

# Guidelines for Culture Blocks Providers

## Purpose

Culture Blocks connects communities with responsive arts, science, and history experiences close to where residents live. The program engages with creative individuals and organizations with a primary mission of arts, science, and/or history to present programs in specific geographic areas. Culture Blocks, funded by Mecklenburg County, supports cultural experiences that are planned with resident involvement and/or take place at libraries, recreation centers, parks, and relevant community spaces.

## Eligibility

Successful applicants will demonstrate a commitment to collaboration with ASC, community partners, and program participants.

*Please consider applying if your program meets the following criteria:*

- The programming explicitly integrates arts, science, and/or heritage/history experiences with community feedback as listed within the **Culture Blocks Program Themes**.
- The programming is open to the public, free and with the purpose to increase access to creative programming for residents living in one or more of these **geographic areas**.
- The programming will begin and end within a 12 month time span. Note: **Applications must be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of the first program.**
- The program provider is a creative individual, a 501(c)(3) organization in good standing with the IRS, or another form of incorporated organization not driven by stakeholder profits.
- The program provider has a primary mission of arts, science, and/or heritage/history.
- The program provider has a recent history of successful public programming (a minimum of twelve months preferred).
- Collaborative programming is welcomed. Organizations working together must identify a single organization to serve as the applicant.
- Religious organizations and institutions of higher education can apply provided the programming reaches a broader audience (not only church membership or faculty/student body) and does not contain proselytizing religious content.

## Restrictions

***Prior to applying, please consider the following list of requests that are not supported:***

- Programming that involves work with Pre-K-12 children during the school day is not eligible.
- Programming designed to serve as a fundraiser is not eligible.
- Programming that occurs outside of Mecklenburg County is not eligible (e.g. touring, travel).
- Organizations or individuals with delinquent paperwork for a previously-funded ASC grant are not eligible to apply.
  
- Requests for capital expenditures are generally not eligible (e.g. laptops, digital cameras, kiln).
- Requests to support an organization’s ongoing staff or faculty salaries are not eligible.
- Requests for more than 20% of the organization’s total annual operating expenditures may require additional documentation to confirm program feasibility.

## Request Amount

Varies. Average requests are between \$250 to \$10,000.

- Requests for more than \$10,000 should generally represent programming that includes multiple events and/or spans several months.

## Application Deadline

Rolling. **Applications must be received at least 90 days prior to the date of the first program.** Program locations must be identified prior to applying.

## Application Assistance

Applicants are required to attend an orientation webinar/call prior to submitting an application. Call or email Megan Walsh at 704-335-3030 [cultureblocks@artsandscience.org](mailto:cultureblocks@artsandscience.org) to request access to the webinar information.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: How will my application be reviewed?**

A: Applications will be reviewed by your responses to open-ended questions within the application and submission of required attachments. Applicants will submit a budget

and/or itemized invoice, when requested, using the template provided. As you prepare your application, it is important to clearly articulate the value and impact of the programming and how it responds to community feedback as listed within the **Culture Blocks Program Themes**.

**Q: How much can I request?**

A: Applicants will be asked to provide information about budget and/or sources of financial support when submitting their application. Applicants must develop a strong application and be realistic about contract expectations. Applicants are discouraged from attempting to create a \$10,000 program that does not match organizational capacity or would be most impactful and successfully executed with a smaller budget. Every application will not be approved, and every approved application will not receive the full funding requested.

**Q: How will I receive payment, if contracted?**

A: Payment schedules will vary, depending on both the scope and duration of the contracted programming. Submission of initial paperwork will be required for a first installment and final report submission will be required before final payments are made.

For organizations applying to partner with a creative individual or cultural organization, ASC will provide the fees and payment schedule to the program provider.

**Q: What types of programs have been contracted in the past?**

A: To view a listing of current ASC Culture Blocks programming, click [here](#). This listing is not an exhaustive representation of eligible programs.

**Q: What costs can I include in my Culture Blocks proposal?**

A: Culture Blocks proposals can include program-related fees & contracts, marketing & advertising expenses, expendable supplies & materials, space rental, etc.

If you are unsure if you can include a specific expense in your proposal, please see the list of ineligible costs below or contact ASC staff at [cultureblocks@artsandscience.org](mailto:cultureblocks@artsandscience.org) or 704-335-3030.

**Q: Can Culture Blocks funding support Public Art Projects?**

A: ASC happily accepts proposals to support Public Art projects, provided they meet the above stated criteria. Public Art provides a sense of place by evoking memories, making connections between cultures, exploring differences, telling stories, and provoking thought and discussion. Public Art is not a tool for PR or Marketing or merely beautification or decoration. ASC believes that much of the value of Public Art lies in the process.

- Therefore, requests for funding to support Public Art projects through Culture Blocks must:
- Define the community that will engage in and be the beneficiary of the project.

- Display evidence that the community will be involved in the identification of the project purpose and concept.
- Display evidence that the community will be involved in the artist selection process.
- Display evidence that the selected artist will engage the community in the development and/or fabrication of the work.

Requests that do not follow this process will be considered ineligible. Additionally, please note that a common obstacle faced by these type projects is securing a suitable location for the work, especially if the proposed location is publicly owned. If funding is awarded for a Public Art project, the applicant must submit proof that a location has been secured prior to the disbursement of the first payment.

**Q: Other than the online application information, can I submit any additional support material?**

A: No.

**Q: I have more questions. Where can I get help?**

A: Culture Blocks staff are available to answer questions as you develop your application. Please contact Culture Blocks staff at 704-335-3030 or email [cultureblocks@artsandscience.org](mailto:cultureblocks@artsandscience.org)

The following is a list of ineligible costs:

- Prizes, including scholarships, tuition or financial awards.
- Purchase of artifacts or artwork.
- Capital expenditures – funds for expenses for purchase of buildings or real estate, renovations or improvements involving structural changes, payments for roads, driveways or parking lots, or permanent and generally immobile equipment such as grid systems or central air conditioning. This also includes acquisitions, which are expenses for additions to a collection of art.
- Contingency funds – funds for an event that may occur but that is not likely or intended.
- Costs for selling and/or marketing any products or services of the organization unrelated to the funded programming.
- Deficit reduction, bad debts, interest on loans, indirect cost rate expenses, losses on other awards or contracts, or fines, penalties, or litigation costs.

- Donations and contributions to other organizations.
- Fundraising and investment management costs.
- Events specifically designed to fundraise.
- Goods or services for personal use of the organization's employees.
- Lobbying expenses.
- Organizational establishment or reorganization costs.

**[DOWNLOAD CULTURE BLOCKS APPLICATION GUIDELINES FAQs](#)**