



For Immediate Release

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Funds activate community building across Oregon: From youth education to public art and cultural engagement, 52 organizations will receive Arts Build Communities grants

SALEM, Ore. – The annual Arts Build Communities grants will fund more than 50 organizations located across the state of Oregon, helping organizations and arts leaders address community needs through the impact of art.

Each awardee will receive \$5,000 in FY2026 to address a community issue or need through the arts. These grants are made possible through a funding partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Oregon Arts Commission.

“Grant requests for this program have surged 160% over the past five years,” said Amy Lewin, Director of the Oregon Arts Commission. “This cycle, we could only fund one-third of applications, but the projects supported will spark creativity, strengthen communities, and activate key spaces across Oregon.”

Among the many notable organizations and projects to receive grant funds for FY2026 is the City of Lowell’s new initiative in partnership with The Maggie Osgood Library, titled “Making Lowell an Art Community,” a hands-on collaborative project with professional artists who will work with members of the community to create art projects together. Another highlight includes the High Desert Museum in Bend, which with its Intergenerational Learning Film Project will harness the power of visual storytelling to raise awareness of contemporary Native communities and the continuation of knowledge across generations.

“These grants start at the local level, where artists and organizations are closest to the needs and opportunities in their communities,” shares Jason Holland, Oregon Arts Commission chair and grant panel chair. “By supporting locally driven projects, the program recognizes creativity as essential to healthy, livable communities—especially in places and populations that have historically had fewer resources. This strengthens access to the arts and helping communities respond to challenges in ways that are inclusive, collaborative and rooted in place.”

The FY2026 recipients include:

All Ages Music Portland dba Friends of Noise, Portland

To support “Band Slam: A City-Wide Battle of the Bands” in 2026. This series of competitions will be hosted at different high schools and nonprofit sites, providing opportunities to youth artists and youth sound engineers.

The Artist Mentorship Program (AMP), Portland

To support houseless youth ages 14–25 by providing holistic arts and music programming and cultural outings that expose youth to theater, dance, concerts, movies, museums, and public arts spaces.

Bag & Baggage Productions, Hillsboro

To support its mainstage production of “Antíkoni,” a new play by Nez Perce playwright Beth Piatote, with a cast of nine actors, featuring strong, complex Native women characters.

Central Oregon Symphony Association, Bend

To support the expansion of music education and outreach in Central Oregon by increasing staff capacity and enhancing access to performances and programs. Efforts will prioritize K–12 students and underserved communities in Madras, Prineville and La Pine.

City of Lowell, Lowell

To support “Making Lowell an Art Community,” a hands-on project where professional artists will work with members of the community to create art projects at The Maggie Osgood Library.

Color Outside the Lines, Portland

To support “Home in Our Hands: A Youth Mural Project.” This large-scale mural, located in central Portland, will be created in collaboration with first-generation Hispanic and migrant youth alongside Mexican artists.

Echo Theater Company, Portland

To support PopRock, a physical theater ensemble composed of adults who desire to perform and have experienced barriers due to disability. PopRock trains, rehearses and performs at the Echo Theater.

enTaiko, Portland

To support Project “ROU,” a March 2026 collaborative concert at Portland Community College Sylvania Performing Arts Center with enTaiko and guest artists Shinkyo, a Deaf taiko ensemble from Japan in their U.S. debut.

Ethos Inc, Portland

To support Ethos’ Music Outreach Program, which provides low-cost afterschool and summer music education to community partners who reach low-income and historically underserved youth.

Eugene Ballet, Eugene

To support Eugene Ballet’s Access to Dance programming. Funds will be used for artist fees, to provide transportation, to pay for student scholarships, and to pay for theater time and staff time for a comprehensive dance program.

Fishtrap Inc., Enterprise

To support the Fishtrap Reads program, designed to engage every person in Wallowa County. Funds will be used to purchase 400 books for area schools and libraries and provide a mix of in-person and online events and school activities.

Gather:Make:Shelter, Portland

To support 1-2 weekly arts workshops throughout 2026 at three transitional shelter villages built and managed by WeShine for people experiencing houselessness; and present participants' work in an exhibition at the Gather:Make:Shelter Gallery.

Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre Northwest, Portland

To support "Creative Movement for Community Learners" at the Community Transitional School in an 8-week, twice-a-week free community program in the spring of 2026.

Huitzilopochtli, Woodburn

To support all three seasons of the Aztec Dance Circle (ADC) program. Funds will be used for securing operational activities that are free of charge for all Latinx and low-income participants.

Humans for Housing Education Inc., Portland

To support the "Humans for Housing Exhibition," an immersive storytelling project launching February 2026 at Stelo Arts gallery in Portland.

Instaballet, Eugene

To support the growing Accessible Education Program, which provides free, on-site, accessible dance workshops where youth audiences co-create choreography with professional artists.

Jazz Society of Oregon, Portland

To support the 2026 Cathedral Park Jazz Festival, a three-day, outdoor, free-to-all jazz festival in the heart of North Portland, featuring Latin, Indigenous and Afro-jazz, and blues, all rooted in the history of our diverse community, presented to an average 9,000 to 12,000 audience members each year. The requested funds will be used for artist fees.

Josephy Center for Arts and Culture, Joseph

To support the 2026 Nez Perce Artists Exhibition in Joseph, Oregon, summer through fall of 2026. Presented in partnership with the ?Itam'yanáawit Small Business Program, the exhibit will feature approximately 20 artists.

Lane Arts Council, Eugene

To support expanded cultural programming for First Friday ArtWalks in 2026. This free community event is held the first Friday of every month. LAC will partner with Cultural Producers to develop, curate and present unique cultural programming.

Literary Arts, Inc., Portland

To support partnership with Woodburn High School to participate in Youth Programs. Requested funds will be used to support WHS students participating in Students to "the Schnitz", which includes free tickets, ground transportation and books for students to attend Portland Arts & Lectures author talks.

Maxtivity, Philomath

To support "How We Weave Together," a six-month community weaving project, taking place January through June 2026, and culminating in a public art installation in Philomath, Oregon.

Montavilla Jazz Festival, Portland

To support the Jessie Márquez: Cuban Jazz Exchange, a community-based music project that brings Cuban and Oregon artists together for performances and workshops in Portland during 2026. Requested funds will be used for artist fees.

Neskowin Coast Foundation aka Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, Otis

To support the K-8 Create: Rural Teaching Artists Program. Sitka will identify and select an artist to work with Sitka staff to deliver a series of workshops for rural Title 1 schools.

North Pole Studio, Portland

To support Public Art at Beaverton Transit Center. Requested funds will be used to cover artist commissions and artwork production. The project is in close collaboration with TriMet and their accessibility upgrades to Beaverton Transit.

Northwest Alliance for Alternative Media and Education, Portland

To support NAAME and the Oregon Youth Authority's Office of Inclusion & Intercultural Relations in bringing arts and cultural programming to Oregon youth correctional facilities, providing a supportive community to develop and amplify youth's creative voices.

Oregon Arts Watch, Portland

To support the highly successful "Cultural Hubs" series. These stories cover essential cultural centers, how they uniquely serve and reflect their communities, and prioritize rural and underserved populations. At least 25 stories, to be published in 2026, will reach 25,000 people, providing the hubs with greater visibility, wider audiences, and increased economic revenue. Requested funds will be used for professional fees and travel expenses.

Oregon Ballet Theatre, Portland

To support the Oregon Ballet Theatre's "OBT2 Tour," the company's second performance tour to smaller communities throughout Oregon, which will increase access to professional-level ballet productions in rural areas.

Oregon Children's Theatre Company, Portland

To support the development of an intergenerational new musical, "WY'EAST" in collaboration with Bag&Baggage of Hillsboro and Native Theater Project, an Indigenous-led organization. Requested funds will be used for artist fees, materials and supplies, and marketing costs.

Oregon Coast Youth Symphony Festival Association, Newport

To support the festival's activities, revitalize high school orchestra programs and expand the size as well as the festival's statewide music community. Funds will be used to pay expenses (food, housing, etc.).

Oregon East Symphony, Pendleton

To support "Mother Goose at the Symphony," a free, family-friendly performance of Ravel's "Mother Goose Suite" with live narration.

Oregon Origins Project, Portland

To support an encore performance of "Oregon Origins Project II: Seven Wonders" in Lakeview, Oregon, in November 2026. Requested funds will be used to fund the majority of artists' fees.

Oregon Symphony Association, Portland

To support the Lullaby Project, a community program that hosts free songwriting workshops, performances and recording opportunities for families experiencing homelessness or incarceration.

Outside the Frame, Portland

To support the provision of new professional development workshop opportunities to Outside the Frame's dedicated staff members and advanced current program participants.

p:ear, Portland

To support "UNSEEN LIGHT," a project facilitated with homeless youth, using the photographic self-portrait as a tool to heal, foster visibility and challenge stereotypes about homelessness. Requested funds will be used for artist fees.

Phoenix Elementary School, Phoenix

To support the PES Community Collaboration Mural Education Initiative. Requested funds will be used for education, artist design and labor, paint and materials, scaffolding/lift rental, wall prep and sealing.

Portland Opera Association, Portland

To support the third installment of "Our Oregon," a 10-year, five-part touring youth opera series that celebrates women from Oregon's richly diverse communities. Our 2026 production will be "The Crown Maker," an opera about Oregon's own Eva Castellanoz.

Portland Playhouse, Portland

To support "If These Stoops Could Talk," a day-long celebration of the history of Portland's historically Black King Neighborhood, which will transform Portland Playhouse's grounds into a living archive of memory, joy and resilience.

Portland Revels, Portland

To support our 2026 Spring Revels production, a collaboration with Theatre Diaspora, Oregon's only professional Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander theatre company, which will be produced at a traditional theatre, then toured to culturally-specific community venues.

Portland State University Library, Portland

To support the Library Wayfinding Murals project to add artistic vibrancy to the PSU Library as well as clearer pathways to resources and services. Requested funds will be used for artist fees and supplies.

Portland SummerFest (dba OPERA IN THE PARK Portland), Portland

To support OPERA IN THE PARK 2026: "Cruzar la Cara de la Luna." This will be the first-ever free public performance of José "Pepé" Martínez and Leonard Foglia's "Cruzar la Cara de la Luna" in summer 2026.

Profile Theatre Project, Portland

To support In Dialogue, a series of workshops, conversations, community-created exhibitions and performances connected to plays by Profile's Featured Writers whose visions broaden perspectives on the world and deepen collective compassion.

push/FOLD, Portland

To support the sixth Union PDX - Festival of Contemporary Dance (Union PDX - Festival:26), featuring performances and classes from local, national and international dance artists. Requested funds will be used for artist fees.

Rejoice Diaspora Dance Theater, Portland

To create “BREAKIN,” a live performance, exhibition and community-center program to amplify and celebrate the history and present of Portland’s street and breakdancing community.

Rooted Ways: An Indigenous Cultural & Ecological Initiative, Dayton

To support Traditional Plant Gathering opportunities for tribal communities, wherein supplies are sustainably harvested for use in traditional art practices such as weaving.

Silverton Arts Association, Silverton

To support Youth Art Programming in Silverton, Oregon. These funds will be used to help purchase art supplies and pay teachers in a longstanding partnership with the Silver Falls School District.

The High Desert Museum, Bend

To support the Intergenerational Learning Film Project, which will harness the power of visual storytelling to raise awareness of contemporary Native communities and the continuation of knowledge across generations.

Third Angle New Music Ensemble, Portland

To support “Eras” at World Forestry Center and PRAx in May 2026, reaching new audiences with a newly commissioned work about wildfires, featuring poetry and a performance by the Oregon Repertory Singers Youth Choir.

Vanport Mosaic, Portland

To support Preserving Vanport Through Art, an initiative to catalogue, digitize and disseminate artistic work inspired by a decade-long memory activism led by Vanport former residents, flood survivors and their descendants.

Western Oregon University Development Foundation, Monmouth

To support Rainbow Dance Theatre: Expanding Arts Access in Polk County. This project will bring a world-class professional dance company to rural schools through a live performance at Rice Auditorium.

Wonderfolk, Portland

To support the creation of a public mural in Portland through the Unity Through Arts youth mentor program. Funds will support compensating artists for their time and expertise (\$4,000) and cover essential supplies.

World Forestry Center, Portland

To support “FOREST HOPE & INNOVATION,” a groundbreaking multimedia exhibition that explores forest health and climate resilience through the fusion of art, science and design innovation.

Write Around Portland, Portland

To support “Building BIPOC Community through Library Partnerships.” Funding will support quarterly in-person writing programs for our BIPOC affinity program, Resonate, in 2026.

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The [Oregon Arts Commission](#) provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of Business Oregon (formerly Oregon Economic and Community Development Department) in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission's expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development.

The Arts Commission is supported with general funds appropriated by the Oregon Legislature and with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust. More information about the Oregon Arts Commission is available online at: www.oregonartscommission.org.