



# *2019 PANEL HANDBOOK*

*for*

## *Decentralization Community Arts Grants*

Decentralization is a grant program of the Greene County Council on the Arts, funding art and cultural projects in Greene, Columbia, & Schoharie Counties. This program is made possible with public funds from the Decentralization program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

### TIMELINE

#### Panel Selection

Panelists are sought via an “open call” in Columbia, Greene & Schoharie Counties. The prospective panelists come to the Community Arts Grants Program via previous panel members’ recommendations, staff and board member recommendations and most importantly, recommendations by the community at large.

#### Panel Orientation

Panel orientation will be done at a group orientation or on an individual basis with the Community Arts Grants Coordinator for those who cannot make a joint meeting. The orientation will occur approximately four (4) weeks prior to the Panel Review Meeting.

#### Awards Approval by Art Council’s Board of Directors

Late Oct 2018/early Dec 2018

#### Applicant Award Notifications

All applicants will be notified in writing of their application status by late December 2018.

#### Appeals

Appeals must be submitted in writing no later than 10 days after notification of decision.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Please direct **ALL** your correspondence to the appropriate Community Arts Grants Coordinator:

Margaret Uhalde

Community Arts Grants Coordinator (Columbia and Greene Counties)

(518) 943-3400

email: [margaret@greenearts.org](mailto:margaret@greenearts.org)

Dennis Shaw

Community Arts Grants Coordinator (Schoharie County)

email: [schohariegrants@gmail.com](mailto:schohariegrants@gmail.com)



### DECENTRALIZATION PROGRAM HISTORY

The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) supports a statewide regranting system called the Decentralization (DEC) Program. Founded in 1977, this program was developed to encourage greater participation in the State's cultural funding at the local level. Local decision-making is the basic principle of the Decentralization Program in supporting a wide range of community-based professional and avocational arts programs in diverse communities throughout the State, and in helping support the work of individual artists. The goal of Decentralization is to support the continued development of local arts and cultural resources responsive to community cultural needs.

The Program forms the cornerstone of the NYSCA's partnership with local arts organizations throughout the State. It provides a direct link between the state arts council and local participation in the arts. Following standard guidelines developed by the NYSCA, local agencies throughout the State are **invited** by NYSCA to regrant funds at a maximum level of \$5,000 to support exemplary professional and avocational arts and/or cultural activities in all artistic disciplines within their own communities. Funding decisions are based on evaluative criteria and local funding priorities determined by each site as appropriate for its community region.

In 1998 NYSCA invited eligible DEC sites to apply to offer two new funding categories: Support for Individual Artists and Organizational Stabilization/Development. (Organizational Stabilization/Development unavailable at this time) This initiative for DEC support was created in response to input from the field. In 2012 the Arts in Education program was no longer designated a separate program, but restructured as to be incorporated into DEC. NYSCA provides this opportunity for enhancement of local DEC regrant programs, it underscores its ongoing concern for broadening access to the arts for all the citizens of the state.

## COMMUNITY ARTS GRANTS PROGRAM

The Community Arts Grants program is administered in Columbia, Greene, & Schoharie Counties by Greene County Council on the Arts. Through this program each county will regrant public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts' Decentralization Program to eligible not-for-profit organizations, unincorporated groups and individual artists, legally based in Columbia, Greene, and Schoharie Counties.

## LOCAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Decentralization Program is administered by the Community Arts & Arts Education Grants Coordinator. The Coordinator is a paid, part-time position that acts as the administrator/liaison between NYSCA, the Executive Directors of Greene County Council on the Arts and Columbia County Council on the Arts, the panelists, grantees, applicants and all other constituents interested in the DEC Program.

## FUNDING

The DEC Program is funded by NYSCA. The Community Arts Grants program was invited by NYSCA to apply via the Greene County Council on the Arts to NYSCA for the DEC Program funding in its yearly program application.

## THE PANEL

A minimum of seven panel members per county from various geographic locations in Greene, Columbia and Schoharie Counties are required to consider grant applications. For DEC Project Support each county's panel reviews their respective county's applications. IA panel is a combined panel consisting of Columbia & Greene residents. One member of each county's board of directors may serve on the panel. GCCA's board of directors appoints panel members for a term of one (1) year. Annual reappointment, up to a maximum total service of three (3) years, is required for continued service on a year-to-year basis. We rotate approximately one-third (1/3) of the panel each year.

Panelists, who volunteer their services for a maximum term of three (3) years, are selected from the following areas of activities and concerns.

1. The arts, either as an individual creative artist or professional arts administrator;
2. Public agencies, be they state or local governments and their agencies, or public school systems;
3. The private sector, including both business and the professions;
4. Community service organizations;
5. Geographic representation;
6. Minority Groups where appropriate to the county and
7. Non-professional patrons of the arts.

## PERKS FOR THE PANELISTS

1. Complementary meal during Panel Review.
2. FREE admission to awardee's events.
3. Invitation for you and a guest to attend Award Ceremonies and meet the talent.
4. Makes a great addition to your Resume (under the "honors" column).
5. You represent the voice of the community!
7. You advocate for support of quality arts programming in your local community.

## PANELIST'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Serve for a minimum of one year, up to a maximum of three years.
2. Completely review the Decentralization Grants Panel Handbook
3. Review and be familiar with NYSCA's Code of Ethics
4. Submit a resume
5. Briefly meet with the Community Arts Grants Coordinator for orientation or refresher discussion (in-person or over phone)
6. Review and sign the Letter of Commitment and the Statement of Affiliation
7. Do not have contact with any of the applicants during the review process
8. Completely review all assigned applications
9. Attend panel review meeting
10. Participate in the auditing process throughout the year (flexible)
11. Attend the awards ceremony (optional)
12. Maintain confidentiality before, during and after the panel meeting

## CODE OF ETHICS

Since the DEC Program is part of NYSCA, the NYSCA Code of Ethics has been adopted (review complete code at the end of the handbook). Every DEC site's staff, board, and panel must abide by the standard Code of Ethics employed by New York State. The Code of Ethics provides information about situations that would be considered a breach of ethics in awarding public funds, such as paid employment from a subgrantee applicant, relation to, marriage to, or friendship with an applicant, or disclosing confidential information about proposals or discussions outside the panel meetings. Any situation that presents a potential conflict of interest or might have an appearance of conflict of interest must be disclosed by the panelist before the first panel meeting so the Community Arts Grants Coordinator may excuse the panelist from a particular discussion or to ask the panelist to excuse themselves from serving. Any panelist with a conflict of interest **MUST** leave the room before any deliberations or votes about the organization/artist in question, including reconsideration. Abstentions are NOT encouraged. If a panel member feels that they cannot be objective, they leave the room for conflict of interest. Abstentions, however, can cause quorum problems. A motion cannot be adopted or defeated without a voting quorum. A voting quorum is defined as one more than one half the number of panelists.

## AFFILIATION STATEMENT

Each panelist shall prepare and file with the Community Arts Grants Coordinator an annual updated affiliation statement covering the duration of their term. The Affiliation Statement reflects organizations and/or individual artists with which the panelist is associated.

## LETTER OF COMMITMENT

The Letter of Commitment a statement of commitment that states the said panelist will participate fully in the responsibilities as specified above. Panelists who fail to do so without just cause may be asked to forfeit their position on the panel. The panelist has received, read and understands the 2019 Decentralization Grant Program Panel Handbook. The panelist has read and will adhere to the NYSCA Code of Ethics.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Panelists are **NOT** permitted to have any contact with DEC applicants. If questions arise during the initial review process, contact the Community Arts Grants Coordinator. **ALL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT PROPOSAL OR PANEL PROCEEDINGS IS TO REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL AT ALL TIMES.** Confidentiality remains intact, most importantly, after the panel process is completed.

## APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

1. A preliminary reading of all applications is conducted by the Community Arts Grants Coordinator to determine the completeness and accuracy. If any additional information is required, the Coordinator contacts the applicant to submit any necessary information in writing. The Coordinator will not send any applications to panel that **DO NOT MEET** the eligibility criteria and restriction components of the DEC guidelines.
2. Following the preliminary reading, each qualified application may then be assigned to a specific reviewer on the panel. These individuals will receive complete proposals, including financial reports, list of staff, paper support materials, etc. Each other panel member will receive a copy of narrative, budget information, bios of artists involved. The assigned panelist will review the application in depth (see Review Criteria and Guide to Studying Applications). In addition to specific assignments, all panelists will be familiar with all applications. Panelists must submit any questions directly to the Community Arts Grants Coordinator who will make any inquiries to the applicant prior to the panel meeting. **Panelists are NOT to contact the applicants at any time.** All questions from the panelists must be made to the Coordinator no later than 48 hours prior to the panel meeting. If the designated reader, the panelist will be responsible for introducing and summarizing the application at the panel meeting.

## THE ACTUAL PANEL MEETING

1. You must bring ALL your applications with you to the panel meeting. Any notes you have written MUST be turned over to the Community Arts Grants Coordinator – ABSOLUTELY NO ITEMS OR NOTES ARE TO BE RETAINED BY THE PANELISTS.
2. At the panel meeting, a brief meet and greet will take place. Introductions and an outline of the agenda will take place in this time frame.
3. The Grants Coordinator or panel may appoint a chair for the term of one year. The chair presides over the meeting by recognizing panelists for discussion, handling disputes, closing discussion at the appropriate time, calling for a formal vote, keeping the panel focused on the review process and the notes regarding the panel's dialog and decision regarding funding.
4. The Coordinator will advise the panel on the review and voting procedures as well as the total grant dollars available.
5. Any applications the panel immediately feels does not fall within the requirements or guidelines of the program, the panel may vote to reject the applications before the full panel deliberations begin. Following approval by the panel, all disqualified applicants are notified so that they may begin to seek other funding.
6. The panel will review each application within the established guidelines. Each application will be discussed (in alphabetical order) one at a time with the assigned reviewer introducing and summarizing the application. The project description, budget, and supporting materials are all examined and discussed by the panel. All supplemental material (such as slides, brochures, photos, etc.) will be available for all panelists to review. At the end of each discussion, the Chair calls for a motion, which may be a simple "yes" or "no" for funding. While we strive for consensus, the panel does manage its affairs with a majority vote.
7. Based on the total dollar amount available for funding, the panel will then proceed to the granting of awards. If there are to be any stipulations placed on the awards the panel will make such recommendations at that time.

The panel will also determine which organizations should receive additional funds if there are a) refused grants, b) funds returned before April c) dollars remaining after a successful appeals process. The panel will also determine whether to distribute these funds to all awardees or to selected awardees either by dividing the funds equally or to award percentages.

The panel will award all of the total grant funds available. The Arts Council will set aside 10% of each individual award for the appeals process. If no successful appeals are made, the 10% will be released as originally awarded by the panel. If a successful appeal is made, the appeals money will be distributed as specified by the panel in the above paragraph.

8. The panel will be asked, at the completion of the panel meeting, to make a group statement that will be issued to the applicants in writing. You will also be asked to make any recommendations for next year's application process with regard to funding priorities (such as an underserved community, discipline, etc.). You will be asked to identify organizations/artists events that you would like to attend for the audit process.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PANEL MEETING

Once the panel meeting has completed their review process and made award recommendations, the Community Arts Grants Coordinator along with the Executive Director will meet with the appropriate Arts Councils Board of Directors. The Arts Council's Board of Directors has the final approval of each award. To date, the Board of Directors has NOT over turned any funding recommendations made by the DEC Panel.

With the Board's approval written award notifications are released. At that time the following information will be released to the applicants:

- Status of their application as funded or declined
- The names of the board of directors
- The panel's group statement

Each applicant has the right to telephone the Community Arts Grants Coordinator to request the specific information as to their denial of funding and the names of all review panelists. Written feedback may be provided at the beginning of the next year's funding cycle to aid in development of a stronger application and give applicants the opportunity to address concerns and weaknesses. Individual panel members will not be identified in relationship to these comments/recommendations.

The Community Arts Grants Coordinator will release all specific grant denial information without attribution to any specific panelist.

## APPEALS

Applicants have the right to appeal upon the following grounds:

1. **Non-presentation of information.** Information known to Arts Council staff or panelists prior to the panel's decision that was not presented and which might have altered the decision.
2. **Misrepresentation of information.** Information known to the Arts Council staff or panelists prior to the panel's decision, which was distorted in its presentation and which, if presented differently, might have altered the decision.
3. **Improper procedure.** Contention by the applicant that the decision by the panel, given the information available to it and its discretionary authority, was arbitrary and inconsistent.

Dissatisfaction with the amount of support or the recommendation of no funding cannot be used as the basis for appeal. Information not provided to the panel or staff **by the applicant** in its application form prior to the panel's decision cannot be used to justify an appeal.

There are occasions when an organization/artist is denied a DEC Grant and feels that the process was carried out unfairly or incorrectly. They were denied a grant because of an error in the grant making process. For those organizations/artists that believe an appeal is in order after having been informed of the local regrant decisions, it is important to remember that the appeals process has been established to provide an avenue to review the fairness of the decision-making process.

The appeal process is initiated when the applicant verbally asks the Community Arts Grants Coordinator to review the considerations that went into the panel's decision. If, after such a consultation, the applicant wishes to pursue an appeal, the applicant must do so in writing, with all of their material supporting their appeal, to the Greene County Council on the Arts Executive Director. The Executive Director must receive the appeal within ten (10) calendar days after the issue date of the funding letter. The applicant will receive a written response and the appeal will be assigned to a different panel. Any person involved in the original decision-making process is prohibited from serving as a member of an appeals panel. The new panel, comprised of at least three members, will meet to examine the grounds for the appeal and provide a recommendation to the Council's Board of Directors for final approval. If the appeal is successful it is funded from the DEC funds withheld for appeals. The appeals decision, and all DEC awards decisions, must be completed in time to submit reporting information to NYSCA by January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

## WHAT IS AN AUDIT?

Audits are evaluations of funded programs. As a panelist, you are able to attend a funded program's event at no charge in order to evaluate it. The audits must be scheduled in advanced with the Community Arts Grants Coordinator due to the limited number of tickets available and as a courtesy to the organization/artist.

The audits begin with the awardee notifying the Arts Council of their funded event dates. The Community Arts Grants Coordinator issues a monthly calendar of the upcoming events. Panelists are asked to contact the Coordinator to schedule their audits. At the panel meeting each panelist will have identified organizations/artists they are willing to evaluate.

The Arts Council, in compliance with NYSCA, is required to audit a minimum of 75% of the funded projects. Panelists may be asked to attend to more than one audit.

## REVIEW CRITERIA

The review criteria can be found within the Guidelines and Application for the grant type you are reviewing. In addition, the guide for studying an application can be found in this handbook.



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# GUIDE TO STUDYING APPLICATIONS

The following list of questions is to guide you in the reviewing process of the applications.

## PROJECT SUPPORT/ARTS EDUCATION

### Support Material

1. Did the applicant provide support material to indicate past project support success, whether for this specific project or other types of projects?
2. Does the support material provided reflect the level of professionalism of the applicant?

### Artistic Merit

1. To what extent does the project involve skillful practice of its particular art form?
2. What is the caliber of the artists involved?
3. If the artists are amateurs, do they strive for and achieve high quality?

### Community

1. Does the project reach an under-served audience?
2. Does the project use local artists and organizations (if possible)?
3. Has interest been shown in the community?
4. Is the applicant providing art and/or cultural services and opportunities to segments of their county's residential population that have had relatively little exposure to them in the past?

### Innovation

1. Does the project offer a relatively unique cultural opportunity?
3. Does the applicant strive to meet a need/desire expressed by the community?
4. Is the project a duplication of an existing service or program nearby?

### Administration

1. Does the applicant have some record of programmatic success?

2. Does the applicant seem fiscally sound? How great is their need?
3. Is participation in/tickets for this project free or low-cost?
4. Is there demonstrated additional support being provided for this project, whether in-kind funding, in-kind services or cash?
5. Has the applicant successfully sponsored other programs? Can they handle something of this magnitude?
6. Is the project administratively sound? Has it been planned properly? Have the necessary contacts been made? Does the budget make sense?

## INDIVIDUAL ARTIST GRANTS

Artistic merit is first and foremost in the review of the individual artist grant. This is a very subjective element and the Arts Council asks our panelists to embrace the diverse number of artistic expressions represented in the application pool.

1. Is the quality of the support material strong?
2. Does the support material or the program narrative represent creative growth for the artist? Is the creative process outlined feasible for the artist in the amount of time allowed for the completion of the work?
3. Does the artist offer a relatively new or unique artistic opportunity via their art, and/or in the community engagement component?
4. Does the art or artist represent an endeavor that is uncommon locally?
5. Does the progression in the artist's creative journey seem appropriate?
6. Does the artist engage the community in their creative process?
7. Is this community engagement process new? Innovative? Interesting? Applicable to the project?
8. If there is a defined plan for sharing the results of the project (optional), is it realistic?

# *New York State Council on the Arts*

## *CODE OF ETHICS*

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### I. Statement of Purpose

Members of the Council, its panels, staff and consultants to the Council are necessarily knowledgeable and active in the arts. It is essential to the conduct of the business of the Council that it maintain high standards of integrity and impartiality in its decision-making processes, and that these processes be free from actual conflicts of interest, and any appearance of conflict. No member of the Council, its panels or staff, and no consultant to the Council should have any direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise, or engage in any business or transaction, or incur any obligation of any nature that conflicts with the proper discharge of that person's duties to the Council.

### II. General Principals

1. This Code of Ethics (the "Code") will apply to all members of the Council, its panels, staff and consultants (sometimes hereinafter referred to as "such person(s)"). Each such person shall be responsible for knowing the contents of this Code. The Executive Director will call the Code to the attention of all such persons each year. A copy of the Code will be provided to each new member of the Council, its panels and staff and to each consultant to the Council upon commencement of that person's duties.
2. No such person may accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity, which would impair that person's independence of judgment in the exercise of his or her official duties.
3. No such person may accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity which would require that person to disclose confidential information which that person has gained by reason of his or her role at the Council.
4. No such person may disclose confidential information acquired in the course of that person's duties at the Council, nor use such information to further his or her personal interest.
5. No such person may use or attempt to use his or her position at the Council to secure unwarranted privileges or exemptions for himself or herself or others.
6. No such person may engage in any transaction as a representative of the Council with any entity in which that person has a direct or indirect financial interest that might reasonably tend to conflict with the proper discharge of that person's Council duties.

7. No such person may, by his or her conduct, give reasonable basis for the impression that any person can improperly influence him or her, or unduly enjoy his or her favor in the performance of his or her official duties. Nor may any such person give reasonable basis for the impression that he or she is affected by the kinship, rank, position or influence of any party or person.
8. No such person may make any personal investments in enterprises which that person has reason to believe may be directly involved in decisions to be made by that person, or which would otherwise create substantial conflict between that person's Council duties and that person's private interests.
9. Such persons will endeavor to pursue a course of conduct, which would not raise suspicion among the public that such person is likely to be engaged in acts that are in violation of the public trust.

### III. Affiliation

1. Each member of the Council, its panels and its staff and each consultant to the Council must file within 30 days of taking office or employment, an "affiliation statement" on a form provided by the Council, covering his or her associations with all organizations eligible for Council support. Each Council member, panelist or staff member will have the responsibility of keeping that statement current by the timely filing of amendments thereto. All such statements will be subject to public inspection.
2. A Council member, panelist, staff member or consultant will be considered to be "affiliated" with an organization eligible for Council support if he or she is related to the organization as:
  - (a) director, officer, trustee or employee;
  - (b) fund raiser or public relations officer;
  - (c) independent contractor who has received fees or payments in the year preceding the filing of the affiliation statement or any amendment thereto;
  - (d) holder of a financial advisory or policy making role; or
  - (e) direct or indirect financial beneficiary of a Council contract with such an organization.
3. In the event of "affiliation" with an applicant, such person:
  - (a) will be forbidden access to any confidential information (APF's, etc.) developed or obtained by the Council concerning that applicant
  - (b) will not participate in any aspect of the decision making process in connection with any matter that involves the applicant directly or indirectly; and

- (c) will be required to leave the room before the initial presentation to any closed meeting of any matter relating to the application of that organization, and will be forbidden from participation in any discussion or vote concerning the application at any open meeting.
- 4. Neither Council members, panelists, staff members or consultants will attempt in any way to influence the votes or opinions of fellow Council members, panelists, staff members or consultants on applications or any other matter involving applicants with which they are affiliated.

#### IV. Participation in activities Supported by the Council

Council members, panelists, staff members and consultants may take part in activities undertaken with support from the Council, but may not receive any remuneration out of Council funds for their services in connection with any such activity, unless the Council knows the amount of remuneration prior to acting on the application of the organization involved. The propriety of receiving such remuneration will depend on the nature of the organization, the amount of Council funding in relation to the total budget of the organization and other relevant factors.

#### V. Gifts, Entertainment and Favors

- 1. Council members, panelists, staff members and consultants are forbidden from soliciting, accepting, or agreeing to accept, any gift of money, goods, loans or services, or entering into or participating in any other arrangements for personal benefits which would improperly influence or have the appearance of improperly influencing them in their Council related duties and responsibilities.
- 2. Paragraph V-1 hereof, however, does not affect (i) the acceptance of free admission and attendant privileges, within reasonable limits, by members of the Council, panelists, staff members and consultants in conjunction with attendance at art events and performances, in the course of the performance of their duties to the Council or (ii) the acceptance of gifts in any form having a value of \$25 or less.

#### VI. Agreement of Persons Involved

- 1. Council members, panelists, staff members and consultants will be subject to these guidelines and procedures during their periods of service to the Council.
- 2. Council members, panelists, staff members and consultants will also avoid any action, whether or not specifically prohibited which might result in or create the appearance of (a) using their Council position for private gain, (b) giving preferential treatment to any person or organization, (c) impeding the operations of the Council, (d) losing complete independence or impartiality, (e) circumventing the Council's decision-making processes or (f) affecting adversely the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Council.
- 3. Upon the approval of the Council, persons may be exempted from particular provisions of this Code. Any such exemption and the grounds therefore will be duly noted in the minutes of the meeting of the Council at which it is granted.

## VII. Interpretation and Advice

1. The Executive Director or his designee will provide information, interpretation and advice with respect to this Code and its application.
2. Any person covered by this Code may seek the advice of the Executive Director or his designee at any time, with respect to actual or potential conflict of interest situations in which such person is or may be involved, or about which such person has knowledge or information.
3. Such persons are encouraged to seek advice, whenever necessary, about the application and interpretation of this Code as noted above.