



# PIVOT Program 2026-2028 Guidelines

APPLICATION OPENS: Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2025

APPLICATION CLOSES: **Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025, 5:00 p.m. Pacific**

## Program Overview

The Seattle Office of Arts & Culture (OAC) is introducing a pilot program to help arts and cultural organizations transform their business models or practices in today's challenging climate. This one-time, two-year program—**PIVOT: Pathways to Innovation, Vitality & Organizational Transformation**—will provide general funding, wrap-around business support through regular advising and coaching, and community building. This combination of resources is designed to help organizations transform and move toward greater sustainability, addressing challenges such as pandemic-related impacts, ongoing revenue difficulties, and seizing opportunities to strengthen their overall organizational health.

Approximately 12-16 organizations will be selected for this opportunity. Selected participants will form a learning cohort, and each organization will receive support from **\$25,000 - \$250,000 per year in 2026 and 2027**.

As this is a pilot program, it will be developed in partnership with participants, so a certain level of flexibility, experimentation, and mutual learning is expected. Our **program consultants**, [Road Openers](#), will work alongside our staff to manage the PIVOT program, including service delivery and grantee/cohort support. A developmental evaluator will help to identify adjustments to the program along the way and track lessons over the two-year period.

Financial and capacity building support will be designed and tailored to participants' needs and individual situations. At the end of the two-year pilot, our hope is to have proven this combination of cohort-based and individualized support for organizations is an effective way to invest in the health of Seattle's arts and cultural ecosystem.

For information and assistance with the application, eligibility, or online technical support, contact [PIVOTinfo@roadopeners.com](mailto:PIVOTinfo@roadopeners.com).

## Program Purpose

The PIVOT program will help arts and culture organizations transform and move toward sustainability. Through this pilot, we will test and refine an approach that we hope will be implemented after the pilot period to support more organizations.

## Goals/Objectives

- Cohort participants each:
  - Begin or continue to transform their business practices
  - Develop adaptability that enables their resilience
  - Feel supported and cared for
  - Develop new and strengthened relationships with fellow cohort participants
- The program:
  - Benefits the ecosystem beyond individual organization benefits
  - Demonstrates to existing and potential funders the importance and viability of multi-faceted, tailored support

## Pilot Format

Participating organizations will receive the following types of support:

- **Individualized:** coaching, navigation, wellness, and regular, frequent communication from Road Openers and OAC. This will include regular meetings and ongoing strategic assistance to help organizations progress towards their goals.
- **Group:** training, peer mentorship, and convenings to foster relationships and ecosystem benefits. These activities will be tailored to participants, respond to emerging needs, and shared learning opportunities.
- **Financial:** unrestricted funds and project funds for transformation work to create stability and room to experiment

Pilot cohort participants will help inform the program's structure and learning activities in collaboration with OAC, Road Openers, and the evaluation team.

## Cohort Structure

The cohort structure is currently anticipated as follows, but subject to change:

- Members (9-12 organizations)
  - Organizations that are just starting their transformation journey or are ready to make changes in response to current challenges or opportunities to sustain or grow their impact.
  - Likely need more individualized support
- Mentors (3-4 organization)
  - Have recently (in the past 5-7 years) successfully navigated a transformation or significant transition and are well-suited to help inspire and guide Members during the program
  - Currently poised for, or are undergoing, a transition or transformation presented by a significant opportunity to sustain or grow their impact.
  - Likely need less individualized support than other cohort members

Both Members and Mentors will be selected from the pool of applicants that submit Letters of Interest.

## Cohort Expectations

- We expect 3-5 members from each organization's leadership and key staff who are integral to their transformation will participate in the program as your Core Team. Not all Core Team members will necessarily be needed for every activity; participation by key board members, staff, and/or volunteers will vary with the nature of the activity.
- Awardees will participate in PIVOT convenings and activities taking place from Spring 2026 through early 2028. Each participating organization's Core Team should expect to dedicate **an estimated 56-76 hours per year for two years** to program-related activities, not including independent work associated with the organization's transformation. While the specific activities in the cohort program will be designed for and tailored to the participating organizations (and therefore have not been solidified), this estimated total of hours is based on these anticipated activities:
  - Two in-person gatherings in Seattle per year (1-2 days each, total of 4-8 days over two years of the program)
  - Periodic virtual gatherings of the cohort or subsets of the cohort (anticipated 2 hours quarterly)
  - Regular individual advising and/or coaching with Road Openers and/or OAC (anticipated 2 hours monthly)
  - Additional correspondence, calls, or peer communication/meetings as appropriate/determined together (a few hours per quarter)

## Application

[Apply online](#) by completing the Letter of Interest (LOI) form in Submittable.

If you don't have computer or internet access, or would like to discuss alternatives to written responses, contact [PIVOTinfo@roadopeners.com](mailto:PIVOTinfo@roadopeners.com) as soon as possible.

## Due Date

**Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025, 5:00 p.m. Pacific**

Please allow ample time to complete your application. The Submittable **form will automatically close at the 5:00 p.m. deadline**, after which LOIs will no longer be accepted.

## Eligibility Requirements

Your organization is eligible to apply to participate in the PIVOT program if it meets all of the following criteria:

- Current or past grantee of the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture within the past seven years (2019 - present)
- Primary location and primary reach of programs/services is within Seattle city limits
- Has operated for at least seven years (for new organizations resulting from mergers, at least one constituent organization must meet this requirement)
- Has identified and can articulate the challenge(s) or opportunity/-ies that require(s) organizational transformation, and is able to demonstrate commitment to the work of transformation

## Funding

Awards will range from **\$25,000 to \$250,000 per year for two years (2026 and 2027)**, depending on your budget size, scope and nature of transformation, and resource needs. Awards will be a combination of restricted and unrestricted funds, based on a project plan.

## Information Workshops (Online)

Learn more about this program and how to submit your best LOI application.

### Information Session 1

Thursday, Nov. 13, 5-6 p.m. Pacific

[RSVP to Nov. 13](#)

### Information Session 2

Monday, Nov. 17, 10-11 a.m. Pacific

[RSVP to Nov. 17](#)

### Drop-in Q&A

Friday, Dec. 5, 12-1 p.m. Pacific

[RSVP to Dec. 5](#)

## LOI Evaluation Criteria

LOIs will be reviewed and evaluated by an independent peer review panel, based on the following measures:

**Clarity and Readiness (30%):** You are clear on – and clearly articulate – the nature of the transformation you want to undertake, why it’s needed, and why now is the right time.

**Understanding and Foresight (20%):** You demonstrate thoughtfulness and understanding regarding the internal and external factors that may affect your organization and the desired transformation, including potential barriers to transforming successfully.

**Capacity to Participate (20%):** Your proposed core team for participation reflects the desired transformation; the team is projected to be stable and able to commit to participating for the two-year program timeline.

**Curiosity and Openness (20%):** You demonstrate openness and thoughtfulness regarding the program's design and the potential benefits for your organization and the larger community.

**Mission and Service (10%):** You demonstrate an understanding of your constituents, the value you bring to your constituents and the Seattle ecosystem, and clarity of mission.

## Selection

We are committed to reflecting the diversity and cultural richness of our city in the selection of grantees and program participants.

**Phase I:** Panelists recommend applications for funding consideration.

**Phase II:** Based on panel recommendations and the considerations outlined below, OAC and Road Openers invite finalists to interview online and submit transformation project proposals. Each finalist organization should prepare to have their Core Team members (organizational leadership who are key to the transformation) take part in the online interview.

In forming the cohort, **the following factors will be considered to ensure a diverse group of participating organizations:**

- Organizations that serve as a hub for community engagement and collaboration with other local arts and cultural organizations on programming, education, advocacy, and/or cultural preservation
- Organizations that operate (or operate in) an anchor cultural facility, such as a City-owned building, a landmark building, etc.
- Community served/community represented
- Location/geography
- Artistic discipline
- Organization type/structure
- Existing and/or potential links among fellow applicant organizations that could amplify impact of PIVOT program

## Timeline

This timeline is subject to change.

- **Nov. 12, 2025:** LOI submissions Open via Submittable
- **Dec. 10, 2025 (5 p.m. Pacific): LOI submission deadline**
- **Dec. to mid-Jan.:** Panelists evaluate LOIs
- **Late January:** Finalists invited to interview and submit transformation project proposal

- **Late January/Early February:** OAC and Road Openers **interview finalists (virtual)**
- **By Late February:** Cohort members identified; **all applicants notified of results**
- **Feb.-March:** City contracts with cohort members. Road Openers conducts onboarding conversations
- **Spring 2026:** Year 1 funding begins. Road Openers meets virtually with cohort participants to develop individualized support plans as well as group activities.
- **Spring/Summer 2026:** First in-person cohort convening. Individualized support begins, including leadership coaching as needed. Organizations needing extra support receive it prior to first cohort convening.
- **Through 2026:** Ongoing individualized and group support.
- **Late 2026/Early 2027:** Second in-person cohort convening. Planning for Year 2 of PIVOT.
- **Through 2027:** Year 2 funding is disbursed. Ongoing individualized and group support and two in-person convenings.
- **By Spring 2028:** PIVOT program pilot complete.

## Application Outline & Components

Please refer to the PIVOT Letter of Interest (LOI) worksheet or the Submittable LOI form for a complete listing of the application questions.

1. Eligibility verification
2. Contact information
3. Fiscal sponsor (if applicable)
4. Artistic discipline
5. Finances: Total operating income and total operating expenses for most recent fiscal year
6. Describe past transformations for your organization (if applicable)
7. Current opportunity or challenge
8. Transformation goal
9. Potential barriers
10. Desired outcomes from PIVOT program
11. Organizational structure
12. Core Team members
13. Organizational demographic information

## Application To-Do

All funding programs are highly competitive. We encourage you to:

- **Read the guidelines**, check your eligibility and follow the instructions carefully.
- **Explore the online LOI form early** so you can plan. Consider drafting responses in a document outside of the online form itself, so you don't risk losing any of your work and you keep a record for yourself.

- **Ask us your questions.** We encourage you to reach out early, including at any of the scheduled information sessions or drop-in Q & A, to receive guidance and hear other applicants' questions. If you can't make an information session, the first one will be recorded and posted online, we'll keep an FAQ document updated, and you can also reach out with other questions to [PIVOTinfo@roadopeners.com](mailto:PIVOTinfo@roadopeners.com).
- **Be clear and concise in your LOI responses,** as panelists read and evaluate many applications. Panelists may not be familiar with you or your work, so be sure to provide essential information.
- **Submit your LOI before the due date** so you have time to deal with any potential technical issues.

## Obligations of Award Recipients

If selected for funding, you must meet the requirements listed below.

### Cohort Commitment

Awardees will participate in PIVOT convenings and activities taking place from Spring 2026 through early 2028. Each participating organization's Core Team should expect to dedicate **an estimated total of 56-76 hours per year for two years** to program-related activities, not including independent work associated with the organization's transformation. While the specific activities in the cohort program will be designed for and tailored to the participating organizations (and therefore have not been solidified), this estimated total of hours is based on these anticipated activities:

- Two in-person gatherings in Seattle per year (1-2 days each, total of 4-8 days over 2 years of the program)
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### Help Refine the Pilot Program

Awardees are required to actively engage in shaping and developing the program, including but not limited to providing input to Road Openers to inform program design, and ongoing feedback to Road Openers and program evaluators so adjustments can be made.

### Acknowledgement

When you receive funding from OAC, you must acknowledge our support in printed materials, signage visible to the public, via social media, or in other ways appropriate to your project. We will supply preferred wording and logos in digital format.

## Public Benefit

State law authorizes the purchase of services on behalf of the public, but not the donation of public money to organizations or individuals. If you are funded, we will consider that your participation in this pilot program meets this public benefit requirement, as your organization will help inform the program's design, development, evaluation, and possible future expansion to benefit the broader Seattle arts and culture ecosystem.

## Seattle Business License and Washington State UBI Number Are Required for Payment

If you are awarded funds from us, you must have a Seattle business license and a Washington state Unified Business Identification (UBI) number prior to receiving final payment. The business license and UBI numbers are *not* needed to apply for funds.

## Reporting

We require awardees for all of our programs to evaluate and report on the impact of our awards (e.g. progress on transformation goal, experience working with our staff, etc.). A check-in conversation may take place toward the end of each program year, and final reporting information will be collected after the program is complete, via a questionnaire included in the final payment request, supplied by us.

## OAC Funding Policies

### Commitment to Racial Equity

The Seattle Office of Arts & Culture commits to an anti-racist work practice that centers the creativity and leadership of people of color—those most impacted by structural racism—to move toward systems that benefit us all. We also acknowledge that we are on Indigenous land, the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples.

We envision a city of people whose success, safety, and health are not pre-determined by their race. A city where all artists, performers, writers and creative workers have the freedom, agency, and platform to share and amplify their stories, art, cultures, and experiences. At the same time, we acknowledge that our actions—both conscious and unconscious, past and present—have benefited some communities while limiting opportunities and outcomes for communities of color. We work toward our vision by addressing and working to eliminate institutional racism in our programs, policies, and practices.

In alignment with the [City's Race and Social Justice Initiative](#), we seek new solutions that use arts as a strategy to drive not only our office, but the City as a whole toward racial equity and social justice. We will continue to break barriers and build arts-integrated tools that challenge the status quo and push us toward the inclusive society we envision.



If you have any questions about our commitment or would like to know more about the work we are doing, please call us at (206) 684-7171 or email at [Arts.Culture@Seattle.gov](mailto:Arts.Culture@Seattle.gov).

## Grant Appeal Process

You may appeal the recommendations of the independent peer review panel. Appeals must be based solely on the information included in your original application.

### Procedure:

- You must first contact the staff member responsible for the program to review the decision and hear a summary of the peer panel feedback: Alex Rose, [Alex.Rose@seattle.gov](mailto:Alex.Rose@seattle.gov) or 206-459-6517.
- Your appeal must be sent in writing to the Director of the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture within 30 days of formal notice of the decision.
- Our Director consults with staff and/or members of the peer panel for input in making the final decision.
- If our Director agrees that the award should have been given based on the merit of your original application, you will be awarded a grant.
- A rejection by our Director is final and ends the appeal process.
- Our Director will notify you of their final decision in writing.

## Application materials are public information

Application materials submitted to us are governed by the Washington Public Records Act and may be subject to disclosure to a third-party requester. To learn more please see [Chapter 42.56 RCW](#) and the [City's Privacy Statement](#).

## Discrimination is not allowed on City-funded projects

Applicants receiving funds from us must comply with Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 20.44, pertaining to prevention of discrimination in City contracts, and Chapter 5.44, pertaining to license requirements. The complete text of these City codes is available at the City Clerk's office and the Seattle Public Library.

## Americans with Disabilities Act applies to City-funded projects

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law ensuring access to services and facilities for people with disabilities. We respect the needs of people with disabilities and seek to make available to applicants, participants and, all interested persons information regarding the provisions of the ADA and its applicability to the activities of our agency. For information about public meetings, accessibility, and auxiliary aids, please contact us at (206) 684-7171 (voice), or (800) 833-6388 (TDD Relay). We comply with all federal, state, and local laws that prohibit discrimination in employment and services.

## Supports freedom of expression

The City believes a community that fosters freedom of speech and thought will advance as a society. Artists play an important role in reflecting and challenging the social concerns of the day. The strength of the United States as a nation rests in its tolerance of divergent opinions and ideas. Government support of the arts must similarly tolerate a spectrum of ideas and encourage freedom of thought.

For additional information about us and our funding opportunities, [visit our website at seattle.gov/arts](http://seattle.gov/arts), and [subscribe to our email newsletter](#).