

Project Grant Updates

At today's meeting, staff will present an update on the 2026 Project Grant guidelines and application.

Code and bylaw support: This item is presented to the Commission as it is supported by City Code 3.56.070 item J: "Recommend priorities for funding and allocation of small grants to arts organizations based on eligibility and selection criteria approved by council."

Background

Project grants (formally called Special Project grants) have existed for at least fifteen years. Award amounts have varied over the years, typically on a sliding scale from \$500 to \$5,000, with an average award of \$1,867 across the past fifteen years. Below are a few updates to next year's program.

- Increasing grant requests to three levels of \$3,000, \$5,000 and \$7,000. Formally, they were \$1,000, \$2,000 and \$3,000. Awards are all or nothing; applicants do not rank their choices for funding, as that creates an unfair situation if a grantee plans an event expecting a certain amount, and then, if awarded much less, must do additional work scaling down or scrambling for more funds. We do still encourage applicants to find a diversity of funding if their project requires more than they request.
- Adding clarity that a project must occur in Bellevue.
- While still under drafting, the application will include an additional question for the BelRed Bonus grant about where the applicant plans to bring their project in the district. In the past, we've seen applicants apply for this opportunity, but not address where they would host the project (to receive the bonus, an applicant must host their project in the district).
- Also, add a question or have applicants address it if they have started conversations with the owners or stewards of the space they are considering. We've seen lists of venues and spaces under consideration, but it was unclear how much thought had been put into whether the spaces were even rentable, usable, and available. This is especially important for the bonus.

Next Steps

Publish guidelines and open the program for applications in August.

Attachments

Attachment A: 2026 Project Grant Draft Guidelines

Staff Contact

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