

Small Operating Support Grant Program

How can we help you do what you do...better?

Healthy arts, history, and cultural organizations enhance quality of life in Iowa communities. With SOS Grants, the Department of Cultural Affairs wants to help small and mid-sized arts, history, and cultural organizations:

Take steps toward improved professionalism and standards of operation

To temporarily cover some operational costs to free up other funds for programming or purchases

Become more effective at achieving goals that will directly affect their community

Grant Amounts

Applicants may apply for no more than 5% of their previous year's operating budget or up to \$5,000 maximum.

Note: SOS grants are one-time grants. The Department of Cultural Affairs makes no commitments to continued funding in subsequent years. SOS grants can not be used for a project funded by another DCA grant.

Funding Period

SOS Grant funds may be used for expenditures occurring between September 1 and June 30.

Deadline

Applications must be received in our office by 4:30 p.m. on July 25, annually. This is NOT a postmark deadline. (When July 25 occurs on a Saturday or Sunday, the deadline is the next business day.)

How can funds be used?

The intent of this grant program is to support operating expenses. Expenses for programming are typically funded through other IAC/DCA grant programs. Small and mid-size arts, history, and cultural organizations in Iowa might apply for an SOS grant to support:

Equipment purchases that will improve efficiency in the organization

New members challenge drive to match membership dues, subscriptions, tickets, etc.

Hiring a consultant or contracted employees

Costs related to technology: software purchases, staff training, web development, etc.

Marketing and promotional expenses

Temporary relief of operating costs such as rent, utilities, etc, due to the costs of special programs.

SOS Grant funds may NOT be used for capital expenses or for political lobbying activities, or for activities already receiving funds from or used as matching funds for another Department of Cultural Affairs grant program.

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for SOS funds, ALL of the following must be true for an organization:

The organization's primary mission and purpose are the arts, history or culture; for example, arts organizations, botanical centers, historical organizations, museums, cultural centers, arts alliances, or centers for the performing arts.

The organization is registered with the Iowa Secretary of State's office as an Iowa nonprofit organization and operates as a federally tax exempt organization under IRS section 501(c)(3), OR is a formal entity of city, county, or tribal government.

The organization has been in existence in its community for at least 3 years.

The organization's annual operating budget is less than \$150,000 per year.

Not Eligible to Apply

Individuals

An entity of federal or state government

A for-profit corporation or business; religious organization; political party; labor union; or national service/professional organization

An educational institution, organization or K-12 school, whose primary orientation, mission and purpose is education and the awarding of academic credits, or organizations that are operated with a purpose to support such institutions

An organization that receives general operating support through other programs administered by the DCA or its divisions

A previous grantee of the Department of Cultural Affairs or any of its divisions with an outstanding late Final Report

An organization using a fiscal agent or the Iowa nonprofit or federal tax-exempt status of another organization.

An auditorium, convention center or other similar type of venue

An organization that has already received funding for the same project or expenses from another grant program operated by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs or any of its divisions.

Funding Limitations from Other DCA Grant Programs

The Department of Cultural Affairs manages a number of grant programs. Some restrictions are necessary in order to be sure that funds can be distributed broadly.

SOS grant recipients may apply for and receive funds from any Iowa Arts Council, State Historical Society of Iowa, or general DCA grant programs, but **MAY NOT** use SOS funds as match for these grants.

In addition, SOS grant recipients are limited to receiving one Major Grant **OR** one Mini Grant from the Iowa Arts Council per fiscal year.

Criteria

SOS grants will be reviewed using the following criteria:

Need for and Impact of Funds (up to 15 points): the need for SOS funds must be clearly stated, and the application narrative must clearly define the impact these funds will have on the organization's ability to achieve its mission and goals.

Community Support (up to 15 points): the organization must show through its narrative and attached support letters that it provides arts, history, or cultural programming and/or services that are highly valued and supported by leaders in its community.

Completeness of Application Content and Budget Detail (up to 5 points): the budget request must be clear and understandable to reviewers, and the application package must include all required materials

Funding Priorities

High Priorities for SOS Funding

Use of funds to improve standards of operation, promote sustainability, and increase community awareness and participation in the organization.

Proposals that include a clear explanation of how funds will assist in sustaining or furthering the operations and programs of the organization. Proposed activities should be a logical step toward achieving the long-term goals of the organization.

Requests to fund salaries, utilities, or other on-going activities that include an explanation of why this is a one-time extra expense (such as particularly high heating bills due to a record-breaking cold winter), how the freed-up monies would be reallocated (if SOS funds would be used to pay for something that was already included in the budget) and how that use improves the effectiveness or efficiency of the organization, and/or how the organization plans to address these costs in the future.

The professionalism of the staff and/or organization will be increased due to receiving funding.

The community will be better served by the increased standards of operations.

The budget included in the proposal demonstrates the need for and use of SOS funding.

Proposals from organizations that have not received SOS funds in the previous 3 years

Low Priorities for SOS Funding

Proposals requesting the maximum amount allowed without making a clear connection between the organization's mission and goals and the amount requested.

Requests to hire permanent staff, cover utility bills, or pay for other on-going expenses without a clear explanation of how such activities will be sustained in the future.

Equipment purchase requests without a clear explanation of how the equipment will be used to strengthen the mission of the organization and the community at large.

Organizations that do not demonstrate community support and participation or articulate the organization's services and/or mission.

Proposals from organizations that have received SOS funds at least once in the previous 3 years

Review Process

A review panel of at least three individuals representing DCA staff and constituents will evaluate each proposal according to the criteria and funding priorities. The panel will make recommendations to the DCA Director, who makes final award decisions.

Applicants will receive notification of award decisions within 45 days of the application deadline.

To Apply

Read the guidelines, funding priorities, application form, and service contract to be sure of the SOS program's details.

Assemble an application package that includes the following:

- Completed SOS Application Form,
- Department of Cultural Affairs Service Contract, completed and signed by the appropriate organization authority
- Completed Substitute W-9 Form, which enables grant payments from the State of Iowa
- Maximum of three letters of support, describing the impact and importance of the organization to the community


Applications missing any of these items will be declared ineligible and will not be reviewed.


Send the application package to:

SOS Grant Application
c/o Linda Lee
Department of Cultural Affairs
600 E Locust St
Des Moines, IA 50319

Menu:

The Word documents below may be filled out, saved, and mailed in. The Acrobat documents must be first printed out, filled out manually, and mailed in.

 SOS guidelines

 SOS application

 SOS application

 W-9 Form

 W-9 Form

Questions?

please contact staff Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM. Offices are closed weekends and state holidays. We encourage you to e-mail your questions.