

Program Overview

The Boost Fund is intended to directly support an artist’s creative practice by providing a “Boost” of funding for artist-led projects or events and artist-specific needs. This funding program prioritizes broad support of creatives and will use a randomized selection system to determine recipients. The program is especially suited for artists who are new to applying for grants.

The Boost Fund will be offered through three (3) cycles, funding a total of 144 Cuyahoga County artists with \$1,500 each. Forty-eight (48) artist recipients will be selected in each cycle.

Funds may be used for a wide range of artist-related expenses included in the *Use of Funds* section below.

Please note that submitting a Boost Fund application does not guarantee funding.

Assembly for the Arts and the Boost Fund are supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from [Cuyahoga Arts & Culture](#).

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Boost Fund, applicants must:

- Satisfy the definition of artist or creative as defined below (see *Definition of Artists & Creatives*) and be able to provide proof of their creative work
- Live and work in Cuyahoga County and provide proof of residency
- Be able to complete a W-9 form with a valid Social Security Number (SSN) or Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)
- Be 18 years of age or older

Ineligibility

Ineligible applicants include:

- Current staff members, board members, or contractors of Assembly for the Arts or Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC)
- Panelists or jury members for Assembly artist grant programs
- Immediate family members, domestic or romantic partners, or household members of current staff, board or contractors of Assembly for the Arts or Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC)
- Artists who have received Cuyahoga Arts & Culture funded artist grants from any of the following programs in 2024 or 2025:
 - Assembly for the Arts: Creative Impact Fund or Boost Fund
 - SPACES Urgent Art Fund
 - Karamu House: Room in the House Fellowship
 - Cleveland Public Theatre: Premiere Fellowship or Individual Artist Fund
 - Julia de Burgos (Unidos Por El Arte) within the last two (2) years are not eligible to apply

Assembly for the Arts reserves the right to determine that an applicant is ineligible where any actual, potential, or apparent conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety would compromise the fairness or integrity of the program.

Artists may submit one (1) application per program cycle and be selected for funding one (1) time per year. Artists selected for Boost Funds are not eligible to submit applications or receive funds in subsequent 2026 program cycles. Artists who are not selected for funding may continue to submit one application for each cycle of the program.

Eligible artists may apply for and receive Assembly's Creative Impact Fund and Boost Fund in the same year.

How to Apply

Interested artists can apply online on the Assembly website at www.assemblycycle.org/boost. Artists will need to create or use their existing [Submittable](#) account to complete their application.

Paper applications are not available for this program, however, if an applicant has a disability or language barrier and needs assistance applying for the Boost Fund, assistance is available by contacting grants@assemblycycle.org.

Applications will be open for 3-4 weeks per cycle, according to the following timeline:

Cycle 1 – March 20, 2026 – April 13, 2026

Cycle 2 – July 24, 2026 – August 24, 2026

Cycle 3 – October 21, 2026 – November 19, 2026

Assembly office hours and grant informational sessions will be available to help artists with their applications. Details can be found on the Boost Fund web page, www.assemblycycle.org/boost.

Application Materials

The Boost Fund application is designed to be easy to complete and will request the following information:

- First and Last Name
- Cuyahoga County residential address (studio addresses and P.O. Boxes are not eligible)
- Confirmation of your eligibility
- A 75-100 word response explaining how you will use the Boost Funds to support your creative practice
- Brief answers to questions about your creative practice, previous funding experience and income
- A link to your artist social media page or website
- Optional demographic questions

Selection Process

Boost Fund recipients will be selected through a random selection process facilitated by Assembly for the Arts. Random selection in artist funding programs has gained popularity across the country¹ and is intended to eliminate subjectivity and reduce competition between artists.

To achieve intended program goals, some recipients from each cycle will be randomly selected from a prioritized group of applicants that meet criteria in alignment with Assembly's mission.

Artist selections will occur after the open application period has ended for each cycle. All applicants will be notified of their application status by email after the selection date for each cycle.

Funds Disbursement

Funds will be distributed via direct deposit within approximately 30 days of receipt of required payment documents. Assembly uses a third-party platform called [Bill](#) to distribute direct deposits. Artist recipients will need to create or use an existing Bill account and enter their bank information to receive their Boost Funds. Artists who do not complete this step or provide verifiable payment documents (W-9, signed agreement) within 60 days of their grant notification will forfeit their Boost Funds.

Applicants are responsible for any applicable taxes for any grant received, and we strongly encourage applicants to consult a tax professional with any questions they have regarding tax obligations for any grant received.

Grantee Requirements

Artists receiving funds through the Boost Fund must:

- Complete and sign an artist agreement
- Submit a W-9 form with a valid Social Security Number (SSN) or Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)
- Have a bank account capable of receiving an ACH (direct deposit) payment
- Add their artist profile and event(s) to [ClevelandArtsEvents.com](#)
- Include Assembly's logo on promotional materials for any public-facing events supported with Boost funds
- Comply with all reporting requirements

Reporting Requirements

All Boost Fund recipients will be asked to provide a 2-3 minute video testimonial of their grant experience and an expense report. Artists will submit reporting materials through a form in their Submittable account. Report deadlines will be determined according to program cycles.

¹ <https://www.theartrebellion.net/chicago-dancechance-event/>; <https://equalitybylot.com/2023/12/06/random-selection-in-funding-art/>;

Expenses must align with Boost Fund goals and the *Eligible and Ineligible Use of Funds* section below. Failure to comply with reporting requirements may result in the return of Boost Funds to Assembly for the Arts.

Use of Funds

Boost Funds are intended to support artist-led projects and events and artist specific needs as outlined below:

For Projects and Events

Artists may use Boost funds to cover expenses for upcoming, on-going or in-progress artist-led projects and events. Projects and events can include but are not limited to: artist-run festivals, exhibitions, fairs, performances, workshops, youth programs, public discussions and more.

Projects and events hosted and led by artists funded through the Boost program should be open and accessible to the public and must take place in Cuyahoga County. Examples of project expenses include:

- Supplies and materials
- Artist fees and contract services
- Technology, audio, visual
- Food and catering (not alcohol)
- Space costs (rental, maintenance)
- Permits

Projects and events **cannot** be: Private fundraisers, galas or exclusive parties, politically partisan events or events led by an organization (for profit or non-profit).

For Artist Needs

Artists may apply for the Boost Fund to help cover costs of industry-specific needs that directly support their creative practice. Examples include but are not limited to: travel expenses (within the U.S.) to participate in an exhibition or gig, studio rent or utilities, permits for an exhibition or performance, tools, supplies or materials.

Expenses **cannot** include any of the following:

- Personal expenses such as medical bills, groceries, home utilities
- Illegal activity
- Political campaign expenses
- Gambling
- Alcohol
- Travel outside the U.S.
- Debt repayment
- Fundraising
- Contributions or donations to external causes or organizations

Definition of Artists and Creatives

To guide the administration of these funds, Assembly defines artists and creatives as professionals who create, perform, teach, or support the development of work in following disciplines:

- **Craft** (ceramics, fiber, glass, jewelry, metals, textiles)
- **Dance & Choreography** (create or perform movement-based works)
- **Design** (fashion, graphic, industrial, object, all forms of architecture)
- **Film** (filmmakers, cinematography, directing, screenwriting, animation)
- **Interdisciplinary** (work creating intentional connections between multiple creative disciplines)
- **Literary Arts / Writing** (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, spoken word, criticism, graphic novels, journalism, arts writing)
- **Media** (work at the intersection of technology, content creation, aesthetics, storytelling, and digital culture)
- **Music** (composing, songwriting, performing, DJing, producing)
- **Theatre & Performance** (directing, playwriting, puppetry, comedy, set design, lighting/installation, and performance art)
- **Traditional Arts** (work related to the continuity and evolution of a tradition and/or cultural heritage such as cultural dance, cultural music, oral expression and traditional crafts)
- **Visual Art** (painting, sculpture, photography, installation, performance art, sound art, video, printmaking, illustration, drawing)

Assembly understands that creative individuals exist in every industry. However, to prioritize and concentrate funding, **the following industry areas are not included in our definition of artists:**

- Cosmetology, Salon and Barber services
- Culinary and Restaurant Services
- Curators and Presenters of other artists' work