

Inspire Vancouver Grant Guidelines

Revised July 22, 2026

Funding goals

Inspire Vancouver funding is awarded through a competitive application process. Funding is distributed through grant agreements with the City of Vancouver. Grant agreements are awarded to proposals that best align with Inspire Vancouver program goals and grant evaluation criteria specific to each grant category. Inspire Vancouver program goals include:

- **Expanding Access and Engagement** – Free or low-cost arts programs, tickets, and transportation that let more people participate.
- **Strengthening the Cultural Community** – Support for nonprofits, cultural spaces, and programs that keep arts and culture alive.
- **Boosting Jobs and Neighborhood Pride** – Events, tourism, and opportunities that help our community thrive.
- **Encouraging Creativity and Learning** – Partnerships, programs, and platforms that spark imagination and share different voices

Updated grant evaluation criteria are published for each application period and will be available at <https://www.inspirevancouver.org/about-our-grants/>.

Use of funds

Eligible organizations must directly provide culture, arts, heritage or science programming or experiences to the people who live within Vancouver city limits. Funds awarded through Inspire Vancouver can support many kinds of public programs, including:

- School-based and youth learning programs
- Free or low-cost events, festivals and performances
- Exhibitions, workshops and lectures
- Arts, culture, heritage and science programs in neighborhoods and community spaces

Funds awarded can also support operating costs and capital improvements related to an organization's programming. This could include:

- Staff, contractors and artists' compensation
- Supplies, food, equipment and technology
- Rent, insurance, permits and marketing
- Capacity-building and sustainability efforts for public programs

Funds cannot be used for

- Commercial or for-profit activities
- Fundraising events or activities
- Debt service or endowment building
- Programs that primarily happen outside Vancouver

- Fines, penalties, or costs of litigation
- Lobbying, programs promoting political agendas or religious practices
- Alcohol, marijuana or any illegal substances

How the program works

Application period

Applications must be submitted through our online grant portal. Each grant category will have its own application, and a preview of the application questions will be available in worksheet format ahead of the grant opening. Grantees will propose their own deliverables (a list of programs offered during the grant period or other major tasks related to operating or capital support) as part of their application.

Inspire Vancouver staff will be available to answer questions and assist with applications so each grantee can submit their best possible work. New grantees are encouraged to reach out to staff while planning their proposal or drafting their application. Staff will be available during application workshops and through individual support over the phone, in person, or online.

Each application period will have a soft deadline and a hard deadline. The soft deadline gives staff time to review each application and provide feedback to the grantee. The grantee will be able to make changes to their applications before the hard deadline passes.

Application Review and Award

The Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission will appoint a review committee of 5-7 community members and/or nonprofit peers to score applications. The committee will score the applications and make a funding recommendation to the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission. The committee may recommend awarding less than the amount requested in an application.

The commission will not read the full applications or change the review committee's scoring, but they may adjust the funding recommendation to best support Inspire Vancouver's goals within the total available funding. The Commission will consider the type of programming, its location, the request amount, the committee scores, and the committee's funding recommendation in the decision.

Inspire Vancouver staff do not score the applications or make award decisions.

Grant agreement and payment of funds

If awarded, the Grantee will be asked to sign a grant agreement for services with the City of Vancouver. The grant agreement's scope of work is based on the deliverables and budget in their application. The grant agreement will include requirements for:

- Insurance held by your organization
- Reporting
- Funding acknowledgement (crediting Inspire Vancouver where appropriate)
- Attendance at Inspire Vancouver cohort meetings
- Making changes to your deliverables or grant agreement

Funding will be paid once a year, upon completion of the grant paperwork including a signed grant agreement, proof of insurance, and additional paperwork needed to process payments to your organization. For multi-year grants, subsequent funding will be paid upon submission of the prior year's annual report.

Reporting

All grantees must submit quarterly reports for any quarter in which grant funds are used. A specific report timeline will be provided with each grant agreement. In addition, all grantees must submit a final report at the end of their period of funding or an annual report in the case of a multi-year grant. Report components will include:

- A Programming Summary Chart that collects information about programming offered, its location, attendance numbers and discounts available
- An Expenditure Summary Chart that collects information about how Inspire Vancouver funds were spent by the organization
- Narrative and survey questions about your progress and experience

Special circumstances

Uncertain Eligibility

The eligibility criteria for Inspire Vancouver are guided by state law (RCW 36.160) and further detailed in the Inspire Vancouver Program Policy, adopted by Vancouver City Council on September 15, 2025. The eligibility criteria are available on page 8 of the Inspire Vancouver Program Policy and on our website at inspirevancouver.org.

Organizations will be asked to provide documentation that confirms their organization's primary purpose. This can include a published mission and/or values statement or the "nature of business" description from their nonprofit business filing with the Washington Secretary of State.

In cases where there are dual primary purposes in an organization's mission (e.g., preservation of culture combined with social services for that specific cultural identity), staff will request a Programming Summary Chart from the year prior to evaluate past programming as part of their decision. If an organization is found ineligible based on their primary purpose, staff will record the decision and its rationale.

Working with a fiscal sponsor

Organizations without nonprofit status may be eligible by partnering with an eligible fiscal sponsor, a nonprofit that manages administrative and financial responsibilities for the project. Grantees are responsible for contacting eligible nonprofit organizations to discuss whether they are willing to serve as a sponsor. Together, the grantee and fiscal sponsor will decide what services the fiscal sponsor will provide and any fees they will charge for their services. The breakdown of responsibilities and fee rate must be documented in a signed Letter of Support from the fiscal sponsor and included in the submitted application. A template will be provided.

Deferring or modifying deliverables

In the event a grantee finds one of their deliverables cannot move forward, Inspire Vancouver staff will work with the grantee to modify or defer that deliverable where possible. Staff will

consider the original application, the review committee's feedback, and the grant agreement with the organization in their determination. If the grantee and staff cannot find a modification that aligns with the intent of the application, staff will initiate an amendment to the grant agreement and or/funding.

Promotion of religious practices

In some cases, culture and religious practices are deeply entwined. When considering the restriction on promotion of religious practices, Inspire Vancouver staff makes distinction between programming that shares religious practices as part of a greater cultural context (e.g., religious holidays, spiritual perspectives, or cultural storytelling from religious sources) and programming that promotes a certain religion or its practice, seeks followers, or harasses participants who do not follow those practices. Inspire Vancouver will not fund organizations or activities that promote religious practices and funding may be revoked if a grantee's programming violates the City of Vancouver's Harassment Prevention Policy.