

2026 Cultural Tourism Grants

Overview

Cultural Tourism Grants aim to increase regional visitation and economic impact through visitor spending by supporting arts and cultural events, programming, and marketing initiatives.

2026 Cultural Tourism Grant program will invest up to \$200,000 in support of approved projects.

Goals/Metrics

ArtsinStark/Visit Canton Grant Program grant projects must:

- Increase attendance and visitor spending by attracting NEW guests from outside of Stark County
- Enhance events, programs, or their destination through arts and cultural elements.
- Foster growth and community collaboration through arts and culture experiences.

Eligibility

Eligible organizations, initiatives, or events must represent:

- Visual Arts/Museums
- Performing Arts/Entertainment/Theatres
- Historic Attractions/Cultural Sites
- Community Festivals & Special Events

** If a for-profit enterprise is a lead or partner applicant, the project must show a partnership or economic benefit for the community or county.*

Project Eligibility

- Projects must demonstrate programs, entertainment, or experiences that will attract visitors and add cultural or artistic value to the community.
- Projects must showcase experiences that cannot be found within 90 miles and/or 90 days of the project.
- Projects cannot solely be reliant on Cultural Tourism grant awards and must have 50% of matching funds invested in the project (in-kind or other grant funding is acceptable)

Eligible Expenses

- **New Experiences, Temporary Exhibitions, & Seasonal Productions – Up to \$20,000**
Qualifying expenses - marketing and event/exhibition acquisition expenses such as shipping, display/exhibit resources, one-time fees/licenses, etc.
- **Music & Arts Entertainment – Up to \$20,000**
Qualifying expenses – marketing and production expenses for nationally touring acts and entertainment
- **Community Festivals & Special Events – Up to \$5,000**
Qualifying expenses – marketing and expenses for arts, culture, history, and heritage activities or entertainment, such as artists, musicians, dancers, speakers, etc.

Ineligible Expenses:

- Venue or equipment rentals
- Staffing/standard operating costs
- Food or alcohol expenses

Repeat Events/Program Expenses:

- If a project is a repeat event that received prior Cultural Tourism funding, the request will only be considered for NEW investment in eligible expenses. No funding for recurring or sustainability costs.

Awards and Timeline

- Grant requests **up to \$20,000** per project will be considered in a competitive application process.
- Applicants may apply for multiple projects per grant cycle, but the total award for Cultural Tourism Grants per organization cannot exceed \$20,000 per cycle.
- Cultural Tourism Grant applications must be submitted at least 90 days before project execution.
- Projects must be completed within the 2026 calendar year.
- The Committee will not judge incomplete applications.

Application Proposal Timeline

Grant Cycle #1- Projects for January 1-June 31, 2026

September 10th- 9 am- October 10th- 5 pm | Online Applications OPEN: <https://visitcanton.grantplatform.com/>
Awards announced by October 24th, 2025

Grant Cycle #2 Projects for July 1-December 31, 2026

February 18th, 9 am – March 20th, 5 pm | Online Applications OPEN: <https://visitcanton.grantplatform.com/>
Awards announced by April 1st, 2026

Grant Application Information

Applicants must provide the following to be considered:

- Applicant organization's name and contact info
- Detailed project description
- Project operational budget with revenue & expenses
- Project marketing plan with targeted audiences
- Requested performer/vendor/marketing quotes and/or contracts
- Estimated attendance for the project with tracking methods to calculate visitor spending
- Repeat events must present attendance and visitor spending data from past events
- Statement on partial funding: If this project is not awarded at 100% of the request, how will the project proceed?

Scoring Considerations

Applications that have addressed all requirements above will be scored. **Applications that showcase collaboration with multiple partners on the project are highly desired.**

Recognition and Acknowledgement Requirements

- Initiatives using Cultural Tourism Grant Funds must acknowledge Visit Canton and ArtsinStark by including their logos on all project marketing materials.
- Awarded grantees must complete a Memorandum of Understanding to receive funding. Grant funds will be distributed as follows: **70% disbursed upon receipt of a signed MOU, and the remaining 30% will be disbursed following review of the final evaluation report submitted by the recipient organization.**

Final Evaluation Reporting

- A detailed summary of all expenditures from grant funding, including but not limited to invoices and receipts.
- Return on investment data, including visitor numbers and locations, the economic impact on the recipient organization, and the estimated effect on the Stark County community.
- **The final evaluation form must be submitted within 30 days of project completion.** Should the Committee require any additional information, the grantee will have 10 business days to submit the requested data.
- If the grantee does not submit a completed report, the remaining 30% of the grant will be forfeited. This forfeiture will also be considered when evaluating future Cultural Tourism Grant applications from the grantees.