

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT GRANTS



ARTS & SCIENCE
COUNCIL



AGENDA

- Introductions
- Grant Purpose & Transparency
- Eligible Projects
- Application Components & Process
- Evaluation & Reporting
- What's next?
- Open Q & A

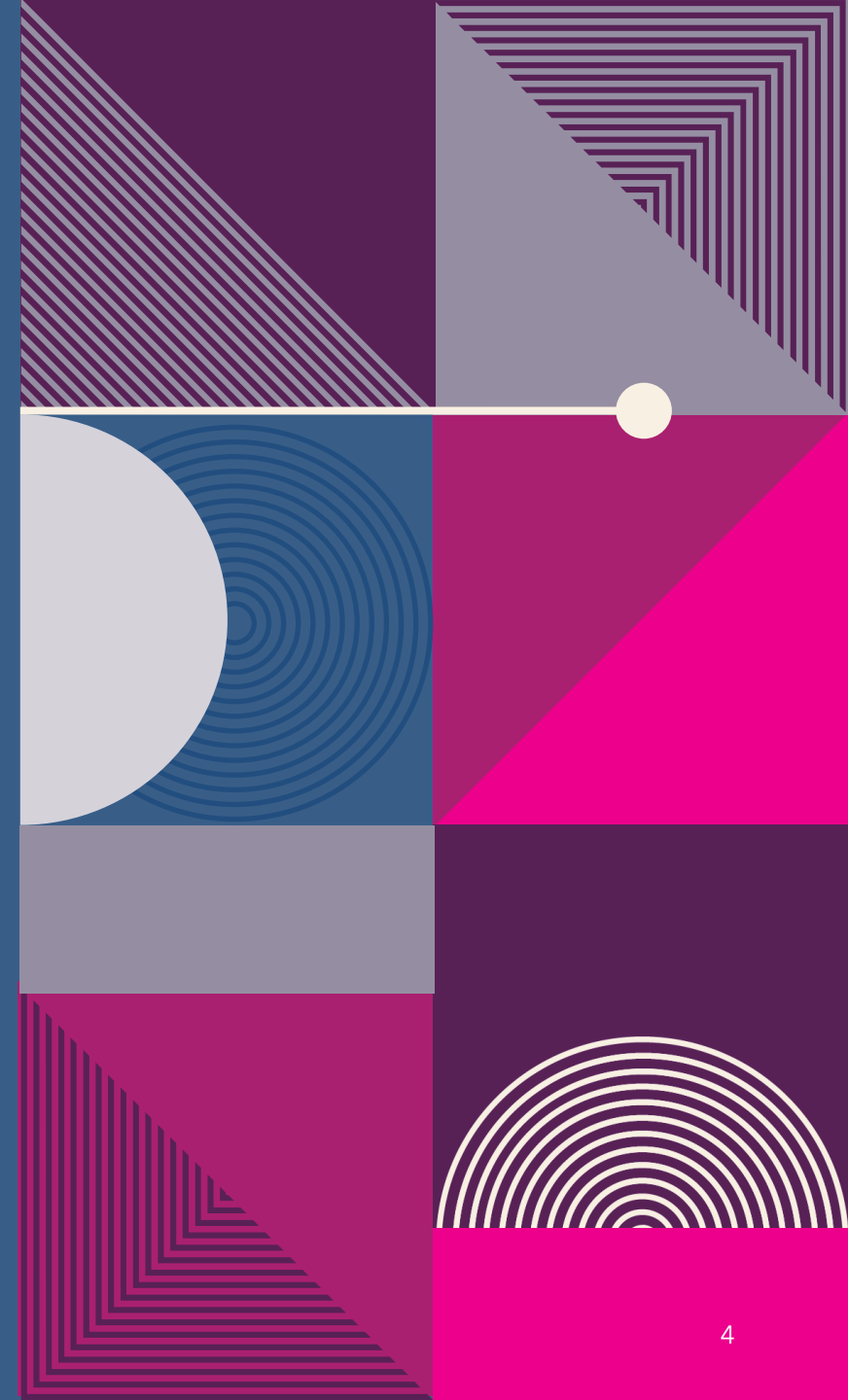


PURPOSE

The **Strategic Investment Grant** is designed to provide funding to established nonprofits in Charlotte-Mecklenburg with a primary mission centralized in arts, science, history, and/or heritage. This support will fund *one-time strategic opportunities* to invest in their organization's growth and sustainability. These project-based grants aim to significantly improve an organization's management, strengthen fundraising, provide a unique learning opportunity for staff/board, and/or achieve operating efficiencies for maximized impact. By investing in these capacity-building initiatives among local nonprofits and fostering collaboration throughout the creative ecosystem and with other sectors, this grant recognizes that **targeted strategic investments are fundamental to achieving sustained community benefit.**

STRATEGIC SUPPORT FROM THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The Strategic Investment Grant stemmed from the research and development of the City of Charlotte Arts & Culture Plan, which outlined a vision to nurture and grow the arts and culture sector in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area. Capacity-building grants to organizations provide sustainability, strategy, and/or operating efficiencies.





WHO CAN APPLY?

- Mecklenburg County-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations with a primary mission of arts, science, history, or heritage.
 - Public and independent schools, colleges and universities, after-school programs, and camps are not eligible.
- Priority will be given to organizations with annual operating budgets under \$1.25 million.
- Organizations must have at least a 2-year history of serving Mecklenburg County.



ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

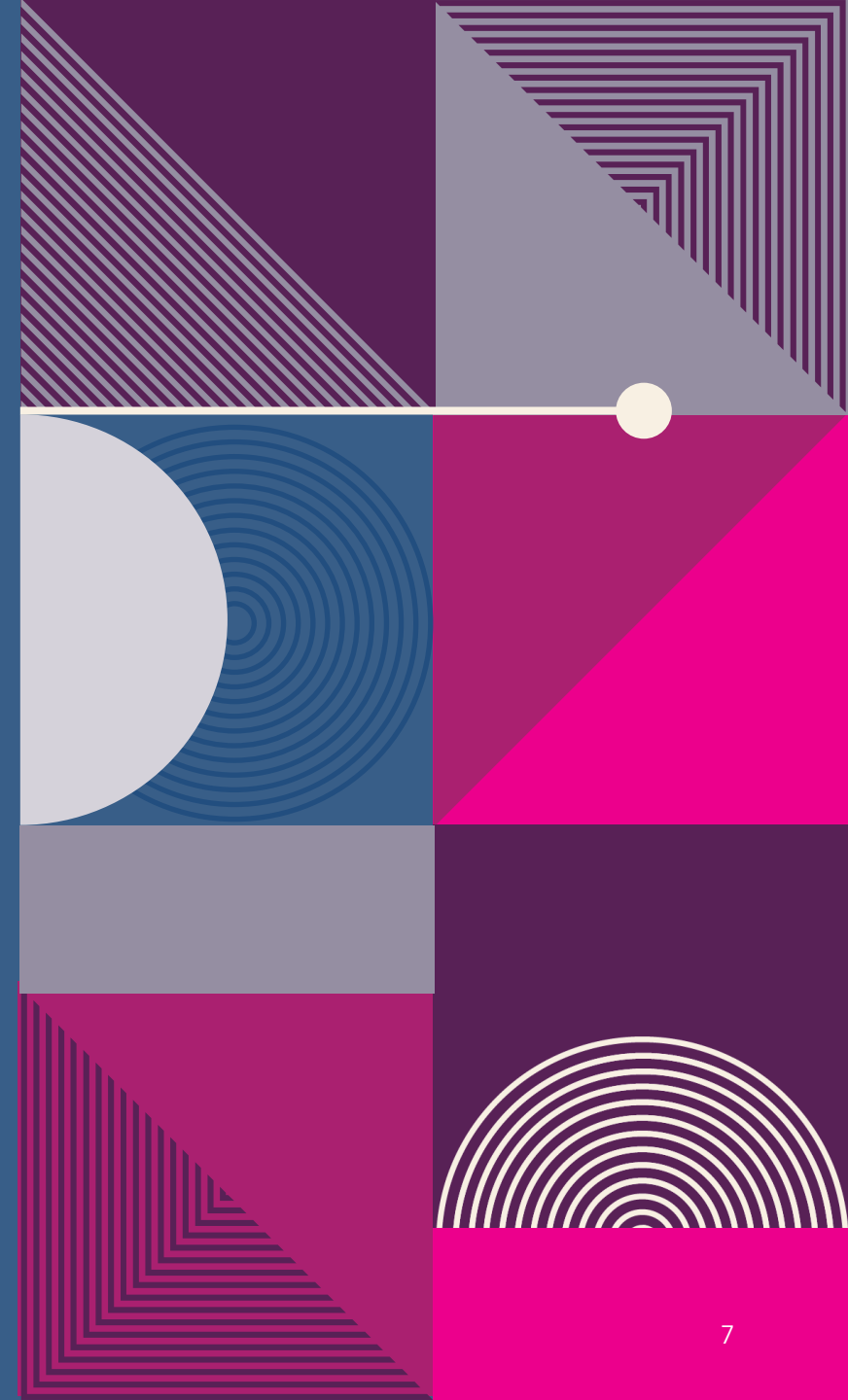
- Must be a 501(c)3 public charity
 - Have an IRS determination letter
 - Be in good status/current on filed tax returns
 - Have a public-facing mission statement
-
- The following requirements above are all part of FFTC's due diligence process, which is run for every proposed awardee of an ASC grant.

WHAT IS ELIGIBLE?

ASC will make grants for projects that run **October 1, 2025** to **May 1, 2026**.

Eligible projects should be a one-time strategic opportunity to improve an organization's management, develop audiences, strengthen fundraising, provide a unique learning opportunity for staff/board, and/or achieve operating efficiencies.

ASC strongly encourages projects that prioritize the organizational work of expanding its reach and impact so it can effectively engage the community to become their next audiences, stakeholders, volunteers, and supporters.



EXAMPLES OF ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- One-time costs related to the implementation of new software (new CRM, etc.)
- Upgrading cybersecurity measures and software programs
- Sending a staff member to a conference within their respective concentration-area for professional development and growth (ideally, this is a new offering – not something previously budgeted)
- Developing an internal leadership development program
- Bringing in an expert for a board governance workshop
- Engaging with a fundraising consultant to develop a major gifts strategy
- Creating accessible program materials in multiple languages
- Hire a consultant to assist your senior team and board craft a strategic plan
- Launching a new targeted digital marketing campaign to reach new audiences
- Consolidate your HR operations through a streamlined HRIS platform
- Technology improvements needed to increase the impact and reach of their work. This includes the purchase and installation of hardware (ex. Live streaming equipment, new camera for high-res program documentation, etc.).
 - Please note: This final option listed is only available to organizations with an operating budget of \$1.25 million or less.



WHAT/WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE?

- General operating support
- Existing staff salaries or benefits
- Ongoing programs, staff or operating costs
- Multi-year requests
- Annual product licenses, membership fees, web hosting fees, etc. that are already included in your organization's operating budget.
- Projects already covered fully by another funding source.
- Applications to support existing programming the organization offers to the public will not be considered for funding.
- Request to support programming the organization offers to the public (materials, rental costs, etc.)
- Private non-operating foundations are not eligible to apply.
- Organizations located outside of Mecklenburg County.
- Organizations that have delinquent paperwork for a previously funded ASC grant are not eligible.


HOW MUCH CAN I REQUEST?

ASC will make grants up to \$50,000 for projects that run October 1, 2025 to May 1, 2026.

- For requests up to **\$10,000**, a match is not required.
- For requests up to **\$50,000**, ASC requires grantees to provide 50% matching funds toward the project expenses via funding from other grants, cash, or in-kind. This requirement demonstrates additional buy-in, financial sustainability, and expansion of the impact of this request among your organization. If providing a cash match is a burden to your ability to pursue this opportunity, please contact ASC staff at grants@artsandscience.org. Organizations with an operating budget of \$1.25 million or more must provide matching funds.

Applicants should be prepared to discuss in their application how the proposed opportunity falls outside of routine annual planning/budgeting and is a one-time strategic opportunity.

Ideally, ASC will receive one application request per fiscal year from each organization. Similarly, this grant is meant to support one initiative, rather than multiple that are unrelated to one another.



APPLICATION COMPONENTS

- 1) Organization Overview
- 2) Narrative Proposal
- 3) Budget

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

- Organizational snapshot
 - Legal name
 - EIN
 - Address
 - Contact Info for grant writer
 - Contact info for leadership team member
 - Mission
 - Operating budget
 - Latest 990 (ensures your org is in proper tax standing with the IRS)
 - Etc.



NARRATIVE PROPOSAL

1. Strategic Vision: Describe the specific one-time strategic opportunity your organization wishes to pursue. What is the core problem or challenge this project aims to address, or what significant opportunity will it unlock for your organization's future?

2. Feasibility: Outline the key activities, timeline, and personnel involved in executing this strategic project. What resources (internal and external) are necessary, and how will you ensure the successful and timely completion of this one-time initiative?

3. Measuring Success: How will you measure the success and effectiveness of this one-time strategic project?

4. Sustainability: What are your key aspirations for your organization's growth and impact over the next 3-5 years as a direct result of this initiative, and how would this grant contribute to those aspirations?

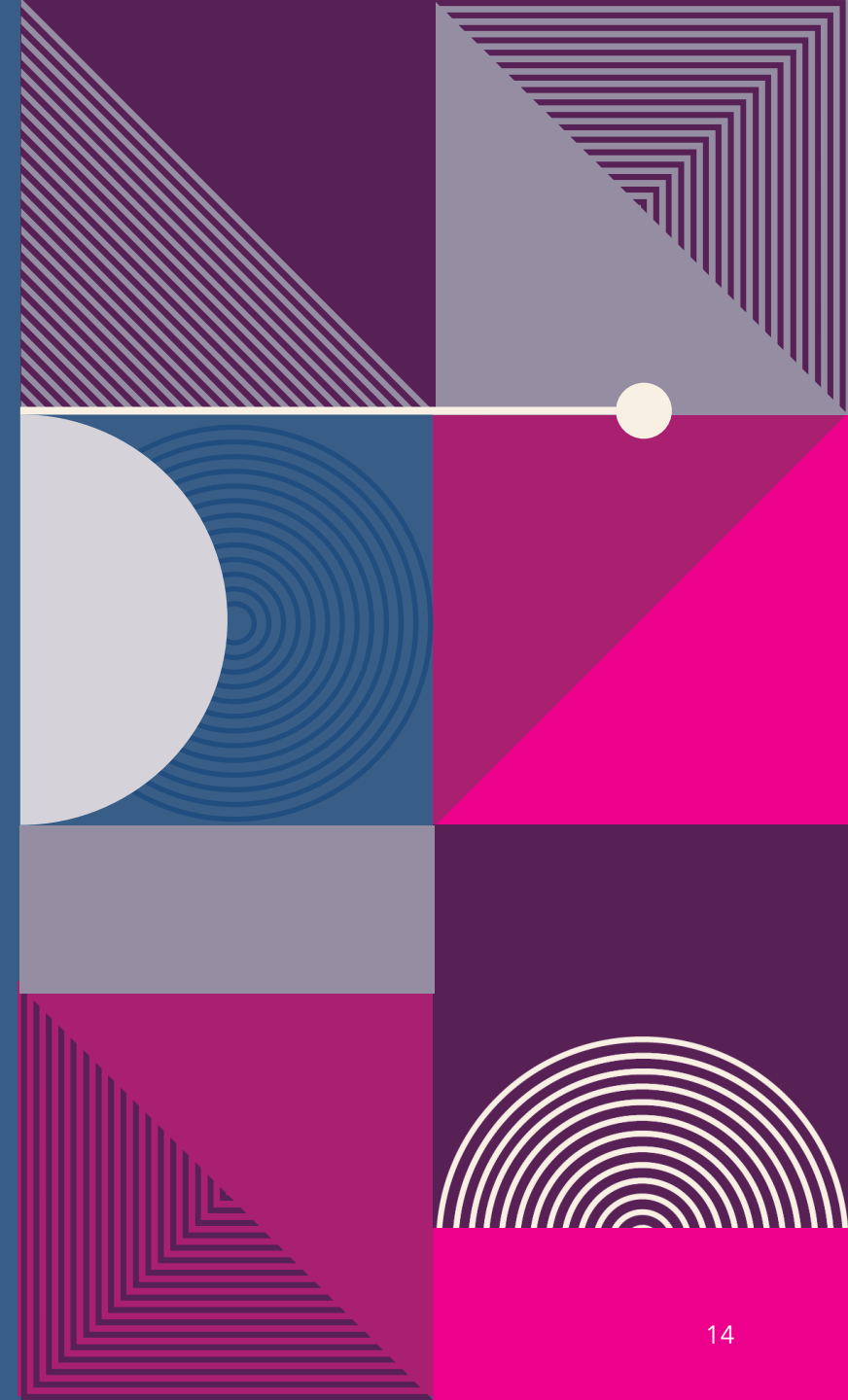
BUDGET

All applicants must complete the same budget template. Failure to do so will disqualify an application.

Describe how your team determined the budget you have included in this application and provide explanations for anything that seem disproportionate.

All organizations will be required to submit their latest IRS-approved 990 to ensure they are in good tax standing.

We encourage you to use this budget template as a planning tool for this strategic investment.





EVALUATION CRITERIA

Strategic Vision (25%): The clarity and ambition of the proposed strategic project, its alignment with the organization's mission, and its potential to advance the organization forward.

Feasibility & Capacity (25%): The practicality of the project plan and the capacity of the team to successfully execute the proposed strategic initiative.

Measuring Success (25%): The clarity of the proposed metrics and/or evaluation methods for assessing the effectiveness of the one-time strategic project.

Sustainability & Organizational Benefit (25%): The anticipated impact of the strategic project on the organization's long-term vitality and/or its ongoing contribution to the organization's overall growth and well-being.¹⁵



REQUIRED REPORTING

Most important to ASC is **learning how your Strategic Investment Grant helped improve or change the organization.** All grantees will be required to submit a final report that describes the impact and outcome of the project. Final reports must be filed through the online process within **30 days** of the activity's completion.



HOW TO APPLY

All applicants will be required to apply online through our grants portal (Blackbaud). This link will be emailed to organizations that attended our info session and posted on our website.

TIMELINE

Application opens: Wednesday, October 8, 2025 at noon

Application Deadline: Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis with preference to applications received by Tuesday, November 4, 2025 at 12:00pm/Noon.

- ASC will stop accepting applications on May 4, 2026.

Award or Declination Notification: TBD. Most likely Dec. 8th for the first round of applications. All other applicants may expect notification at approximately 4 weeks after application receipt.

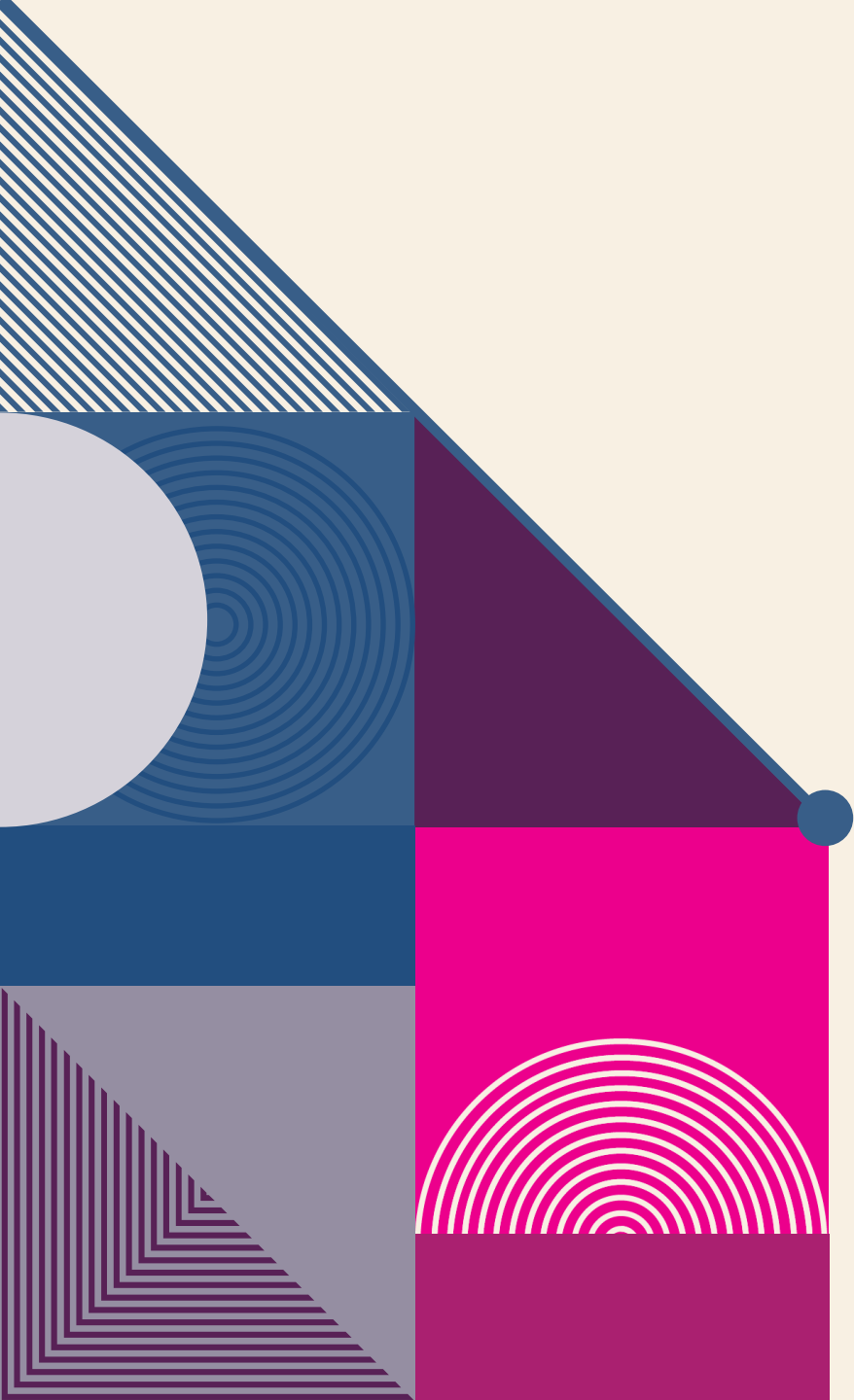


WHAT'S NEXT?

- **Program Officer:** Micah Deer will serve as the Program Officer for this grant. Please reach out to him at Michah.Deer@artsandscience.org or grants@artsandscience.org for application support.
- **Panelist Review:** This application will be reviewed by a panel made up of community members. These panelists sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest agreement to ensure this process is equitable.
- **Advocacy:** We appreciate your support of ASC. While this program does not have as many opportunities for promotion, it would be helpful to our organization to tag us in social media posts, list this support on your website, share our name in Board meetings, etc. We rely on Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte to be aware of our operations and community support, and any advocacy to assist our mission is welcomed and appreciated.

GENERAL Q & A

- What are eligible matching options?
 - Foundation or additional grant support from another agency, individual gifts, corporate gifts or sponsorship, and in-kind support are all eligible matching options. If you have a specific matching opportunity other than these options, please reach out to the ASC team to discuss.
- How will I receive funding, if awarded?
 - ASC will make a one-time payment once the applicant has been awarded a grant and all necessary paperwork has been completed. All potential grant awardees will need to receive due diligence approval from the FFTC Finance department.
- I have more questions. Where can I get support?
 - ASC's Grants and Services staff are available to answer questions as you develop your application. Please direct questions about guidelines or applications themselves to grants@artsandscience.org.



OPEN Q & A

What can we answer for you?



THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO!

Interested in other happenings at ASC?

[Click Here to sign up for our newsletter!](#)

Website: www.artsandscience.org

We appreciate your interest in the Strategic Investment Grant!