Incubator Grant Fund Mission & Beliefs

Building upon their individual philanthropic missions and achievements, VIA Art Fund and Wagner Foundation partnered in 2019 to establish a $1 million Incubator Grant Fund. This fund aims to build a robust and inclusive national arts ecosystem by awarding unrestricted funding to small nonprofit visual arts organizations throughout the United States, with a particular focus on regional diversity.

We share the belief that –

- Art has the power to engage, challenge, inspire, and transform individuals.

- Local arts organizations play a critical role in creating inclusive and supportive communities, and expanding access to creativity and well-being through engagement with the arts.

- A geographically diverse and programmatically dynamic network of small arts organizations cultivates innovative and creative artistic voices, and is vital to the overall health of arts in the United States.

- Small arts organizations face considerable challenges in attracting and sustaining both capital and human resources.

Core Values & Assessment Criteria

I. Artistic Production
We champion the production of new work – from creation to exhibition, documentation, and dissemination – that reflects artistic excellence and innovation.

II. Thought Leadership
We support the work of both established and emerging voices in contemporary art that brings new knowledge and dynamic avenues of understanding to the field. The creative output of these thought leaders generates entry points for dialogue and collaboration and fosters vital intellectual exchange.

III. Public Engagement
We promote work that penetrates social, cultural, geographic, and economic barriers to inspire and educate diverse and expanded audiences. These initiatives act as platforms for inquiry and investigation, generating meaningful collective experiences for the public.
Incubator Grant Fund Guidelines

What We Fund
We recognize that cultural production takes many forms. Proposals considered for the Fund include local art spaces focused on production and exhibition; artist residency programs; online or print discursive platforms; and curatorial or artists’ initiatives. We seek to support small visual arts organizations whose activities are rooted in programs, platforms and/or initiatives that embrace innovation, progress, and risk; who champion new, diverse and/or overlooked artistic voices; who attract and serve expanded audiences; and who cultivate new avenues of thought leadership.

How We Fund
The VIA | Wagner Foundation Incubator Grant Fund provides two-year general operating support (that may also be directed towards a specific initiative) for small visual arts organizations across the United States. Each year, five organizations will receive a grant of $40,000, which will be disbursed in equal installments of $20,000 per year over the two years.

Application Process
All Incubator Grant proposals are reviewed through an open call letter of inquiry (LOI), followed by an invitation-only application process. Interested applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Incubator Grant Fund Core Values and Assessment Criteria (above) to determine the potential compatibility of their organization's work within the Incubator Grant Fund's parameters and grantmaking values. Organizations that were invited to submit an application, but were unsuccessful in a previous cycle must wait two years before submitting another LOI.

Eligibility Criteria

- Incubator Grants may be awarded to U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit visual arts organizations. Organizations or artists' initiatives that do not have 501(c)(3) status may submit an application through a fiscal sponsor. The fiscal sponsor must submit the grant application.
- VIA does not award grants to international entities within the Incubator Grant Fund.
- In some cases, VIA will consider grant requests for funding from start-up organizations, or artists' initiatives at a nascent stage of development. However, the organization must demonstrate clear objectives and robust engagement with diverse constituents.
- Organizations with an annual operating budget of up to $2.2 million are eligible to apply for a grant.
- Incubator Grant Fund recipients may not apply for renewed funding at the conclusion of their grant period.
- Organizations that were invited to submit an application, but were unsuccessful in a previous cycle must wait two years before submitting another LOI.
Submitting a Letter of Inquiry

The deadline for Letters of Inquiry (LOI) is December 1, 2021.

Your letter of inquiry should be submitted in a single PDF and include:

- The organization's full address and website, plus email and phone for a primary contact for the organization (this person will receive VIA’s acknowledgement of receipt via email).
- A brief three-page description discussing:
  - Organization’s history and mission
  - Organization’s executive and programmatic leadership
  - Overview of organization’s program and activities; and how these align with VIA’s Core Values & Assessment Criteria
- Organization’s current annual operating budget as well as most recent financial statements
- Proof of 501 (c) (3) nonprofit status (including Nonprofit Tax ID); or fiscal sponsor’s nonprofit status

Please submit your Letter of Inquiry in a single PDF file to grants@viaartfund.org.

If your proposal is of interest, we will contact you with an invitation and further instructions on how to submit a formal application.

Dates & Deadlines 2022 Grant Cycle

Letter of inquiry deadline: December 1, 2021
Invitation to submit full application: February 1, 2021
Application deadline (by invitation only): March 1, 2022
Grant award notification: June 2022

Contact

To obtain more information about our grant procedures, or if you have further questions, please consult our FAQ sheet under the “Apply + Contact” section of our website before contacting us at grants@viaartfund.org. Due to our small staff and the high volume of correspondence we receive, we cannot take inquiries by phone.

About Us

VIA Art Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit philanthropic arts organization founded by an international coalition of individuals and private foundations who believe in the central role art plays in society. VIA’s activities support innovative, ambitious and rigorous works of art and endeavors with far-reaching public impact realized in various forms including institutional production and acquisition, exhibitions, public installations, curatorial research, publications and symposia. Funding artists, curators and arts organizations around the world, VIA Art Fund awards grants in three categories – Artistic Production Grants, Incubator Grants and an annual Curatorial Fellowship grant – that exemplify VIA’s core values of Artistic Production, Thought Leadership, and Public Engagement.
Wagner Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit private foundation working to build just and robust community where all people have equitable access to opportunity and the ability to live a life of purpose and dignity. Wagner Foundation supports organizations that improve health equity, increase economic mobility, expand institutional fairness, and strive for cultural transformation. In these efforts, we welcome creative solutions bringing communities together. We are committed to encouraging visionary individuals, as well as arts institutions that expand cultural access. The willingness to explore, ask questions, and support one another makes new solutions possible, transforming culture in the process.