

FAQs

The Connecticut Arts Foundation is committed to a fair, transparent, and equitable review process. All applications are evaluated through a structured panel review that reflects public-sector best practices used by arts funders across Connecticut.

How are applications reviewed?

Applications are reviewed through a structured panel process that reflects public-sector best practices used by arts funders across Connecticut.

Who reviews my application?

Applications are reviewed by a panel of arts professionals with experience in visual arts and related fields. Panelists are selected for their professional expertise and are required to follow conflict-of-interest and confidentiality policies.

Overview of the Review Process

Applications are reviewed in several stages:

1. Eligibility Review
2. Independent Panel Review
3. Panel Discussion and Scoring
4. Funding Recommendations and Final Approval

Each stage is designed to ensure that funding decisions are based on published criteria and professional judgment.

What criteria are used to evaluate applications?

Applications are evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Artistic Excellence
2. Artistic Merit of the proposed project or practice
3. Impact on artistic and professional development
4. Feasibility and readiness
5. Budget and appropriate use of funds

All applications are reviewed using the same criteria and scoring system.

How are scores assigned?

Panelists score applications independently using a standardized rubric. Scores are combined and discussed to ensure consistent application of the criteria.

Is equity considered in the review process?

Yes. Panelists are instructed to recognize diverse artistic practices and career paths and to be mindful of personal aesthetic preference and implicit bias. Personal characteristics are not considered.

When will I be notified?

Applicants will be notified by email according to the timeline listed in the program guidelines.

Are funding decisions final?

Yes. All funding decisions are final.

If you have additional questions, please contact Foundation staff using the information provided in the application guidelines.

1. Eligibility Review

Before panel review, staff verify that each application:

1. Meets basic eligibility requirements
2. Is complete and submitted by the deadline
3. Includes all required materials (work samples, narrative, budget, etc.)

Applications that do not meet eligibility requirements are not forwarded to panel review.

2. Independent Panel Review

Eligible applications are reviewed by a panel of arts professionals with experience in visual arts and related fields.

Panelists:

1. Review applications independently
2. Score each application using a standardized rubric
3. Base their evaluations solely on the materials submitted

At this stage, panelists do not discuss applications with one another.

3. Evaluation Criteria

Applications are evaluated using the following criteria:

Artistic Excellence

The quality, originality, and strength of the artist's work, as demonstrated by work samples.

Artistic Merit of the Proposed Project or Practice

The clarity and strength of the artist's goals and artistic intent.

Impact on Artistic and Professional Development

The extent to which the grant will support the artist's growth, sustainability, or advancement.

Feasibility and Readiness

The likelihood that the artist can carry out the proposed work or use the funds as described within the grant period.

Budget and Appropriate Use of Funds

The clarity and reasonableness of the proposed use of grant funds.

Each criterion is weighed, and all applications are evaluated using the same scoring system.

4. Panel Discussion

After independent scoring, the panel meets to:

1. Discuss applications with significant score differences
2. Clarify questions based on submitted materials
3. Ensure consistent application of the evaluation criteria

Panel discussions are facilitated to ensure respectful dialogue and balanced participation.

5. Funding Recommendations

Based on final scores and panel discussion:

1. The panel recommends applications for funding
2. Recommendations are forwarded to the Foundation for final approval

Due to limited funding, not all strong applications can be supported.

6. Equity, Fairness, and Bias Awareness

The Foundation recognizes that artists work in many different ways and follow varied career paths.

Panelists are instructed to:

1. Evaluate applications on their own merit
2. Focus on artistic quality and clarity
3. Be mindful of personal aesthetic preference and implicit bias
4. Recognize nontraditional practices and professional trajectories

Personal characteristics are not considered.

7. Confidentiality

All panel reviews and discussions are confidential.

Applicants:

1. Will not be contacted by panelists
2. Will not have access to panelist scores

How to Strengthen Your Application

The panel evaluates applications using a standardized rubric. The suggestions below are intended to help you clearly address each review criterion.

Artistic Excellence

1. Submit work samples that best represent your current artistic practice
2. Choose images that demonstrate quality, consistency, and technical skill
3. Include clear image captions (title, medium, year, dimensions)

Tip: Fewer strong samples are more effective than many uneven ones.

Artistic Merit of the Proposed Project or Practice

1. Clearly describe your artistic intent and goals
2. Explain how the proposed work relates to your ongoing painting practice
3. Use specific language rather than general statements

Tip: Panels respond well to clarity—avoid jargon unless it is essential to your work.

Impact on Artistic and Professional Development

1. Explain how the grant would support your growth, sustainability, or next steps
2. Consider addressing career stage, opportunities, or challenges the grant would help you navigate
3. Be specific about why this support is timely

Tip: Focus on impact, not need alone—explain what the support enables you to do.

Feasibility and Readiness

1. Present a realistic plan or timeline for the grant period
2. Demonstrate readiness through past work, experience, or preparation
3. Ensure the scope of your proposal matches the grant amount

Tip: Panels look for projects that are ambitious and achievable.

Budget and Appropriate Use of Funds

1. Clearly explain how grant funds will be used

2. Ensure costs are reasonable and directly related to your artistic work
3. Use clear descriptions rather than broad categories

Tip: A simple, well-explained budget is often stronger than a complex one.

Final Tips

1. Review the application instructions carefully before submitting
2. Ask a trusted peer to review your materials for clarity
3. Ensure all required materials are complete and uploaded correctly

The Foundation recognizes the time and care required to prepare an application and appreciates your interest in contributing to Connecticut's arts community.

For Emerging Artists & First-Time Applicants

Below is an adapted, applicant-facing version written specifically for emerging artists and first-time applicants. The tone is encouraging, plain-language, and aligned with Connecticut public-sector expectations, while explicitly reducing intimidation and gatekeeping. We can label this as “For Emerging Artists & First-Time Applicants” in our portal.

For Emerging Artists & First-Time Applicants

You do not need an extensive exhibition history or formal credentials to apply. Panelists are interested in the quality of your work, the clarity of your ideas, and your readiness to use the support effectively.

The guidance below explains what panelists look for under each review criterion.

Artistic Excellence

1. Submit work samples that best represent where you are now in your artistic practice
2. Technical perfection is not required; panelists look for intent, care, and artistic direction
3. Clear, well-documented images help panelists focus on the work itself

Helpful reminder: Emerging artists are evaluated in the context of their career stage.

Artistic Merit of Your Project or Practice

1. Describe what you are exploring or developing in your work
2. It is okay if your ideas are still evolving—clarity is more important than polish
3. Explain what excites or motivates you about your painting practice

Helpful reminder: There is no “right” kind of project—panelists value authenticity.

Impact on Your Artistic and Professional Development

1. Share how this grant would support your next steps as an artist
2. This might include time to focus on your work, access to materials, or skill development
3. You do not need a long-term career plan—focus on what this opportunity enables now

Helpful reminder: Panelists understand that emerging artists are building momentum.

Feasibility and Readiness

1. Keep your proposal simple and realistic
2. Explain how you would use the grant during the funding period
3. Draw on your own experience, even if informal or self-directed

Helpful reminder: Readiness can include commitment, consistency, and preparation—not just experience.

Budget and Use of Funds

1. Clearly explain how you would use the funds
2. Common uses include materials, studio costs, documentation, or time to work
3. Estimates are acceptable; the budget does not need to be perfect

Helpful reminder: The budget shows how the grant supports your work—not your accounting skills.

Additional Tips for First-Time Applicants

1. Use your own voice—clear and honest writing is more effective than formal language
2. Ask a trusted friend or fellow artist to review your application
3. Make sure all required materials are uploaded and easy to view

Please Know

Not receiving funding does not reflect a lack of merit. Panelists often review many strong applications, and funding is limited. The Foundation values your time and creativity and encourages you to apply again in future cycles.

A Note to Applicants

The Foundation values the time, care, and creativity that go into each application. We appreciate your participation and your contribution to Connecticut's arts community.