponsors must be in good standing with all required entities at the time of application.

I want to apply for an Artistic Legacy Grant, and I've been a practicing artist in San Francisco since 1990. Am I eligible?

Yes, you are eligible because you are a San Francisco resident and you have been a practicing artist based in San Francisco for 25 or more years. Artistic Legacy Grant applicants need to have been a practicing artist in San Francisco continuously since 2000 or before.

Added 10/10/25:

What qualifies as "residency" for organizations? Do we need bricks and mortar?

Organizations must provide proof of the San Francisco address where your organization is based and where your work takes place.

If you are fiscally sponsored and share your address with your fiscal sponsor and provide a signed co-working agreement, do you need to provide any other documentation for proof of corporate address?

No other documentation for proof of corporate address is needed for the fiscally sponsored organization, provided that the signed co-working agreement meets SFAC's criteria as listed in the guidelines and organization application instructions.

If using a fiscal sponsor, the applicant's address must be different from their fiscal sponsor. If the applicant is operating their business in a fiscal sponsor's space, they must provide a current signed co-working agreement.

If my organization does not have a bill with the organization's name, can we use the fiscal sponsor's address as proof of residency?

The organization's proof of address needs to have the organization's name on it. If using a fiscal sponsor, the applicant's address must be different from their fiscal sponsor. If the applicant is operating their business in a fiscal sponsor's space, they must provide a current signed co-working agreement.

What budget figure is used: annual expenses or revenue?

When determining budget eligibility, the budget number is based on annual revenue.

Does Recology or trash collection statements count as proof of address?

Yes, Recology or trash collection is considered a utility bill.

Can an artist apply representing a 501c3 arts organization?

Individual artists and Organizations need to create separate accounts in the Grants Portal SmartSimple. Individual Artists should apply as individuals. 501c3's should apply as Organizations.

Can I apply as an organization without a current Arts Impact Endowment grant for a project that involves an artist who is a current Arts Impact Endowment grantee in their capacity as an artist? Same question regarding a lead artist who is a current grantee for the Artistic Legacy Grant?

You cannot apply for the exact same project. We understand that folks will have iterations and expansions of their work. If that is the case, the application would have to have discernably different grant plan activities, dates, and expenses. It needs to be obviously a different scope of work.

If I have a small for profit gallery, should I apply as an organization or individual artist?

Organization applicants must not be a for profit entity.

The Artistic Legacy Grant is for artists and not organizations. Correct?

Yes. It is a grant for an artist. Applicants need an individual artist account in SmartSimple in order to apply.

Can the Arts Impact Endowment grant activities be for all three funding areas or only one?

Applicants must choose one of the three funding areas to respond to in the narrative.

Are artists eligible for the Special Project Grant category?

No. Special Project Grants are for organizations only.

Can I apply as an organization if my 501c3 status is pending?

If you are not currently a 501c3 you will have to apply with a fiscal sponsor in order to provide the required compliance documentation.

When will Cultural Equity Initiative guidelines be posted?

Only the Arts Impact Endowment and Artistic Legacy Grant are being offered this year. The Arts Impact Endowment provides general operating support for organizations. Organizations looking for general operating support should apply to the Arts Impact Endowment category.

Can an individual artist and a 501c3 they work with apply for grant funding at the same time?

Yes, however the activities in the applications cannot overlap.

This is my first time applying. Do I need to demonstrate two years of artistic history in San Francisco?

Yes, you will need to demonstrate two years of artistic practice in San Francisco. These activities can be with other collaborators and partners. For example, if you are applying to write an album of choral music, you could include events in the last two years with other bands and choirs.

Fiscal Sponsor Questions

How do I know if I need a fiscal sponsor?

Artists working with vulnerable populations; defined as working with a minor under 18 years old, a senior over 65 years old or anyone from a disabled population; and organizations filing taxes as sole proprietorships or single member LLCs with a budget cap of \$500,000 must work with a fiscal sponsor. Please email sfac.grants@sfgov.org to determine eligibility.

Can I add a fiscal sponsor if my grant is funded?

No. The fiscal sponsor agreement is required to be provided at the time of application.

Can I remove a fiscal sponsor if my grant is funded?

No. The fiscal sponsor agreement is required to be provided at the time of application. Fiscal sponsor relationships cannot change after the application deadline or throughout the grant term. If your grant is funded through a fiscal sponsor and you terminate your agreement with your fiscal sponsor, your grant with SFAC will be terminated. If the fiscal sponsor organization ceases operations, at the discretion of the SFAC, staff may elect to reassign a grant to either the subgrantee or a new fiscal sponsor with Arts Commission approval.

Can an organization fiscally sponsor an artist to work for the same organization on an Arts Commission funded project?

No. An organization that hires an artist to work on a project is an employer, not a fiscal sponsor. Organizations cannot act as a fiscal sponsor for employees, board members or artists hired or contracted by that organization; a third-party fiscal sponsor is required.

Grant Activity Questions

Can I apply to tour my project outside of San Francisco?

No. All grant activities must take place in San Francisco.

Can my project include activities outside of San Francisco?

No. All grant activities must take place in San Francisco.

Can I use my grant funds for travel?

You can use funds for travel within San Francisco. You cannot use funds for travel outside of San Francisco.

Can I use the grant funds to pay project personnel (i.e. artists, staff, contractors, consultants) who live outside of San Francisco?

While the grantee and all project activities need to be based in and take place in San Francisco, project personnel (excluding the grantee that must live and/or operate in San Francisco during their entire grant term), do not need to be based in San Francisco.

Added 10/10/25:

Ineligible Expenses for all Grant Categories includes Fundraising activity (Development staff is allowed as a direct personnel cost). Does this mean if you contract fundraising staff, they would not be an eligible expense under Professional Services?

Correct. Only employee direct personnel costs are allowed.

Are honorariums covered by the Arts Impact Endowment grant?

Yes, payments to artists are covered by these grants.

For Gen Support 2: can organizations request both a single item purchase at \$10,000 or more AND the other planning examples for org development and staff development?

Yes, organizations can request both a single item purchase of \$10,000 or more and do other activities related to the funding area.

Can you please explain what “six grant plan activities and outputs” means in the application guidelines? Is this a different way of asking for set goals for the grant activity timeline?

Yes, these are the activities you plan to use the funds for and your project timeline. The activity is a description of what you are doing, and the output is a quantifiable measure that will come from the activity.

Content Questions

What types of work samples can I submit?

There is no limit to the type of work samples we accept as long as they are accessible via link or one of the allowed file upload types referenced in the instructions: pdf, doc, docx, mpg, mp3, mp4, vma, divx, mov, avi, wmv, wma, jpg. Please email sfac.grants@sfgov.org if you have questions about a specific work sample.

The Arts Commission cannot accept Apple Software/System documents. Apple documents are not acceptable file types. Please convert Apple documents to pdf, or other accepted file type.

Do you fund film?

We fund every type of artistic genre or practice. There is no limit to the type of project that we fund.

Added 10/10/25:

For writing samples, is one page considered one minute?

In general, 100 words is one minute of reading. This can vary depending on how the text is presented on the page and who is reading it.

Are marketing materials from past workshops a good supporting document?

It depends. If the workshop is not related in content or topic to the project you are proposing, it might not be relevant.

How do I demonstrate working with local community as a writer?

Most writers work with editors and publishers, and do research about their topics. Writers share their work publicly by publishing materials or doing readings in person or online. These materials are then accessible to community. Applicants will need to identify who their community is as part of the narrative response.

Compliance Questions

What are the requirements regarding the San Francisco Minimum Compensation Ordinance? How does this differ from the general San Francisco Minimum Wage Ordinance? Who does the Minimum Compensation Ordinance apply to?

[Minimum Compensation Ordinance | SF.gov](#) is currently \$21.55 per hour. Non-Profit rate will increase to \$23.00 on January 1, 2026.

[Minimum Wage Ordinance | SF.gov](#) is currently \$19.18.

Minimum Wage is a San Francisco law. All grantees are required to adhere to local, state and federal laws. Minimum Compensation is a separate ordinance required for nonprofit organizations with five or more employees. If you will pay one of your five employees with grant funds, you must pay them at least the minimum compensation amount which is higher than minimum wage. Please see the links above for more information.

Is there a health insurance requirement or option for the grant?

There is no health insurance requirement to receive funding. The Arts Commission does not provide artist health insurance.

Can Admin/Indirect Expenses be Ineligible Expenses or do they have to be Eligible Expenses?

All expenses need to be eligible expenses as defined by Appendix A in the grant agreement and aligned to the approved budget.

How should I document Admin/Indirect Expenses?

Admin/Indirect Expenses go under the Admin/Indirect line item on the expense report.

As an artist grantee, how do I show that I paid myself for the work?

Artist grantees should include what they are paying themselves in their grant budget. The reporting process will include an expense report to document how the grant money was spent. Artists may also create invoices for themselves or others to document payment. Please keep all receipts for any items purchased as part of the project and paid for by grant funds for a minimum of five years.

What are the benefits of being paid as an LLC?

An LLC allows collectives and groups that do not want to incorporate into a nonprofit access to the larger organization grant amounts. A single member LLC may also provide some additional liability protection for individual artists. Please consult with your financial advisor for questions regarding your specific needs and concerns.

Added 10/10/25:

Can you please give an example of “physical theater” in the new requirement for proof of general liability insurance?

Physical theater is a specific classification some artists identify with that is movement-based.

If our organization has adult and youth programming, but our intended grant plan is only for adults, do we still need to have misconduct insurance?

If your organization works with youth under 18, you need to provide misconduct insurance, even if it is not explicit in grant plan.

If our organization plans to serve only adults in the project activities and budget to purchase equipment that will eventually be used in youth programs, would we need the additional misconduct insurance?

If your organization works with youth under 18, you need to provide misconduct insurance, even if it is not explicit in grant plan.

If Funded Questions***When does the press release go out announcing grantees?***

The Press Release usually goes out around July 1, which coincides with the start of your grant term.

When should I expect my first payment?

The City’s payment process is a NET 30 pay period, which means you should have money in hand within 30 days of signing your invoice.

How quickly will reimbursement requests be processed?

All City payments have a NET 30-day payment timeline, which means grantees will receive payment within 30 days of signing their invoice; provided that the supplier account is fully compliant and all insurance requirements are up to date.

How much will my first payment be?

Initial payment or disbursement amounts will depend on the Advance Payment amount requested. Most Advance Payments will be 50% of the total grant.

What is the disbursement schedule for grant payments?

The disbursement schedule is tied to quarterly reporting. Once the 50% advance has been spent, grantees will submit quarterly reports and requests for reimbursement.

Does the Arts Commission offer direct deposit for individual artist grantees?

It depends. If you have an Employer Identification Number from the IRS or are registered as a single member LLC you may have the option to sign up for direct deposit. If you sign up as a Supplier with a W9 sole proprietor designation and use your social security number, you will not be able to sign up for direct deposit and will receive a paper check in the mail.

What are the criteria to receive a direct deposit as an individual?

You must register as a City Supplier with a W9 that has an Employer Identification Number from the IRS or as a single member LLC. Then you must enroll in the third-party payment provider, [Paymode-X](#).

Are payments made by the Paymode system?

Direct Deposit payments are made by [Paymode-X](#), the third-party vendor contracted by the Controller's Office to make payments for the City. If you are receiving a check, the check is processed and mailed by the Controller's Office.

May I pick my check up from the San Francisco Arts Commission Office?

No. The Arts Commission does not issue grant payments. Grant payments are issued by the Controller, and the distribution policy is managed by the Controller's Office. Checks are mailed according to City policy.

Do I have to pay taxes on my grant?

Yes, grants are taxable income. San Francisco Arts Commission staff are not tax preparators and are legally not allowed to advise on any tax questions. Please contact your financial adviser for any tax questions specific to your situation.

Is there a specific format to follow if I want to announce our funding or funded projects on social media?

- ONLINE/PRINTED MATERIALS: Acknowledge City's funding in all publications or other printed materials.
- "Supported by the San Francisco Arts Commission" and state that the activities are sponsored in whole or in part through a grant from the Agency.
- SFAC LOGO: Logos and style guide can be downloaded from our website under [Press Materials](#).
- SOCIAL MEDIA: #SFACfunded
- VERBAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Acknowledge SFAC's support in your verbal remarks when applicable.

Will the SFAC help me publicize my event?

The Arts Commission does its best to publicize as many grantee events as possible, but there is no guarantee as it depends on the timing of the event and staff capacity. Events shared with SFAC staff with less than two weeks before the date of the event may not be publicized. It is easiest to share if you have your post content prepared. For the newsletter, please send the event information by the last week of the month before the event is scheduled to take place for the upcoming month's newsletter. For example, if your event is in August, please send the information to staff by the last week of July or earlier to be included in the next upcoming newsletter.

Will a contact list be shared within the grantee cohort?

Yes, the Arts Commission will provide a contact list of those grantees that have consented to share their information.

San Francisco Arts Commission Funding

Where does the funding for the grants come from?

The Arts Commission receives funding for grants from the [Hotel Tax Fund](#). There are a number of different line items managed by the Arts Commission including the Cultural Equity Endowment, Cultural Center Endowment, and Arts Impact Endowment. Below are the minimum amounts designated by Prop E in 2018.

(2) **Allocation Number 2 (Cultural Equity Endowment):** \$6,400,000 to the Arts Commission for programs that move San Francisco arts funding toward cultural equity, including any associated administrative costs.

(3) **Allocation Number 3 (Cultural Centers):** \$3,800,000 to the Arts Commission to support the operation, maintenance, and programming of City-owned community cultural centers to assure that these cultural centers remain open and accessible and remain vital contributors to the cultural life of the City, including any associated administrative costs.

(5) **Allocation Number 5 (Arts Impact Endowment):** \$2,500,000 to the Arts Commission to address needs in the arts community, including any associated administrative costs, to be determined by a cultural services allocation plan prepared no later than March 1, 2019, and every five years thereafter, by the Director of Cultural Affairs with community input and approved by the Arts Commission and the City Administrator.

Can the Mayor cut the budget for the Arts Commission Grants?

The [Hotel Tax Fund](#) is a voter approved initiative. Changes to the baseline amounts of the line items or other allocation changes would have to go through an additional voter initiative process.

Do "SFAC" grants now include GFTA funding (and not just SF Arts Commission funding)?

No. Grants for the Arts remains at present under the City Administrator's Office. Additionally, the Arts Commission grants and grants issued by Grants for the Arts come from separate line items in the Hotel Tax Fund.

SEC. 515.01. HOTEL TAX ALLOCATIONS.

Other Funders

The grant amount does not cover the full cost of my project, what other funders do you recommend?

Please see the Arts Funding Resources section of our website: [Arts Funding Resources | San Francisco Arts Commission \(sfartscommission.org\)](#)

I am not eligible for your funding. What other funders do you recommend?

Please see the Arts Funding Resources section of our website: [Arts Funding Resources | San Francisco Arts Commission \(sfartscommission.org\)](https://www.sfartscommission.org/arts-funding-resources)