Ontario Arts Council (OAC) - Guide to OAC Project Programs

Guide to OAC Project Programs

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Ontario Arts Council (OAC) project grant programs provide one-time grants for specific projects. Project grants are not meant to cover operating or ongoing expenses.

This guide provides essential information about OAC's project grants, including eligibility, assessment process and policies. Be sure to review it prior to each application as information and policies are updated regularly and subject to change.

Details on specific project grant programs, including eligibility, are available on the grant program pages.

The guide includes the following:
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For information

For general information in French or English, contact **reception**:

416-961-1660 or toll free: 1-800-387-0058, ext. 0
reception@arts.on.ca

For information on specific programs, contact OAC staff listed on the program web page or see the OAC staff list.

The OAC is committed to providing services in French according to the requirements of the *French Language Services Act*. For services in French, see staff listed on program web pages on the French pages of OAC's website and staff listed as bilingual on the OAC staff list.

Eligibility requirements
Eligible applicants include Ontario-based:
- individual professional artists and arts professionals
- ad hoc groups and collectives
- organizations

In some project programs, municipalities, colleges, universities, school boards, First Nations and schools administered by a First Nations or Indigenous Education Authority are eligible. For a list of the types of organizations eligible to apply to a particular project grant program, refer to the program's web page.

Applicants must meet program and OAC eligibility criteria at the time of application submission.

An **individual** must:
- be a professional artist or arts professional

  The OAC defines a professional artist or arts professional as someone who has developed skills through training or practice, is recognized by artists working in the same artistic tradition, has a history of public presentation or publication, seeks payment for their work and actively practices their art. Short breaks in artistic work history are acceptable.
- be 18 years of age or older
- be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada, or have an application pending for permanent resident status and, if requested, be able to provide documentation to verify this.
- be a resident of Ontario

To establish residency in Ontario, you must have lived in Ontario for at least 12 consecutive months before submitting an application. This applies to new Ontario residents and former Ontario residents returning after frequent or long-term

absences.

As an Ontario resident, you may be absent from the province only under the following circumstances to maintain your eligibility:
- If you are absent from Ontario on a recurring basis, such absences must not exceed four months (cumulatively) of the 12 months before the submission of your application. This applies even if you kept an address in Ontario during your absence.
- If you are absent from Ontario on a temporary, one-time basis (for a residency or contract, for example), such an absence must not exceed 12 months of the 12 months before the submission of your application. You must also have been in Ontario for at least 8 months of the year preceding an absence of this length. During this absence, you must not have applied to public funding agencies or ministries in the jurisdiction of your temporary residence.

If requested by OAC, you can, at any time, provide documentation to verify your residency information.

An **ad hoc group** or **collective** must:
- be comprised of at least two members who meet the eligibility requirements for individuals listed above and who will be responsible for the administration of the grant on behalf of the ad hoc group or collective
- have at least 50 per cent of its members residing in Ontario (or both members in the case of two-person collectives)
- not be a corporation
- be able to deposit a grant cheque in the name of the ad hoc group or collective

Note: Ad hoc groups are formed for a one-time project, while collectives have ongoing activity.

An **incorporated not-for-profit organization** must:
- be incorporated in Ontario or federally
- have a head office in Ontario
- be governed by a volunteer board of directors or an advisory board

A **for-profit organization** must:
- be an Ontario-based, Canadian-owned book or magazine publisher eligible for funding in OAC's publishing programs
- be incorporated in Ontario or federally
- have a head office in Ontario

A **college** or **university** must:
- be Ontario-based
- present or produce professional Ontario artists, arts professionals, arts

groups, arts collectives or arts organizations
- be registered through the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Colleges and Universities
- have a staff member responsible for arts programming

A **municipality**, **school board**, **First Nation**, or **school administered by a First Nation or an Indigenous administered authority** must:
- be Ontario-based
- engage professional Ontario artists, or present, produce or publish the work of professional Ontario artists, arts groups, arts collectives or arts organizations
- have a staff member responsible for arts programming

Important: The OAC may request documentation to confirm an applicant's eligibility at any time. If they are unable to provide documentation, their application will be withdrawn or any funds granted must be repaid.

See the full [terms and conditions](#) that govern applications to OAC project grant programs.

Restrictions
- You are not eligible to submit an application to any OAC project program if your final report for a previous grant:
  - is past its due date and has not been submitted
  - is past its due date, has been submitted and requires revisions
  - has been submitted but cannot be approved because of substantial or unresolved issues
- If your final report is in any of the above states, Nova, OAC's online granting system, will stop you from submitting an application to a project program.
- Nova will also stop you from submitting an application to a project program if:
  - you are applying as an individual, but have taken responsibility for a past grant awarded to an ad hoc group or collective that now has a final report in one of the above states
  - you are applying as an ad hoc group or collective, but one or more of the individuals taking responsibility for the application have a final report in one of the above states
- You may only apply for one grant in any program per deadline.
- You cannot **receive** more than one OAC project grant for the same activity.
- You are not eligible to **submit** more than one project grant application at a time for the same activity. You may re-apply to OAC for the same

activity if you have received notification that your first application was not successful.

- Third-party recommender programs are an exception – the same activity may be supported by multiple recommender grants. See recommender program web pages for specific eligibility criteria.

Three-grant limit

- Individuals, and organizations that do not receive OAC operating funding, are eligible to receive up to three project grants awarded from deadlines that fall within the same calendar year, provided each grant is for a different activity.
  - If you apply to three project program deadlines during the year, you cannot submit a fourth until you have received notification that one of your applications has not been successful.
  - If you have already received one project grant in a given year, you may apply for only two other project grants at a time; if you have already received two project grants in a given year, you may apply for only one other project grant at a time.
  - If you are awarded more than one grant through a single third-party recommender program in its 2025-2026 year, these grants will count as one grant toward your three-grant limit for 2025. The recommender programs are: Indigenous Visual Artists' Materials, Exhibition Assistance, Recommender Grants for Theatre Creators and Recommender Grants for Writers. Refer to each program web page for details on the program year and other application and grant amount limits.
  - Grants awarded through Accessibility Fund: Project Support do not count towards a recipient's three-grant limit.
- Operating grant recipients may receive a maximum of two project grants in a year. Refer to each project program page for information on eligible applicants.

Project grant online applications

All OAC grant applications are submitted through OAC's online granting system, Nova. Applications are available approximately two months before a project program deadline.

All application material and related subsequent documents and information must be submitted in Nova.

Note: OAC offers the following alternative services and application processes:

- [Alternative services and processes for Deaf persons and persons with disabilities](#)
- [Offline submissions for persons with limited internet access](#)
- [Oral applications for Indigenous persons](#)

Note: All individuals working on an application for an organization (including ad hoc groups and collectives) must create a personal profile in Nova and link it to the organization's profile. See the [Nova User Guide](#) for step-by-step instructions on how to set up profiles, start applications, and more.

Each program web page links to the application questions and lists what you need to apply.

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Application deadlines

Project grant applications are accepted no later than 1 p.m. ET on the deadline date.

- Nova will prevent you from submitting an application after 1 p.m.
- Once an application is submitted, no changes or additions can be made to it.
- An application cannot be transferred to a different applicant.
- The OAC does not give extensions in order to allow an applicant to submit an application after a deadline.

Withdrawing an application

Reasons for withdrawing an application:

- The applicant does not meet the program eligibility.
- The application is incomplete.
- The applicant has requested that the application be withdrawn.

Timing for withdrawing an application:

- Applications will only be withdrawn after a program deadline has passed (except for programs with open deadlines).
- Applications can be withdrawn at any time in the assessment process.
- It may take up to 5 business days for OAC to respond to a request for withdrawing an application.
- Applicants will be notified by OAC if their application is withdrawn.

Note: If you want to withdraw your application from a recommender program, you must contact the recommender directly to make a request.

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Support for Deaf persons or persons with disabilities
Supporting accessibility costs for applications and final reports
Applicants who are Deaf or have a disability and need support to complete their grant application can apply for funds to cover the costs of assistance from service

providers. Up to $500 is available per eligible applicant per year (April 1 – March 30) through Accessibility Fund: Application Support. This funding should be requested at least four weeks before the project program deadline. Grant recipients who need help with their final reports can also request up to $150 per report.

Please be aware that OAC may need advance notice to provide certain alternative formats and accommodations while leaving enough time for applicants to submit their application on time.

For more information, please talk to the Application Support contact person or the contact person for your granting program as soon as possible to discuss options.

Supporting accessibility costs for funded projects
Deaf artists and artists with disabilities who apply for or receive a project grant may request supplementary funds to help them cover anticipated accessibility expenses.

Accessibility Fund: Project Support is open to applicants who identify as Deaf or as having a disability, ad hoc groups and collectives with one or more members who identify as Deaf or as having a disability, and incorporated organizations that have a mandate to serve Deaf artists and artists with disabilities and are led by board members and/or staff members who identify as Deaf or as having a disability.

To find out how to apply and what expenses are eligible, see the Accessibility Fund: Project Support web page.

The OAC identifies Deaf artists as distinct from artists with disabilities based on the Canadian Hearing Society's definition of "Culturally Deaf," a term that refers to individuals who identify with and participate in the language, culture, and community of Deaf people.

The OAC identifies artists with disabilities as people who have physical, mental or learning conditions with long-term, temporary or varying effects that may be apparent or not.

For more information, see OAC's Alternative services and processes for Deaf persons and persons with disabilities and the Accessibility Plan.

Assessment and decision-making process
The OAC uses a peer assessment process to make grant decisions in most

programs. See the [Guide to OAC Assessment](#) for information on the peer assessment methods that OAC uses: juries, advisory panels and third-party recommenders. The Guide also includes information on the role and responsibilities of assessors, conflict of interest policies, etc.

For information on assessments of applications submitted in French outside of the Francophone Arts section, see [Assessment of French language applications](#) in the Guide to OAC Assessment.

Finding out about a grant decision

When grant decisions are made, approximately four and a half months after the deadline, OAC will inform you by email that the results of your application are available in Nova. Applicants must log in to their profile in Nova to view the grant notification letter. Please do not call or email OAC for this information.

Grant notification letters include, as applicable:
- the status of the grant: Awarded, Denied or Withdrawn
- the recommended grant amount
- any conditions that must be met in order to release the grant payment(s), including a deadline for meeting conditions

If you are awarded a grant, you must complete the following tasks in Nova:
- enter your social insurance number (individuals only)
- confirm that you understand your personal responsibility for the grant (ad hoc groups and collectives only; this must be done by each of the two members specified in the application as taking responsibility for the grant)
- verify your mailing address
- confirm that you will request approval from OAC before making any significant changes to the project
- acknowledge receipt of the notification letter

These must be done before the grant cheque can be issued.

Grant payment

The payment of your grant will be held if you or your co-applicant (if applicable) have a final report that:
- is past its due date and has not been submitted
- has been submitted but requires revisions
- has been submitted but cannot be approved because of substantial or unresolved issues
- has been submitted but has not yet been reviewed by OAC staff
    - Note that it may take a number of days for OAC staff to review a final report. In this case, no action is required from you.

The payment of your grant will also be held if:

- you have been awarded a grant as an individual, but have taken responsibility for a past grant awarded to an ad hoc group or collective that now has a final report in one of the above states
- you have been awarded a grant as an ad hoc group or collective, but one or more of the individuals taking responsibility for the grant have a final report in one of the above states
- OAC has asked you to repay all or part of a past grant and you have not yet done so

The OAC sends grant cheques by regular mail.

If conditions are not met, the grant will be forfeited and not paid.

Assessment feedback
In many OAC programs, you may request that the OAC program officer provide a verbal summary of your application's assessment. Exceptions include programs such as Visual Artists Creation Projects and Literary Creation Projects. Check your notification letter to see if feedback is available for the program you applied to.

Assessors read and score all project applications before the assessment meeting. In programs where the number of applications is much higher than the number of available grants, assessors review these preliminary scores as a group at the beginning of the meeting. Only the highest-scoring applications are discussed and further considered for funding.

The program officer will summarize assessors' comments about your application if it was among those discussed at the meeting. If your application was not discussed, the officer will share information about the program and deadline, as well as general advice on preparing a strong application.

If you get a grant
If you receive a grant, you must:

- complete the project as outlined in your application to OAC
- request prior approval for changes to the key collaborators, budget, programming, duration, timing and location(s) of the funded activity (see Making changes to a funded project below)
- publicly recognize OAC funding by reading and following the Recognition Requirements for Project Grant Recipients
- submit a final report when you complete your project
  - Final reports must be submitted by the due date indicated in Nova.

- If your final report budget shows a surplus of more than $250, you may be required to repay the surplus amount to OAC.

If you do not submit a final report or do not complete your project, OAC may require you to repay the grant.

Making changes to a funded project

When you receive a project grant, you agree to use the funds for the purposes you outlined in your application. However, sometimes it's impossible to complete the project exactly as planned. In these cases, OAC will allow you to adapt the project, as long as you request prior approval. The officer needs to review your proposed changes to confirm that your modified project is still eligible, and that it retains enough of the original elements that influenced the assessors' grant recommendation.

OAC will not approve changes that substantially alter the project's primary purpose, vision and/or goals as described in your application, or that make the project ineligible.

What constitutes a significant change may depend on the program and project. Contact program staff if you have questions.

To submit a request for approval of project changes:
- Log in to your Nova account.
    - Note: If your personal profile is affiliated with a collective, ad hoc group or organization, you may need to switch to the correct profile after logging in.
- In the **Applications for...** section of your home page, select the **Grants** tab.
- Click the row for the application that corresponds to your project.
- At the top left corner of the application, click on the red **Request Project Change Approval** button.
- Click **Continue** and follow the instructions to send a message to the program officer through Nova.

Approval is at the sole discretion of OAC. If OAC does not approve the changes to your project and if you do not complete the project as outlined in the application, you may be required to return all or part of the grant. The amount of grant funds to be returned will be calculated by OAC.

Cancelling a project

If you can no longer carry out a project funded by OAC, you will probably need to return the grant. There are two possible scenarios.

- **If you haven't spent any of the OAC grant money,** contact the program officer for instructions on how to return it to OAC.
- **If you have spent some or all of the OAC grant money,** submit a request for approval of project changes (see above). Describe how far you got into the project and indicate how much of the grant you spent. State clearly that you are cancelling the project. The program officer will contact you to discuss full or partial grant repayment. You will need to submit a final report on the spent portion of the grant.

Final report extensions

To request a final report due date extension, use the **Request Project Change Approval** button on your application or final report. See instructions under Making changes to a funded project.

If the extension is approved, your final report due date will be updated in Nova.

Requests will be considered when there are:
- unanticipated changes to project plans that prevent you from completing the project by the end date given in the application.
- significant personal or administrative circumstances outside your control that prevent you from submitting the final report by its due date.

You will need to explain why you are requesting an extension and provide an updated timeline for completing the project or final report.

The program officer cannot approve a final report due date extension solely to enable you to submit a new application.

See the Terms and Conditions for receipt of OAC project grant funds.