

DATE: August 3, 2026
TO: Mayor Barbara Buffaloe
Members of the City Council
FROM: Diana Moxon, Chair, Commission on Cultural Affairs
RE: Arts Funding Recommendations for FY2027

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 starting in FY25 to increase annual funding for the arts from \$100,000 to \$200,000. I know the over 25 arts agencies, which received City funding each year, 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 FY22, 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 \$135,811,704* General Fund expenditures (*FY25 *actual total*). 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 grant funding through the Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA). 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 30 projects recommended for funding (Attachment A).

In addition to City funding, \$10,000 will be distributed from the Columbia Arts Fund, an arts endowment fund established at the Community Foundation of Central Missouri in 2012. Because of contributions from individual donors and fundraising efforts from the OCA's annual Celebration of the Arts event, the fund has grown to more than \$442,000. The annual grant funding amount of \$200,000 will be augmented to allow for \$210,000 to be distributed in FY27.

All the above is 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, there is a recommended 35% cut in federal funding of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Missouri Arts Council (MAC) also saw a decrease in funding from \$10.1 million to \$7.2 million in FY27. We are fortunate in Missouri in having an earmarked state statute that draws from the taxes paid by non-resident professional athletes and entertainers to provide arts funding to MAC. However, due to annual appropriations from this fund, in FY27 less than a third of the withheld amount will reach the arts.

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 FY2027 budget is approved by the Council.

FY2027 Recommended Projects

Boone County Historical Society

Project Name: BCHS Visual Arts, Music Programming, and Youth Presentations FY2027

Description: The Montminy Gallery season of exhibits, Boone Youth Explorers monthly series, Things That Matter speaker series, and Boone Piano concert series.

Stipulations: Provide final schedule of speaker series and concert series when known.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

Choral Arts Alliance of Missouri

Project Name: 2026-2027 Concert Season

Description: Presentation of eight 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 2027

Description: A two-day fine arts and craft festival at Stephens Lake Park, featuring 110 artists from across the state and country.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

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

Columbia Chinese Performing Arts Group

Project Name: CCPAG Chinese Cultural Arts & Community Exchange Program

Description: Series of five community performance events

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$1,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

Columbia Civic Orchestra

Project Name: Holiday and Season Finale Concerts of the 2026 - 2027 Columbia Civic Orchestra

Description: Two orchestral concerts

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

Columbia Community Band

Project Name: Community Maker Series 2027

Description: Series of eight free concerts.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$9,320

Conflict of Interest: None.

Columbia Gadget Works

Project Name: Community Maker Series 2027

Description: Series of monthly classes

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$2,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

CoMo Preservation

Project Name: CoMo Brick & Mortar Project and ART-itecture Contest

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

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$2,295

Conflict of Interest: Stacey Thompson

Compass, Inc.

Project Name: Music Is For Everyone Scholarship Fund

Description: Supports weekly private lessons for students.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

Dismal Niche Arts

Project Name: Columbia Experimental Music Series

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

Stipulations: Provide date and venue for final concert when known.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

For the People Powwow Committee

Project Name: 17th Annual For the People Powwow

Description: Two-day event featuring a variety of Native American performances

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

GreenHouse Theatre Project

Project Name: GreenHouse Theatre Project 2027 Season

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

Stipulations: Provide final dates of productions when known.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

Jabberwocky Studios

Project Name: Jabberwocky Studios Arts Education

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

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

Jazz Forward Initiative, Inc.

Project Name: 2027 Mo Jazz Music Festival

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

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$4,000

Conflict of Interest: Greg Aker

Maplewood Barn Association

Project Name: 2027 Maplewood Barn Community Theater Season

Description: Summer theater season including four mainstage productions.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Sarah Howard

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: \$3,940

Conflict of Interest: Sarah Howard

North Village Arts District

Project Name: First Friday Entertainment

Description: Support entertainers at monthly First Friday events.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$5,100

Conflict of Interest: None.

Odyssey Chamber Music Series

Project Name: Odyssey Chamber Music Series, Season 23

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), Black History Month Celebration events.

Stipulations: Provide dates for Black History Month events when known.

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 along with educational opportunities.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

School of Service (dba Access Arts)

Project Name: Aides for Artists

Description: Year-long K-12 educational arts programming.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Spencer Thompson

Talking Horse Productions

Project Name: 2026-2027 Season

Description: Six mainstage productions, a new play festival, and an educational programming for children (series of improv comedy).

Stipulations: Provide dates for new play series and children's programming when known.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Sarah Howard

The Columbia Book Festival, Inc.

Project Name: Unbound Book Festival 2027

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: Provide date for Ragtag film collaboration when known.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Sarah Howard, Spencer Thompson.

The Missouri Review

Project Name: Access to Prize-Winning Authors

Description: Spring 2027 Issue Launch event, with a reading and reception for the 2026 Editors' Prize winner.

Stipulations: Provide date for event when known.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

The Missouri Symphony

Project Name: Spring Masterworks Concert: Carmina Burana

Description: The Missouri Symphony Orchestra presents concert with collaborating choral ensembles.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Sarah Howard

TRYPS Children's Theater

Project Name: 2027 TRYPS Education and Outreach Programs

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

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Sarah Howard, Spencer Thompson.

University Concert Series

Project Name: University Concert Series 119th Season

Description: Season of performances featuring nationally and internationally recognized touring artists, theatrical productions, musicians, dance companies, family programming and educational experiences.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: None.

Vidwest

Project Name: 2027 Community Workshop Series and Labor Pool

Description: Offer 10 workshops to educate participants with skills and education in lighting, photography, drone operation, podcasting, content creation for social media, and sound productions. Additional media labor pool accessible by nonprofits for media needs.

Stipulations: Provide final schedule of workshops.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Sarah Howard, Spencer Thompson

Vox Nova of Columbia

Project Name: Vox Nova Season 13 Programming

Description: Concert series including three choral programs.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$3,700

Conflict of Interest: None.

"We Always Swing" Jazz Series

Project Name: "We Always Swing" Jazz Series

Description: Series of seven concerts.

Stipulations: None.

Request: \$10,000

Conflict of Interest: Greg Aker, Sarah Howard