

# THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER AMERICA

## The Opera Fund Civic Practice Grants

### 2018–2019 Guidelines and Application Procedures

#### Grant Cycle Dates

July 2018	Application materials available
September 10, 2018	Intent to apply deadline
October 2, 2018	Application deadline
November 2018	Adjudication
December 2018	Notification
January 2019 – August 2020	Grant period

#### Apply

Go to [grants.operaamerica.org](https://grants.operaamerica.org).

**OPERA America**  
330 Seventh Avenue  
New York, NY 10001  
[operaamerica.org](https://operaamerica.org)

## **The Opera Fund: Civic Practice Grants 2018–2019 Guidelines**

### **About the Opera Fund**

The Opera Fund provides financial and technical support to U.S. Professional Company Members of OPERA America and their partners as part of a broader effort to enhance the quality, quantity and enjoyment of opera and music theater. The Fund was launched by the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from the Helen F. Whitaker Fund and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Civic Practice Grants build on learning from nearly two decades of audience development projects and the recent work of the Civic Action Group, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts.

### **Civic Practice in Opera**

Civic practice invites opera leaders to think flexibly about the art form's inherent assets and requires a nuanced understanding of and deep respect for a locale's many histories and identities. Civic practice is more likely to be successful when it advances through partnership with organizations that may be dissimilar and unfamiliar to the opera company. This work requires administrators, artists, board members, volunteers, funders and even members of the general public to expand their understanding of what it means for opera and opera companies to be engaged cultural assets in their communities.

At the same time that enhanced civic practice can animate the civic commons and place opera companies at the center of stronger community relationships, such work can attract funders who would not ordinarily support the arts. The enhanced stature, visibility and trust of the opera company may also lead to ticket sales among new audiences, especially those who were either intimidated by or excluded from opera companies.

Civic practice is predicated on an ongoing process of learning, partnership and leading change. For most companies, changes will need to begin internally with the mindsets of its decision-makers, followed by the organization's capacity to develop new relationships. As civic practice becomes company-wide, organizational structures and eventually outputs will rebalance the attention given to public service and the artistic product.

### **Civic Practice Goals**

Civic Practice Grants help OPERA America Professional Company Members (PCMs) and their partners develop new and/or deeper relationships that lead to mutual understanding, sustained collaboration, shared projects and programming that emerges from the interconnection(s).

Grants are intended to support opera company efforts to learn more about civic priorities within their communities, to develop relationships with leading arts and non-arts organizations and their leaders, and to discover and deliver services that strengthen the community, as well as the visibility and trust of the opera company within it.

Successful applications will demonstrate that mutually beneficial community partnerships are ongoing and seek more than short-term gain measured through ticket sales or fundraising.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** The project encourages substantive sustained collaboration with other organizations in the community, especially those that demonstrate plans for continuity beyond the scope of the project.
- **Genuine Engagement:** The project demonstrates a clear plan to understand community priorities and the priorities of partner organizations, as well as a willingness to adapt programming in service to these priorities.
- **Learning and Communication:** The activities offer multifaceted opportunities for company staff and community partners to learn about each other and the community in which they reside.
- **Planning and Management:** The proposal demonstrates a thorough planning process that relies on input from community partners. Organizational financial history will be used to evaluate the company's ability to carry out the proposed project. The proposal reflects the commitment of the company's leadership and interest from community partners.
- **Evaluation:** The project will be evaluated using participant assessment or other types of measurement beyond ticket sales or event attendance.
- **Documentation:** Projects incorporate documentation strategies in order to share the activities and learning with other companies.

## Funding Parameters

Grants of up to \$30,000 will be awarded to support up to 100 percent of project costs. Grant award amounts will be determined by an independent panel of experts and may be less than the amount requested. A company may submit only one Civic Practice Grant application in each cycle. Civic Practice Grants are available on a biennial cycle beginning in 2018.

Grant Period: January 1, 2019, through August 30, 2020. All expenses must be incurred during this time.

Budgets may include, for example:

- Fees for consultants and facilitators.
- Honoraria for community partners.
- Training/coaching of staff.
- Costs for meeting space and hospitality associated with convenings.
- Purchase of tickets to attend performances and events at other arts/non-arts organizations.
- Travel and accommodations associated with visits to observe civic practice at other opera companies.
- Costs for symposia, presentations and/or performances.
- Artist fees.
- Staff salaries and benefits (up to 50 percent of the request).

Ineligible expenses include:

- Transportation costs above coach class, or change fees.
- Audience development activities for standard repertoire.
- Costs associated with standard marketing practices, including subscription or single-ticket brochures or advertising.

## Eligibility:

In order to be eligible for an Opera Fund grant, the applicant must be a U.S. Professional Company Member of OPERA America in good standing. A company in good standing has met the following criteria:

- Has maintained Professional Company Membership with OPERA America for at least one year prior to the start of the grant period.
- Is current in the submission of reports for any prior OPERA America grants.
- Is current in the payment of membership dues.
- Is current in the completion of the most recent Professional Opera Survey.
- Is current in updating Membership Directory and Season Schedule of Performances listings.
- Has OPERA America's logo, including a hyperlink to the OPERA America website, in a prominent location on its website.

## How to Apply

Please read the guidelines and review the worksheets before completing the online application. All online information must be submitted by an authorized representative of the applicant organization at [grants.operaamerica.org](http://grants.operaamerica.org). Please note that the organization must create a single account for this site and that the account information is wholly separate from the company's OPERA America membership account.

Applicants must first complete the intent to apply form to gain access to the full application. Applicants may receive feedback on the suitability of the project and the eligibility of the proposed expenses prior to the full application stage. The intent to apply and the application, along with all required attachments, make up a complete proposal. Applications that are incomplete, late or sent via means other than OPERA America's grant website will not be accepted.

Timeline:

July 2018	Application materials available
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## Application Review Process

All complete final applications will be reviewed by an independent panel drawn from a pool of experts approved by OPERA America's board of directors. No board member or employee of OPERA America may serve on a panel. Individuals who stand to benefit from a grant are also ineligible to serve. Panelists represent various artistic disciplines and expertise in arts-based civic engagement, creative placemaking and creative youth development. Panelists will be selected to reflect geographic diversity. The panel evaluates each application based on the criteria listed above. All panel decisions are final.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their requests by mail following panel review. Applicant organizations may be invited to provide information on the results of projects, even when not supported by the Opera Fund. Successful applicants will receive award letters indicating a grant start and end date, an explanation of the grant's terms and conditions, and details on the narrative and financial reporting requirements.

## **Grant Terms**

Any funds not expended at the end of the grant period will revert to the Opera Fund unless an extension of the grant period is requested and approved. Requests for extensions must be made in writing. Funds may be withheld by OPERA America if a company is not current in its membership dues, the submission of required surveys and/or the submission of reports from prior grants. The Opera Fund grant recipients may be asked to submit additional documentation or cooperate with OPERA America in sharing the results of their projects with the field.

## **Payment**

Advances of up to 50 percent of the grant amount are available upon request once the grantee has submitted a revised budget for the project and completed a grantee orientation call. The balance of the grant will be paid upon satisfactory submission of a narrative and financial report once the project is completed. Opera Fund grants are restricted to the project described in the application. Funds paid in advance must be repaid in the event the approved project is not carried out. The receipt of a grant does not guarantee continued support from the Opera Fund or OPERA America.

## **Acknowledgment**

Grantees are required to acknowledge OPERA America and the Opera Fund in the manner described in the award letter. The Opera Fund recipients must maintain OPERA America's logo, including a hyperlink to OPERA America's website, in a prominent location on their website. The submission of proof of acknowledgment constitutes an element of the final report of the grant.

Questions? Contact Kurt Howard, director of programs and services, at [KHoward@operaamerica.org](mailto:KHoward@operaamerica.org) or 212.796.8624.