

DATE: August 4, 2025  
TO: Mayor Barbara Buffaloe  
Members of the City Council  
FROM: Diana Moxon, Chair, Commission on Cultural Affairs  
RE: Arts Funding Recommendations for FY2026

Dear Mayor Buffaloe and Members of the City Council:

First and foremost thank you to the City Council for considering the Commission on Cultural Affairs' recommendation last year to increase annual funding for the arts from \$100,000 to \$200,000. I know the 27 arts agencies, which received City funding in FY2025, join me in expressing their thanks for your recognition and support for the cultural work they do, making Columbia the best place for everyone to live, work, learn and play.

Many studies have proven that the arts are a sound investment. In FY2022, 33 Columbia nonprofit arts organizations took part in a nationwide survey by Americans for the Arts as part of its Arts and Economic Prosperity 6 study. The results were significant: The direct economic impact of the nonprofit arts and culture organizations in Columbia and their audiences was \$18,266,853. Of this amount, \$421,711 went to local tax revenue.

The \$200,000 that the City of Columbia allocates to its annual arts funding program is a 0.15% sliver of the City's \$136,513,711 General Fund expenditures. All of us who work in and/or value the arts in Columbia are grateful that we live in a city that allocates part of its General Fund to the arts.

As many of you know, every spring Columbia's nonprofit arts agencies are invited to submit a request for funding. Each application includes details about the proposed program's artistic and educational value, how the project will impact and add value to the lives of people in the community, along with budget details, supporting supplementary materials, board information, and the agency's most recent fiscal history. The Cultural Affairs commissioners spend many hours reading through the applications, and determine scores based on the artistic and educational components, community involvement, and administrative management and financial management. Attached to this document is an overview of the grant review process and summary of 24 projects recommended for funding (Attachment A).

This year, the Columbia Arts Fund Advisory Committee was able to make the decision not to withdraw additional funds from the Columbia Arts Fund, an arts endowment fund established at the Community Foundation of Central Missouri in 2012. In recent years, the funding process has had to lean heavily on this fund, withdrawing the annual maximum (5% of the principal) to support the arts agency funding program. This year we were able to leave the principal untouched and allow the fund to grow. The fund currently stands at \$377,464.

All of the above is the good news. In our city where the vision is to make Columbia the best place for everyone to live, work, learn and play, City arts funding is making so much possible. However, at a national level, the recommended 35% cut in federal funding of the National Endowment for the Arts is being felt by many arts organizations. Here in Columbia two of our larger arts agencies, Ragtag Film Society and the "We Always Swing" Jazz Series, have seen their federal funding eliminated. In the case of the Jazz Series their promised funding was cut 2 days after their project was completed resulting in a loss of \$25,000.

Many of Columbia's nonprofit arts organizations receive additional funding from the Missouri Arts Council (MAC), which in turn receives federal funding. At this point, we do not know how the national cuts will affect the state agencies across the country. In Missouri, we are fortunate in having a state statute that draws from the taxes paid by non-resident athletes and entertainers, which is then earmarked for arts funding through MAC. However, due to annual appropriations from this fund, only around half of the withheld amount is allocated to MAC to support Missouri's hundreds of statewide nonprofit arts agencies.

When communities invest in arts and culture, they are not investing in community at the expense of economic development. Rather, they are investing in an industry that stimulates the economy, supports local jobs, and contributes to building healthy, vibrant, and more livable communities. The arts power the communities where people want to live and work. Shared artistic and cultural experiences strengthen a sense of belonging and community pride.

Please know we deeply appreciate the Council's recognition of the importance of actively supporting the arts. Increased funding for our arts organizations will continue to grow the ineffable qualities and often intangible benefits that make Columbia a great place to live.

Submitted Respectfully,

Diana Moxon  
Chair, Commission on Cultural Affairs

## **Attachment A**

### **Summary of Process**

A basic summation of the process is as follows:

- The annual grant funding application form is revised annually to guide planning, implementation and evaluation of programs.
- Notification of the funding process was sent to all previous applicants. The OCA's webpage listed a timeline of the process and included an interactive application form.
- There was an opportunity for agencies to turn in drafts to the OCA staff for feedback and/or meet with the OCA for assistance.
- Organizations may request up to 25% of last fiscal year's total revenue, with a minimum request of \$1,000 and a maximum request of \$10,000.
- Agencies may submit only one application.

Commissioners review applications in a manner patterned after the Missouri Arts Council's process. In short, each Commissioner reads all applications on their own, makes written comments pertaining to the evaluation criteria, and scores applications in advance of the June meeting. The written comments and scores are submitted to the OCA and a compilation is provided to all Commissioners prior to the June meeting. At the June meeting, each application is discussed, and preliminary scores are figured, which are then ratified by the Commission at the July meeting.

OCA staff employs a mathematical formula approved by the Commission to determine a preliminary funding level for each applicant. It directly relates to the application scores, therefore rewarding proposals that most clearly and directly meet guidelines and address program criteria.

The Commission held a posted, public hearing at its July meeting to gather feedback from organizations and individuals wishing to comment on the grant funding process. Ultimately, the Commission approved the work done at its June work session, clearing the way for contracts to be authorized once the OCA's FY2026 budget is approved by the Council.

### **FY2026 Recommended Projects**

#### **Boone County Historical Society**

Project Name: BCHS Visual Arts & Music Programming FY2026

Description: The Montminy Gallery season of exhibits, four Free Family Events, four or more concerts.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

**Choral Arts Alliance of Missouri**

Project Name: 2025 - 2026 Concert Season

Description: Presentation of nine choral programs that include concerts and events.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

**Columbia Art League**

Project Name: Art in the Park 2026

Description: A two-day fine arts and craft festival at Stephens Lake Park, featuring 100 artists from across the state and country.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Diana Moxon, Stacey Thompson, Kate Nolte

**Columbia Civic Orchestra**

Project Name: Series of Four Concerts

Description: Series of orchestral concerts.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

**Columbia Community Band**

Project Name: 2025-2026 Concert Series

Description: Series of eight free concerts.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$6,255

Conflict of Interest: None.

**CoMo Preservation**

Project Name: CoMo Preservation's ART-chitecture Contest - CoMo Brick & Mortar Project

Description: Historic architecture art contest and series of 10 tours about Columbia's historic architecture.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$1,250

Conflict of Interest: Stacey Thompson

**Dismal Niche Arts**

Project Name: Columbia Experimental Music Series

Description: Contemporary music and arts program, including five concerts and one film screening.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$6,750

Conflict of Interest: None.

**GreenHouse Theatre Project**

Project Name: GreenHouse Theatre Project Season 2026

Description: Two main stage productions and a youth theatre workshop.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

**Jabberwocky Studios**

Project Name: Jabberwocky Studios 2026 Education Program

Description: Education programs including dance programming; STEAM instruction; middle school art classes; The Art Mobile; mural program; internships and theater productions.

Stipulations: Provide finalized schedule of programs.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Kristin Gadsden

**Jazz Forward Initiative, Inc.**

Project Name: The 2026 Mo Jazz Music Festival

Description: Presentation of one-day jazz music festival, free and open to the public.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$3,500

Conflict of Interest: None.

**Mid-Missouri Traditional Dancers**

Project Name: Traditional American Dance Series

Description: Regularly scheduled Contra Dances, a dance weekend event, and a Mizzou Dance Series.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$3,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

**North Village Arts District**

Project Name: First Friday Entertainment

Description: Support entertainers at monthly First Friday events.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$5,200

Conflict of Interest: None.

**Odyssey Chamber Music Series**

Project Name: Odyssey Chamber Music Series, Season 22

Description: Presentation of chamber music concerts and outreach activities.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

**Orr Street Studios Artist Guild**

Project Name: Orr Street Studios Community Programming

Description: Monthly art exhibits, six Second Saturday for Kids events, monthly Hearing Voices/Seeing Visions, six free adult art classes (Saturday Art for Adults).

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

**Ragtag Film Society**

Project Name: True/False Film Fest

Description: A four-day documentary film festival featuring films, musical showcases and visual art installations.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Kate Nolte, Kristin Gadsden

**School of Service (dba Access Arts)**

Project Name: Aides for Artists

Description: Assistance for paraprofessionals and aides for teachers and adaptive students in K-12 programming.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None

**Talking Horse Productions**

Project Name: 2025-2026 Production Season

Description: Six mainstage productions, a female playwright series, a new play festival, and a touring children's theatre production.

Stipulations: Provide dates of new play festival and children's theatre tour productions when known.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

**The Columbia Book Festival, Inc.**

Project Name: Unbound Book Festival 2026

Description: Annual book festival presenting nationally-recognized and best-selling authors and poets to participate in readings, interviews, panels, workshops, and other book-related activities.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

### **The Curators of the University of Missouri**

Project Name: University Concert Series 118th Season

Description: Season of performances in music, dance and theatre.

Stipulations: Provide final schedule of performances.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

### **The Missouri Symphony**

Project Name: The Missouri Symphony's 2025-26 Season

Description: The Missouri Symphony Orchestra's season including three concerts and the Firefly Music Festival.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

### **Theater Reaching Young People & Schools**

Project Name: TRYPS 2026 Education Programing

Description: Education programing including classes, camps, and outreach activities.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

### **Vidwest**

Project Name: Media CoMoguls: A Workshop Series presented by Vidwest

Description: Offer 20 workshops to educate participants with skills and education in lighting, photography, podcasting, content creation for social media, and sound production.

Stipulations: Provide final schedule of workshops.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

### **Vox Nova of Columbia**

Project Name: Season 12 Concert Series

Description: Concert series including four choral programs.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$3,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

### **"We Always Swing" Jazz Series**

Project Name: "We Always Swing" Jazz Series - "Onward: Season #31"

Description: Series of eight concerts.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.