



Building for the Arts

Program Overview / Frequently Asked Questions

Building for the Arts (BFA) is a program that awards state grants to nonprofit community-based organizations to buy, build or renovate arts and cultural facilities. It is managed by the Washington State Department of Commerce. For the current biennium, these capital project grants can cover up to 33.3% of the total costs for construction.



The maximum grant award for the current biennium is \$2,000,000. There is no minimum grant award amount. The BFA program operates on a biennial (two-year) grant cycle.



How does BFA work?

ArtsWA will work with organizations in the early stages of the process to help them determine if they are ready to pursue this opportunity.



There are six steps in getting a Building for the Arts grant:

- **Determine** whether you are eligible and ready to apply
- **Decide** whether to seek LEED certification or exemption
- **Complete** your application online
- **Application review** by a citizens advisory board
- **Negotiate** a contract
- **Submit** reimbursement materials



What organizations are eligible?

Applicants must meet these requirements when they submit their application:

- Be a tribe or registered nonprofit organization in the state of Washington
- Have binding control of the project site, either by owning it or having a long-term lease (at least 15 years from application date). Operating agreements are not eligible
- Have a legally constituted board of directors
- Agree to LEED certification for the project (or file an exemption)
- Agree to pay state prevailing wages for project labor
- Have either secured all non-state funding for the project OR have made substantial progress in a capital fundraising campaign



How does BFA work?

Eligible projects must be arts related. They must include construction or renovation of facilities, or the purchase of bare land to build a facility. The facilities must focus on arts-related activities. This is defined as *the active interpretation, performance or exhibition of aesthetic traditions, practices or works of art that characterize cultural values.*



What is LEED certification?

LEED provides a framework for efficient, carbon and cost-saving green buildings.

To achieve LEED certification, a project earns points by adhering to prerequisites and credits that address carbon, energy, water, and more. Projects go through a verification and review process and are awarded points that correspond to a level of LEED certification: Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum.

Most BFA projects are required to apply for LEED silver certification.

Important links:

Department of Commerce:

- [Building for the Arts | main page](#)
- [Building for the Arts | guidelines](#)

ArtsWA:

- [Building for the Arts | main page](#)
- [Building for the Arts | Webinar](#)



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What is a feasibility study?

A feasibility study is meant to determine whether a planned project can be completed. Feasibility studies generally occur early in the process, and analyze demographics, community need, and more. Organizations often hire a consultant to assist with a feasibility study. Feasibility studies cannot be funded through a Building for the Arts grant.

Can reimbursable costs be retroactive?

Yes - for the time being. Reimbursable costs can be retroactive for the current funding cycle. Please note that this may be changed in the next funding cycle.

Can organizations apply if they have applied for, but not yet received, 501c3 status?

No. Organizations must have received nonprofit status before they apply for the grant.

Is an organization with a non-profit fiscal sponsor eligible?

Yes and no. A non-profit organization needs to be the primary recipient of the grant. However, partnerships are allowed. You can review the [grant guidelines from the last fiscal cycle](#) to learn more about the requirements for these partnerships.

Are behind-the-scenes projects, such as HVAC or insulation, competitive against higher-profile projects?

Yes. The past fiscal cycle included funding for projects like retrofitting, electrical panel upgrades, HVAC systems, roofing and similar kinds of essential improvements.

Can a single organization apply to more than one Building for the Arts grant?

Yes. Organizations may apply for multiple Building for the Arts grants throughout their lifetime.

Would a nonprofit media organization that provides art programming be eligible?

Yes. As long as you are an arts nonprofit organization requesting support for a capital project (such as studio improvements or repairs), the review panel will likely consider your application.

Are non-performance spaces, such as event and exhibition spaces, eligible?

Yes. The space needs to be a place where members of the public can visit or gather to have arts and cultural experiences. Spaces that are restricted to the public - anything that could qualify as "Members Only" - would not be eligible.

What does 'binding control of site mean? Can we apply if we are still working out the terms of our lease or purchase?

Binding control means that you currently a) own or occupy the site, or b) have either a lease or mortgage agreement stating that you are the tenant or owner and can legally occupy the site. You cannot apply if your agreement is not in place at the time of application.

Who should we contact with further questions?

Questions about how to prepare and determine readiness for an application, contact Annette Roth at annette.roth@arts.wa.gov. For complex issues and questions about the application itself, please contact the [Department of Commerce](#).