



# NYC OPERA GRANTS: Support for Small-Budget Organizations

*Supported by the Howard Gilman Foundation*

**2025 GUIDELINES &  
APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

[operaamerica.org/Grants](https://operaamerica.org/Grants) | [Grants@operaamerica.org](mailto:Grants@operaamerica.org)

OPERA America  
National Opera Center  
330 Seventh Avenue  
New York, NY 10001

## Timeline

- Intent to apply deadline: September 25, 2025, 11:59 p.m. ET  
Required for access to full application
- Application deadline: October 30, 2025, 11:59 p.m. ET
- Grantees notified: December 2025
- Grant period: January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2027

### Important Links

[OPERA America Website](#)

[OPERA America Grants Portal](#)

The OPERA America website and Grants Portal require different usernames and passwords.

If you need to reset your password for OPERA America's website, go [here](#).

For Grants Portal information, contact [Jenny Fornoff](#), senior manager for grants.

## Program Purpose

NYC Opera Grants: Support for Small-Budget Organizations offer two-year project grants supporting strategic investments in opera organizations based in New York City with budgets below \$250,000. Projects may include investments in administrative areas (e.g., marketing, fundraising, production, etc.) or in programming (e.g., productions or other public-facing programs) that will increase the capacity of the organization.

By investing in small-budget opera organizations across New York, OPERA America and the Howard Gilman Foundation strive to serve and celebrate the city's vibrant cultural communities across the five boroughs.

### Definition of Opera & Opera Organizations

OPERA America defines opera as a music-theater experience with a dramatic arc written for trained voice(s) of all genres and accompanied by at least one instrument.

Any organization that identifies as primarily engaging with opera according to OPERA America's definition will be eligible to apply, provided they meet the requirements of the program.

Engagement with opera may include developmental workshops, concerts, recitals, staged performances, video or multimedia presentations, community engagement activities, educational activities, and more.

## Program Details

OPERA America will award 8–12 grants of \$5,000 to \$15,000 per year over a two-year period (\$10,000 – \$30,000 total) that represent the diversity of opera organizations in New York City in terms of organizational focus and communities served. Grant amounts will be determined by

an independent panel. It is OPERA America's intent to make awards large enough to contribute substantially to the cost of a project.

Organizations will be asked to identify up to two strategic areas for focused investment. Focus areas include but are not limited to:

- Marketing (e.g., audience development, advertising, website designs/upgrades)
- Development/Fundraising (e.g., grant writing, special event management, donor prospecting/stewarding)
- Artistic (e.g., paying/increasing artists' fees, commissioning fees)
- Production (e.g., costs related to venue and rentals of costumes, technical, lighting, and equipment, etc.)
- Education/Community Engagement (e.g., teaching artists, program development/evaluation)
- Personnel (e.g., hiring staff or consultants, increasing staff time/salaries)

Applicants will be asked what they hope to accomplish during the two-year grant period. The funded activities should, in some way, support the organization's future growth or development beyond the scope of the grant.

OPERA America is invested in the long-term health of its members and grantees. To support the growth and development of the small opera organizations funded by this grant program, OPERA America staff will work with the grantees as a cohort to promote peer connections. It will offer professional development programming tailored to fit the specific needs of grantees.

The grant period is January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2027. Funds will be disbursed at the start of the grant period in year one. Disbursement of funds for year two will be contingent on participation in grantee cohort activities and/or a mid-term meeting with OPERA America staff.

## Project Budgets

Organizations may request between \$5,000 and \$15,000 per year (\$10,000 – \$30,000 total) for strategic investments to increase organizational capacity. No matching funds are required.

Eligible expenses might include payments to consultants, staff salaries, performing or teaching artists, software, web platforms, equipment or venue rentals, advertising, design fees, and more. Applicants will be asked to describe how they plan to use the requested funds and how the costs relate to the project.

## Eligibility

Applicant organizations must engage primarily with opera and may be producing entities, educational organizations, choirs or choruses, creative incubators, or something completely different.

Applicants are NOT required to be members of OPERA America.

In order to apply, applicants must be:

- New York City-based organizations, incorporated within the five boroughs.
- 501(c)(3) organizations or fiscally sponsored organizations with operating budgets under \$250,000. Both operating expenses and revenue of the most recently completed fiscal year must be under the \$250,000 threshold.
- Engaged primarily in opera, as defined above. All types of programming are eligible; the organization is not required to produce full opera productions for the public.
- Able to demonstrate programming within the 12 months prior to application. It is recommended that the organization also be able to outline programming planned for the upcoming 12 months, although funding is not contingent on fixed planning.

Annual grantees of the Howard Gilman Foundation are ineligible to apply for NYC Opera Grants: Support for Small-Budget Organizations. Additionally, organizations that receive an NYC Opera Grant and subsequently reach a budget over \$250,000 may not apply directly to the Howard Gilman Foundation until the funding period concludes (December 31, 2027, or later).

Applicants are required to compensate artists as follows:

- Opera-producing entities must pay all performing artists, musicians, conductors, stage directors, designers, and others.
- Community choruses must pay all guest artists, musicians, and soloists who are not already chorus members.
- Competitions must pay all accompanists and artists serving as faculty or adjudicators.
- Educational arts organizations must pay all performing and teaching artists.

*Exceptions and/or other scenarios may be considered but must be approved in advance by OPERA America staff.*

The following organizations are NOT eligible:

- Organizations or programs embedded within larger institutions, such as a school, university, or other music organization, that have a budget over \$250,000.
- Organizations requiring artists to pay to participate (i.e., a company that requires payment for the artists to perform or a vocal competition charging an entry fee).

## How to Apply

- Read the guidelines carefully before completing any application materials.
- All materials must be submitted online via the [Grants Dashboard](#).
- An intent to apply form is required for all applications and is due by September 25, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. ET. Only applicants who submit an intent to apply may submit a full application.
- Applicants will receive notification if the intent to apply form has been advanced to the application stage.

- Submit a complete final application, including all supplemental materials, by October 30, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. ET.
- Applications that are incomplete, late, or sent in person or via mail, fax, or email will not be accepted.

## Application Review

All final applications for NYC Opera Grants: Support for Small-Budget Organizations are reviewed by an independent panel of experts approved by the board of directors of OPERA America. The panel will consist of professionals of varied races, ethnicities, and gender identities, representing opera company general directors, independent producers, composers and librettists, professors, and other individuals with experience relevant to the proposed projects.

The majority of the panel will be active professionals who have substantial experience working in New York City and with smaller companies. No current OPERA America board member or employee may serve on the panel. Individuals who stand to benefit from a grant are also ineligible to serve. All panel decisions are final.

Using the following criteria, panelists will evaluate the applications through a cultural humility lens, which is a practice of honoring the cultural values and perspectives of the applicants while reflecting on how one's own background and the background of others impact the review of applications.

Applications will be assessed on the following dimensions:

1. **Mission/History/Community Service:** Applicants should clearly articulate what drives their work, what they have achieved, the community/communities they serve, and how they serve their constituents within New York City.
2. **Project/Goal Alignment:** The project's intended outcomes should clearly support the organization's goals for the future. The organization's goals should be reasonable and realistic based on its operational history.
3. **Strength of Project Planning:** Projects should reflect detailed consideration of the strategic actions required to realize the intended outcomes. Both the project's goals and the organization's overall goals should be specific and measurable.
4. **Budget and Use of Funds:** Expenses listed in the budget should be connected to the strategies outlined in the project narrative.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their requests after the panel completes its review.

## Award Announcement

- Grantees will be required to speak with OPERA America's project manager to activate their grant and receive panel feedback.

- Applicants who do not receive an award may request application feedback from OPERA America staff.

## Terms, Payment Schedule, and Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants will receive an award agreement explaining the grant's terms and conditions, including required narrative and financial documentation.

The full payment for the first year will be made no later than January 31, 2026, after a signed agreement is uploaded to OPERA America's Grants Portal.

Disbursement of funds for the second year will be contingent on active participation in the peer learning groups (described above). The second payment will be disbursed no later than January 31, 2027.

Grantees may be asked to provide a short written report or participate in a final conversation with OPERA America staff at the conclusion of the grant period. In no way will the information negatively impact the funding of this grant or chances of future grants from OPERA America. The goal is to capture the learning from grantees associated with the program, to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing small organizations in New York City.

Recipients of NYC Opera Grants: Support for Small-Budget Organizations may be asked to submit additional documentation or cooperate with OPERA America in sharing the results of their projects with the field both during and after the grant period.

Awardees are required to acknowledge OPERA America and the Howard Gilman Foundation in the manner described in the award agreement. Recognition of the awarded project is required in all print and digital materials distributed to the press and general public.

Recipients of a NYC Opera Grants: Support for Small-Budget Organizations award must maintain OPERA America's logo, including a hyperlink to OPERA America's website, in a prominent location on their website.

The receipt of a grant at any stage of a project or activity does not guarantee continued support from OPERA America.

## Contact Information

For more information, contact Jenny Fornoff, senior manager for grants, at [Grants@operaamerica.org](mailto:Grants@operaamerica.org) or 646.699.5258.

## Funder

NYC Opera Grants: Support for Small-Budget Organizations are made possible through the generosity of the Howard Gilman Foundation.