

## New Music Organization Fund: Overview and Guidelines

General Operating Support, Creation of New Work, Live Music for Dance

### About

The New Music Organization Fund offers **grants to non-profit organizations, performance groups, dance organizations, festivals, presenters, and venues** that need support to sustain their programming of new music and/or nurturing of music creators and other artists. This program is for outstanding organizations that work regularly with and support the development of music creators and artists and offer crucial resources to their community. The main criteria for this fund are:

- **Artistry** of applicant organization and/or supported artists.
- **Community Value, Engagement & Impact** on the community of artists and/or audiences served.
- **Organizational Readiness & Need: Why Now?**

The average grant award is \$7,000 and the maximum is \$10,000.

### Our Definition of New Music

New Music USA's mission is to nurture a vibrant and inclusive community for artists and listeners. To us, that means supporting the many musical approaches and ideas being created and performed today. We welcome all artists/organizations who are curating compelling sonic experiences, influencing original musical creations and presentations, and contributing to the sounds of tomorrow.

### Timeline

**The deadline to apply is March 19, 2026, at 11:59pm ET / 8:59pm PT.** Our application portal will open on February 19, 2026, and will remain open for four weeks. Internal notifications will be made in late June 2026, with a public announcement to follow in August.

Funds for General Operating Support must be used during 2026-27 season (July 2026-June 2027). Creation of New Work and Live Music for Dance funds must be used between July 2026 and June 2028.

### Registration Links for the Application Webinar and Q&A Sessions

The following services will be available to help you with your application:  
Application Webinar – March 5, 2026, 2pm ET/11am PT – [Register HERE](#)  
Q&A: March 11, 2026, 2pm ET/11am PT – [Register HERE](#)

## Program Approach

We aim to support and represent a broad range of organizations across different US cities and music genres. Organizations can apply for funding through one of the following strands: **General Operating Support**, **Creation of New Work**, or **Live Music for Dance** projects.

We are particularly interested in supporting organizations that have a deep and consistent impact on their community of artists and music lovers. For this reason, we are asking applicants to submit an endorsement from a member of their community as part of the application. For organizations seeking general operating support, this endorsement could come from an artist, invested supporter (e.g. board member), or audience member (see 'Application Requirements' section below). For organizations applying to the Creation of New Work or Live Music for Dance strands, the endorsement should be a letter of support from the collaborating composer/ musician.

Successful applicants will exhibit some or all of the following traits:

- Commitment to programming new music and providing opportunities for creators throughout the year/season.
- Commitment to commissioning and facilitating the creation of new work.
- Demonstrated artistic merit and performance history.
- Commitment to relationship building and collaboration with artists, other organizations, and the community.
- Offering of learning, engagement, and/or artist development or educational opportunities, and commitment to building future audiences for the organization's work
- Commitment to cultivating creativity, as well as leveraging new music in the service of individual and community transformation.

## Funding Areas

Organizations can apply for funding through one of the following strands: General Operating Support, Creation of New Work, or Live Music for Dance projects. Dance organizations are only eligible to apply for Live Music for Dance funding.

### General Operating Support

This strand is for outstanding organizations that work regularly with and support the development of music creators and artists and offer crucial resources to their community. Awards from this strand are to be used for general operating costs which support the organization's regular programming of and collaboration with US, Native land, and US territory-based composers and artists. Your application does not need to be tied to any specific project, but we are asking you to tell us about the programs, events, and initiatives that best align with New Music USA's support.

Organizations seeking general support will be asked to present their year-round work, including:

- Planned music programming.
- Opportunities provided to artists and music creators.
- Community of artists served (we support music creators/artists based in the US and US territories).
- Audiences their activity will reach.
- Impact on their community.

General Operating Support funds must be used between July 2026 and June 2027.

## **Creation of New Work**

This strand is intended to fund specific new music projects/programs. We are particularly interested in funding the creation and/or commissioning of new work. Funds can be applied to costs beyond the commission fee. Projects must be presented between July 2026 and June 2028.

## **Live Music for Dance**

This strand is for dance organizations that work regularly with music creators and musicians. The fund aims to support and encourage the use and creation of new and live music for dance performances, support collaborations between music creators/composers and choreographers, foster meaningful collaborations between musicians and dance companies, and create performance opportunities for musicians. Dance organizations are only eligible to apply for Live Music for Dance funding; they are not eligible to apply for the General Operating Support or Creation of New Work strands.

Live Music for Dance funds are meant to support live music performances and can support musician or music creator fees, artist/choreographer time for collaboration with the composer, commission fees, and dancer fees for the project. Projects must be presented between July 2026 and June 2028.

## **Eligibility**

All applicants must:

- Be based and doing work in the US, sovereign Native lands, or US territories.
- Have a minimum of three years of performing, programming, and budget activity at the time of the application.
- Have an average annual budget between \$5,000 and \$3 million over the past three years.
- Have a dedicated organizational bank account.
- Not be a university.
- Not be an individual. This fund is for organizations only. Individuals may not apply.
- Must have completed all previously awarded activities through New Music USA and submitted all required reporting.
- Must have not been an awardee of the 2025 New Music Organization Fund cycle. 2025 Organization Fund awardees will be eligible to apply again in 2027.

General Operating Support applicants must:

- Have a commitment to producing, performing, and/or commissioning the work of living, US/territories-based music creators on a regular basis.
- Demonstrate commitment to working and performing in their community.

Creation of New Work/ Live Music for Dance applicant organizations must:

- Confirm that any newly commissioned work is entirely new; Proposals for expansions, arrangements or re-stagings of existing works are not eligible.

Creators/musicians collaborating with Creation of New Work/Live Music for Dance applicants must:

- Be based and doing work in the US and remain so for the duration of the project.
- Not be enrolled in a degree-giving program.
- Have completed any and all projects associated with previous awards from New Music USA including the Organization Fund, Creator Fund, Next Jazz Legacy, Reel Change, and Amplifying Voices.

**Important eligibility notes for past Organization Fund recipients:**

- Please be aware that:
  - All projects previously funded by New Music USA must be complete, including all required reporting.
  - Being a past Organization Fund grantee does not guarantee that your organization will receive funding this year.
  - **Beginning in this cycle (2026), organizations that received Organization Fund awards the previous year (2025) must wait a year before reapplying to the program.**
    - This means that organizations that received Organization Fund awards in 2025 are ineligible to apply in 2026 and must wait until the 2027 cycle to apply again.

## Our Application Review Process

New Music USA staff will first screen applications for completeness and eligibility. Applications will then enter a peer review process: 25-30 independent panelists from around the country will evaluate the applications and determine the awardees. At least 3 panelists will assess every application.

Applications will be evaluated based on **artistry, community value, engagement & impact, and organizational readiness & need**, outlined below.

### Review criteria

**Artistry:** As demonstrated by the quality of the submitted music examples; artistry of the organization's programming including creators, and/or musicians involved.

**Community Value, Engagement & Impact:** The organization's impact on the community of artists and audiences it serves; history of regular and ongoing performance, programming, and engagement of living creators; evidence of programming that reflects and resonates with the organization's community

### **Organizational Readiness & Need: Why Now?**

How would your organization use New Music USA's support, and why is it important to have now? How will this grant help your organization achieve a goal or project, or navigate a transition? How will the organization or artists involved benefit from New Music USA's support?

## Number of Awards We Can Make

This year we aim to fund approximately 70 to 80 organizations with an average award of \$7,000. You may apply for up to \$10,000. Our funding comes from New Music USA's endowment (see below) and our annual fundraising efforts.

## Funding Transparency

Both the New Music Creator Fund and the New Music Organization Fund are made possible by the generous funders who either donated to our endowment or donate to New Music USA annually. Some of these funders had or have specific requests regarding the kinds of work we support because of their geographical location or specific area of interest. We are providing the facts and figures below so that all applicants have a better insight into these restrictions, which influence the applications our advisors select. Please note that applications may cover a number of the categories listed below; others may not fit with any.

- Award rates are generally between 5% and 10% of the overall applicant pool (this means we support around 1/10 of the applications we receive each year).
  - Roughly 25% of the applications we fund must include the creation of new work (e.g. commissions and the facilitation of brand-new pieces of music) and will be distributed through the Creation of New Work strand.
  - Roughly 25% of the applications we award must include creation or programming of live music for dance (creation, performance, choreographer, and dancer fees) and will be distributed through the Live Music for Dance strand.
  - Roughly 50 to 60% of the applications we award are unrestricted and will be distributed through the General Operating strand.
  - Roughly 10 to 12% of the applications we award will be engaged in their community and its transformation and will be distributed through the General Operating strand.
- Geographical restrictions are as follows:
  - 54% of our grants budget is available without geographical restriction.
  - 37% is restricted to New York City based artists/organizations.
  - 7% is restricted to New York State based artists/organizations.
  - 2% is restricted to California Bay Area based artists/organizations.

These numbers represent the minimum amount we must fund in each area.

## Application Requirements

The application will be submitted online at [SMAPPLY](#). Please provide the following:

### Endorsement Letter

- General Operating Support – Community Endorsement Letter
  - A statement of endorsement from an artist or other member of your community (e.g. audience member, board member, invested supporter, partner, performer). Please highlight:
    - Why the organization applying is important to its community.
    - What is unique about the organization’s activities.
    - Why New Music USA’s support would be important to the organization now.
- Creation of New Work and Live Music for Dance – Artistic Letter of Support
  - A statement of endorsement/commitment from the creator and/or musicians that are collaborating with the organization on the project. The statement should include the writer’s/writers’ role(s) in the proposed project.
  - For Live Music for Dance: It is recommended to also include a statement from the choreographer.
- You may submit multiple letters of endorsement as necessary; up to three are permitted.

### Information About Your Organization

- Provide a brief organizational history or bio (up to 150 words)
- Share your organization’s mission statement
- Describe your organization’s upcoming artistic programming for the proposed grant period (if available), highlighting your commitment to new music, the new music program planned, and any artist development opportunities you are providing. (up to 250 words)
- Describe your organization’s impact on the community it serves. Why is your organization important to this community, and what is its unique role? (up to 500 words)

- Share why this funding is so important to your organization right now. How will this grant help your organization achieve a goal or project, or navigate a transition? How will the organization or artists involved benefit from New Music USA's support? (up to 100 words)

#### Project Description or Use of Funds (up to 200 words)

- **For General Operating Support applicants:** Please summarize any specific music program or project that New Music USA's funding would help to advance. If applicable, please include the names of any specific music creators you will be supporting.
- **For Creation of New Work/Live Music for Dance applicants:** Please tell us about the project, including key personnel, timeline, goals, and expected outcomes.

#### Information about the artists collaborating with Creation of New Work/Live Music for Dance applicants

- Creator/musician names, locations, bios, and websites. (Up to 350 words)

#### Music Examples

- 2 to 3 work samples demonstrating the work of living creators; you may provide links to YouTube, Vimeo, or upload mp3/wav files. Providing variety in the samples best supports a strong application.
  - Ensembles/collectives: please provide examples of recent performances that feature the work of different music creators.
  - Presenters/venues/other: please provide examples of recent performances of different artists featuring the work of music creators.
    - Please limit file uploads to under 500Mb.
    - If your files are larger than 500Mb, please provide a link to an unlisted YouTube or Vimeo file.
    - For Creation of New Work/Live Music for Dance
      - Be sure to include a work sample of the music creator and/or musicians you are planning to work with.

#### Finances

- Amount requested.
- A budget for your current financial year. Please include the amount you are requesting from New Music USA in your income projections. **(General Operating Support only)**
- Budget of project **(for Creation of New Work and Live Music for Dance only)**
- Your organization's budget totals over the last three years. This section requires you to provide a brief numerical response, the income total, and expenses total for each year. **(All applicants)**
- Most recent audit or financial statement **(for General Operating Support only)**

## Support from the New Music USA Team

Due to the high volume of applications we receive, New Music USA is only able to provide email assistance for technical issues with the application site. For help with your application the following services will be available:

- Application Webinar: March 5, 2026, 2pm EST / 11am PST
  - [Register HERE](#)
- Q&A: March 11, 2026, 2pm EST / 11am PST
  - [Register HERE](#)

- We strongly encourage all applicants to watch (live or by viewing on demand) the Organization Fund [Application Webinar](#), which will take place on **March 5, 2026, from 2-3pm ET, as well as the [Q&A session](#) on March 11 at 2pm ET**
  - Due to the high volume of applications we receive, New Music USA will only be able to provide email support for technical issues with the application portal. A recording of the webinar will be available on [the program page](#) for those who cannot attend in real time.
- All applicants must read the [Organization Fund FAQs](#), which provide answers to most questions.
- All Webinar and Q & A sessions will be recorded and uploaded to this page.
- If you have a technical issue with the application site, email [grants@newmusicusa.org](mailto:grants@newmusicusa.org) with “Technical Issue” in the subject line.

Due to the high volume of applications, New Music USA **is not able to:**

- Accept applications after the stated deadline of March 19, 2026 at 11:59pm ET.
- Consider or inform applicants of incomplete or improperly submitted applications.
- Provide feedback on grant applications.

Notifications and any communications about your application will be made via email from our application site. Please add [noreply@mail.smapply.net](mailto:noreply@mail.smapply.net) to your address book to ensure you receive these communications.

If awarded:

- You will be required to document grant-funded activities, keep records of expenses, and submit documentation - including proof of crediting - and receipts.
- You will be required to submit a final report or update on funded activities by July 2027.

**[For further questions and information, please read the FAQs HERE.](#)**