



CKAF 2026 Festival Grant Guidelines: Emerging Festivals

Program Description

Annual grants to support the production, presentation, and operations of arts festivals that have a city-wide impact. This program has two categories, based on years of operation and festival history:

- Established Festivals
- **Emerging Festivals**

This grant program provides operational support for established festivals run by incorporated non-profit arts organizations with a sustained history of festival delivery, and smaller festival grants for emerging arts festivals run by non-profit organizations and collectives.

A festival is defined as a concentrated collection of arts activities with a common theme. Festivals funded through this program must have a primary focus on the arts and may be devoted to one or more artistic discipline(s).

This document outlines the guidelines for organizations applying as **Emerging Festivals**. To review the guidelines for Established Festivals, please visit www.artskingston.ca/ckaf/festivals

City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF) Festival Grants awarded to applicants in the Emerging Festivals category are not guaranteed to be recurring, however, successful applicants in this category are encouraged to reapply in future years.

Key Dates

Applications Open	Thursday, 26 March 2026
Information Session	Thursday, 16 April 2026, 5:00 PM
Application Deadline	Thursday, 7 May 2026, 11:59 PM
Results Expected	Wednesday, 8 July 2026

Funding Period

CKAF 2026 Festival Grants are intended to support festival activities occurring between September 2026 – December 2027.

Grant Amounts

Grants awarded to Emerging Festivals range from \$10,000 – \$20,000.



Contact Information - Kingston Arts Council

Inquiries regarding the CKAF Festival Grant program should be directed to Shamara Peart, Grants Administrator at grants@artskingston.ca or **613-546-2787**.

Applicants may also visit the KAC office in person during office hours. The KAC office is open to the public **Monday – Friday, 10AM – 5PM** and is located at:

Unit 115, Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning
370 King St W, Kingston ON K7L 2X4

Grant Application Support

The KAC is committed to Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IIDEA) and strives to make our granting processes more accessible. Applicants with accessibility needs are encouraged to contact KAC staff as early in the application period as possible to request accommodations for their grant application. Applicant support offered for the CKAF grant program include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Providing ASL interpretation at all CKAF Information Sessions;
- Facilitating online or in-person meetings, and by request:
 - Providing Access Notes for the KAC office for in-person meetings; and/or
 - Providing ASL interpretation for individual meetings with applicants, typically hosted via Zoom.
- **New to CKAF:** Providing financial support of up to \$500 for grant writing services for applicants who are Deaf, living with a disability, illiterate, or do not have a working proficiency in English;
 - Note: Financial support for CKAF grant writing services must be requested by the applicant and approved by the KAC no less than two weeks prior to the application deadline. Applicants who are approved for this type of support must then submit the service provider's details to KAC staff, who will coordinate payment with the service provider directly. The applicant is responsible for paying the service provider for any costs exceeding the maximum allowance.
- Providing recommendations for services or tools that may be of use to artists with accessibility needs

Alternate forms of support for grant applications, including alternative submission methods for components of an application, may be considered upon request. Please contact KAC staff if there is another way we can make the grant application process more accessible for you, and we'd be happy to consider it.

Eligible Applications

Emerging Festivals must:

- Take place in the City of Kingston;
- Have a defined period of no less than one day and no longer than one month, and take place between September 2026 – December 2027;
- Have a primary focus on the arts and meet the definition of a festival outlined in the Program Description; and
- Offer programming that is open and accessible to the broader public (i.e. not require membership), including some programming offered free of charge or discounted either for the public or a designated priority group.

Applicants must also:

1. Operations and Mandate:

- Compensate artists and arts workers and demonstrate efforts to meet industry standard rates at minimum;
- Meet the operations and mandate requirements for their respective applicant type, as defined below:

Non-profit Organizations:

- Be incorporated as a non-profit organization or registered charity for a minimum of one year;
- Be physically located and deliver programs and services within the City of Kingston;
- Have a history of public programming, project delivery, and budget management; and
- Be governed by a Board of Directors or other body responsible for the organization.

Collectives:

- Consist of a group of three or more professional artists and/or community members who have come together for the purposes of artistic creation and presentation in a collective artistic endeavour;
- Based on shared artistic input, workload, risks, and rewards amongst a group of individuals that works together regularly;
- Are not legally incorporated;
- Have a majority of members who reside and/or regularly work within the City of Kingston; and
- Have a lead applicant who resides within the City of Kingston and is responsible for managing the grant funds, application, and reporting.

- If the arts organization is situated within a multi-purpose institution (i.e., library, university, museum, etc.) the applicant must clearly demonstrate their independence by being able to fulfill all eligibility requirements separately and distinctly from the multi-purpose institution. This includes a fully segregated and itemized financial statement specifically for the revenues and expenses of the organization separate from the multi-purpose institution. Arts organizations within a multi-purpose institution must be governed by a board of directors or an advisory body solely responsible for the arts organization. Levels of funding for organizations associated with and supported by a multi-purpose institution will be determined based on need and maximizing the impact of municipal funding;
- Alternate structures may be considered to facilitate Indigenous agency, at the discretion of the Kingston Arts Council and the City of Kingston; and
- Organizations registered in nearby areas, including First Nation or Indigenous communities, may be considered eligible at the discretion of the Kingston Arts Council in consultation with the City of Kingston, provided the majority of festival activities occur within the City of Kingston.

2. Financial:

- Demonstrate additional funding/revenue sources — CKAF funding requests cannot account for 100% of the applicant's proposed budget;
- Administrative costs must not exceed 20% of your total budget;
- Be in good standing with the City of Kingston and with CKAF and/or other City grants (i.e. successful completion of projects and submitted final reports, no outstanding invoices with any City departments); and
- Demonstrate responsible financial management, defined for their respective applicant type as:

Non-profit Organizations:

- Submit independently-prepared financial statements for the most recent fiscal year available, signed by two Board members, in the form of Audited Financial Statements, a Review Engagement Report, or Compilation Statement.

Collectives:

- Provide two reference letters which speak to the collective's ability to execute the festival as proposed in the application. This may include speaking to their history of public programming, project delivery, and/or budget management.

Eligible Expenses and Activities:

Expenses and activities that may be funded by CKAF Festivals Grants include:

- Artists fees;
 - Note: Applicants **must** include artist fees as part of their expenses to be eligible for CKAF grants, and are expected to meet industry standard rates at minimum.
- Travel and Accommodations;
- Production and technical (including equipment and venue rental);
- Marketing, promotion, and audience development;
- Administration;
- Insurance;
- Staffing;
- Accessibility;
- Security and policing; and
- Volunteer program development and training.

Ineligible Applications

Applicants and festivals that are considered ineligible to apply through this category include:

- Festivals not primarily focused on the arts;
- Commercial, for-profit businesses and/or festivals;
- Organizations or collectives based on fundraising or building awareness for a third party, such as a charitable cause or political movement, focused on religious practice, or the goal to change religious belief;
- Organizations or collectives that directly deliver curriculum-based education (such as a school) or which are based on the pursuit of a postsecondary diploma or degree; and
- Organizations already receiving funding from the City of Kingston through other sources including grants or Service Level Agreements. Organizations may only receive funding through one CKAF grant stream annually. In-kind support is excepted, especially as it may relate to participation in multi-partner initiatives.

Ineligible Expenses and Activities:

Expenses and activities that may not be funded by CKAF Festivals Grants include:

- Capital projects;
- Furthering a for-profit venture or to advantage a for-profit partner;
- Alcohol;
- Major equipment purchases;
- Fundraising or recovering the costs of an applicant's financial deficits; and
- Programs or services delivered by an organization aligned with any political party or religious group.
- Paying for expenses not directly related to the delivery of the festival for which the applicant is seeking funding; and
- Paying for expenses incurred prior to September 2026.

Assessment Criteria

CKAF Festival Grant applications are assessed based on the criteria outlined below. In preparation for adjudication, jurors assign each of the assessment criteria below a score on a scale of 1 to 5.

Artistic Merit

- Clearly defined purpose that responds to a need in Kingston's arts sector; and
- There are clear commitments to equity in the festival mandate and goals.

Artistic Programming and Service Quality

- Programming reflects the festival's mandate and mission, advances a particular discipline or practice, and is of a quality to merit public support;
- The artists reflect the diversity of Kingston and the festival has inclusive practices to support Indigenous artists and artists from equity deserving communities;
- Commitment to hiring Kingston artists and compensating artists and employees at industry-standard rates;
- Contribution to sector development, including opportunities between collaboration and cross-pollination for emerging and established artists, and between Kingston artists and provincial, national, and international peers; and

- Demonstration of informed and respectful delivery of programming related to Indigenous and equity-deserving groups.

Impact and Benefit to Kingston Residents

- Commitment to developing and/or engaging audiences and participants that reflect the diversity of Kingston;
- Accessibility plans and practices are in place to ensure access to participation, and safety is prioritized;
- The applicant demonstrates efforts to ensure festival programming is impactful, distinct, and innovative in the context of Kingston's arts sector;
- There are strong marketing and outreach plans, strategies, and initiatives in place;
- Community engagement is demonstrated through support from local community partners, businesses, and a mix of for-profit and non-profit partner organizations; and
- The potential to attract audiences from within and beyond Kingston and bring provincial or national recognition to Kingston's arts sector.

Financial Management and Viability

- Strong financial management, including a history of budget management for large-scale projects and strong financial health of the organization (if applicable); and
- There are realistic budget projections, an appropriate balance of programming and administrative expenses, with expenses aligned with revenues.

Administration and Viability

- The festival has a viable and well-resourced volunteer program and training for all staff and volunteers;
- Leadership has the relevant experience, knowledge and skills to manage the festival; and
- Demonstrated commitment to the well-being of staff and volunteers, including having defined policies and practices in place to ensure a healthy workplace culture.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

We recognize that AI technologies can be leveraged as an accessibility tool and to support applicants in navigating the grant writing process. As such, we do not bar applicants from utilizing AI technologies to compose written materials for their applications, however, **the submission of supplementary materials (ex. images, videos, audio) generated by AI is prohibited.**

Applicants must ensure that all information included in their grant application is true and accurate. We recommend that applicants seeking to utilize AI tools to support their grant writing process consider the potential risks, including the duplication of written materials amongst applicants, accuracy of information, data security, and intellectual property concerns. We strongly encourage applicants using AI tools to ensure your written materials are thoroughly reviewed and revised, tailored to your organization or collective, and accurate.

Supplementary Material

Submit five (5) pieces of Supplementary Material to support your application. These can be text, video, audio, or image files that illustrate the artistic merit and impact of the organization.

All text submissions combined cannot exceed 5 pages. All audio/video submissions combined cannot exceed 10 minutes.

Audio files and image files may be attached directly to your email submission.

If submitting video files, please upload the video(s) to a website (ex. Vimeo, Youtube) and submit a single-page document outlining the applicant name, video name, video link, and password to access the video, if applicable. Include time stamps, if needed, to ensure your submission does not exceed the maximum time limit (ex. *Please view 0:00-3:00*).

Application Contents

A complete application, respective to each applicant type, consists of:

Non-profit Organizations:

- Application Form (signed);
- Budget Form;
- Supplementary Material (5 pieces);
- Partnership Letters (if applicable);
- Board of Directors List; and
- Year-End Financial Statements.

Collectives:

- Application Form (signed);
- Budget Form;
- Supplementary Material (5 pieces);
- Partnership Letters (if applicable); and
- Two Reference Letters.