Local Cultural Council Program Guidelines

Massachusetts Cultural Council
MEMBERSHIP

- Between **5** and **22** members.
- **Appointed** by top appointing official (i.e., the mayor, city manager, board of selectmen, or executive officer)
  - Note: The chief appointing authority and members of the local appropriating authority cannot serve as council members.
- Most terms are **three years**.
- **Members** can be appointed for any length of time as long as they don’t exceed **six consecutive years**.
MEMBERSHIP

- A member with an expired term shall continue to “serve until the qualification of such member's successor,” if needed for the council to reach a quorum.
- Each council must annually elect a chair, secretary, and treasurer.
- Local councils may also elect to designate former officers or members as non-voting, ex officio council members. Since they do not vote, they do not count toward the quorum or minimum of five members.
Each local council must keep all funds (state funds from the MCC, interest earned and locally raised funds) in the LCC’s municipal account.

- Must be a revolving account.
- Separate from other monies.
- Councils are entitled to interest.
- Locally raised funds can be spent outside of MCC guidelines for cultural purposes.
- Funds are distributed by Town Accountant or equivalent.
MCC vs LOCAL FUNDS

**MCC funds:**
- MUST be spent in upcoming grant cycle
- MUST follow all state guidelines and reporting.

**Local funds:**
- No deadline for spending
- Do not have to follow state guidelines but must support a cultural purpose.
- Funds and financial activity must be reported.
FUNDRAISING

- **Examples of fundraising:**
  - private contributions
  - local government allocations
  - program revenues
  - interest from the LCC’s municipal account

- Donations are tax-deductible.

- Donations are treated as **locally-raised funds.**
LCCs may spend up to 5% of their state allocation each funding cycle for administrative expenses.
- Ex: paid staff, postage, stationery, and publicity
- Note: Locally-raised funds can also be used for the same purposes.

Refreshments:
- Can be covered at public events like grant receptions.
- May not be covered at voting meetings.

Timeline:
- Calculate and set aside funds at the beginning of the grant cycle, in the Annual Report.
- Any unused admin funds must not remain in the account, and must be regranted during the following grant cycle.
LCC DUTIES: COMMUNITY INPUT

- Each council must conduct regular assessments of cultural needs within its community.
  - LCCs receiving $20,000 or more from MCC must gather community input **each year**.
  - All other LCCs must do so once **every three years**.

- Community input can be collected in many ways: surveys, public meetings, any conversation with the public.
LCC DUTIES: COUNCIL PRIORITIES

• Must be updated by September 1. You may not make funding decisions based on priorities not listed here.

• All councils are strongly encouraged to develop funding priorities, and councils receiving more than $20,000 are required to do so.

• Autonomy is encouraged in the establishment of local funding priorities, as long as it is within the parameters of the guidelines established by the Mass Cultural Council.

HLCC Funding Priorities:
Emphasis is placed on supporting local artists presenting work in Holyoke. Funding is made available to the widest range of community cultural needs possible.

As determined by the most recent community survey, the following are funding priorities:

- arts education in the schools
- public events like concerts or festivals
- support for community arts and cultural organizations
- field trips for students to museums or performances
- projects celebrating diversity

HLCC Local Guidelines:
- Funded projects must be completed in the calendar year (January - December) following the October application deadline.
- Field trips must be to destinations within the state.
- Performing applicants must have a secured venue in Holyoke at the time of application and a letter of confirmation from the hosting venue.
LCC DUTIES: FINANCIAL REPORTING

• Meet with your municipal fiscal officer (usually the municipal treasurer, auditor, or accountant) in September.
  o The municipal fiscal officer must provide the LCC with a completed LCC Account Form. This document is a summary of activity in your account during the last fiscal year.
  o Any differences in the LCC’s accounting and the municipality’s accounting should be worked out at this time.
  o Both parties sign the document and the LCC retains the signed original for their use.

• Submit the LCC Account Form to the Mass Cultural Council through the Annual Report before October 15.
LCC DUTIES: ANNUAL REPORT

- Summary of:
  - Account activity in past fiscal year
  - Amount available for granting
  - Voting meetings
  - Applications
  - Granting decisions and amounts

- Must complete sections 1 & 2 by October 15.
- Must be submitted by January 15.
OTHER LCC DUTIES

• **Communicating with the public.**
  - Promote the LCC and its programs.
  - Inform the public of the availability of funds, the application deadlines and local priorities.
  - Publicize the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the local council office or contact person.
  - Communicate with grant applicants and recipients.

• **Reviewing and recommending action on local applications.**
  - Hold a voting meeting at least once a year to review applications. See the LCC Guidelines for more information.
LCC APPLICATIONS

- **Applications** must be submitted between September 1 and October 15 deadline. **No exceptions!**
- Any **Council Priorities** must be posted by **September 1** to be valid for the grant cycle.
- If a council chooses to accept paper applications, they must notify applicants by posting it in their Council Priorities by **September 1**.
LCC GRANTS ARE REIMBURSEMENT BASED

- If approved for a grant, the grantee expends his or her own money on the project.
- Once the project is complete, the grantee submits paperwork for reimbursement to the LCC.
- Grantees have one year from acceptance letter to accept reimbursement.
- A grantee can submit an extension request to the LCC for approval if more time is needed.
TYPES OF GRANTS

- Operating support
- Ticket subsidy programs
- Field trips
- Artist residencies
- Public art
- Fellowships
- Other activities, based on local priorities and needs
  - Each local council should determine its own local eligibility requirements based on a community input process. These should be incorporated into their council priorities and published to the council profile.
• Applicants may apply for grants for programs that take place during an 18 month window of eligibility from July 1, preceding the application deadline in October, through December 31 of the following year.
• Applicants may apply for projects that have already happened, with the knowledge that funding is not guaranteed.
• Local councils are authorized to establish a smaller window of eligibility; if they do so, they must publish the eligible dates in their Council Priorities by September 1.
ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Applicants must reside or be located in Massachusetts.
- Local councils may accept applications from anyone included in the list below:
  - Individuals
  - Incorporated private nonprofit organizations
  - Unincorporated associations that can establish a nonprofit objective
  - Public schools, libraries, other municipal agencies, and the local cultural council itself
  - Religious organizations
FUNDING CRITERIA

- Arts, Humanities, and Science
- Public Benefit
- Non-Discrimination
- Local Criteria - councils have the option of developing local review criteria and may decide how to weigh their importance. Must be listed in Council Priorities.
Local council funds may only be used to support programs in the arts, humanities, and science in Massachusetts.

This definition includes the study, pursuit, performance, exhibition, and appreciation of cultural activities in the broadest sense.
PUBLIC BENEFIT

- Local council funds must be used to support activities that contribute to the cultural vitality of the community as a whole, rather than benefiting any private individual or group.

- A large crowd of people does not need to participate in order to satisfy the public benefit requirement. For example, an artist working with a small group of teens is a valid public benefit.

- When possible, activities funded by LCCs should be available to the general public by exhibit, performance, demonstration, reading, or other means.
Local councils may not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race, gender, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, sexual orientation or age. Nor may they fund projects that discriminate.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that persons with disabilities have access to public programs or services on an equal basis with the rest of the general public.

Most proposed programs can find ways to work around their limitations. Visit our accessibility page for more info.
GRANT RESTRICTIONS: REFRESHMENTS

- Grant funds received from a local council **may not be used** to purchase food or beverages.

- The ONLY acceptable use of MCC funds for refreshments is for a **public event (ex: grant reception)** hosted by the LCC. Voting meetings are not included.
GRANT RESTRICTIONS: SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Individual students are not eligible** to apply for scholarships.
- **An organization may apply** to an LCC to sponsor a scholarship
  - provided the Local Council feels the scholarship program provides sufficient public benefit.
  - if it meets all other state and local criteria.
An LCC may spend up to 15% of its state allocation to support programs initiated by the local council itself.

- The project should respond to cultural needs that are not otherwise being addressed in the community.
- Use your community input process to ask for specific suggestions or to elicit feedback.
- A final report is due on January 15 of the following grant year.
COUNCIL PROGRAMS: PROGRAM RESTRICTIONS

- Council Program funds **cannot be spent** on administrative expenses.

- Funds raised locally from local council programs must be **kept in the LCC’s municipal account**.

- Each member of the council must carefully follow **the conflict of interest procedures**.
TECHNICAL DISAPPROVALS

- Do not use “technical disapprovals” (typographic errors, transposing of two fields, etc.) as the sole basis for disapproving applications.

- Meeting October 15th deadline is NOT a technicality.
OPEN MEETING LAW

- All meetings must be open to the public.
- Meetings must be posted with the municipality at least 2 business days in advance.
- A quorum (more than half) of appointed LCC members is required in order to vote.
- Telephone voting, email voting, or proxy voting is not allowed.
CONFlict of INTEREST

- In cases where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest, the member should abstain from both the discussion and vote.
  - Visit our Conflict of Interest page for examples.
  - Contact the Attorney-of-the-Day for specific questions.
All records of the actions of local councils are considered public information and are subject to the state’s public records law.

- You should take minutes at every meeting.
- LCCs must respond to requests to view these materials “without unreasonable delay.”
- Records must be stored in a public place for 6 years.
- Your Town Clerk can tell you where they prefer to store records.
An applicant may request reconsideration of an LCC decision if the applicant can demonstrate that the LCC failed to follow published state guidelines and council priorities.

- Dissatisfaction with a denial or award amount do not constitute grounds for reconsideration.

Disapproval letters must provide applicants with clear reasons for denial based on published state guidelines or council priorities.

- “Insufficient funds” does not provide applicants with adequate rationale for disapproval.

The request must be sent in writing to the MCC within 15 days of the notification date on the disapproval letter.

If the MCC determines that the applicant has grounds for reconsideration, the local council must convene a quorum and review the application, as if for the first time.

A decision on any requests for reconsideration should be made before LCCs finalize funding decisions and complete the Annual Report to the MCC. Only after the Annual Report to the MCC has been completed can successful applicants be notified of their approval.
All grant recipients are required to acknowledge the financial support of the LCC that approved their grant and the MCC in published materials and announcements about their project.

"This program has applied for support from the [City/Town] Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency."
LCCs may place conditions on approved applications, for example, to meet certain requirements such as accessibility.

LCCs must communicate any conditions to the applicant in writing.

If the applicant does not agree to the condition they can choose not to accept the grant.
EXTENSIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

- LCCs can approve reasonable extensions and modifications for projects. The modification should not significantly alter the original purpose of the approved application.

- Project extensions and modifications must be requested in writing and responded to in the same manner. In order to review an extension or other modification to an approved grant the LCC must convene a quorum of LCC members and vote.
Grant recipients have **one year** from the date of their approval letter to request reimbursement.

Reimbursements are made directly to the applicant or to **third party** vendors.

A minimum of **two council members** sign the form and forward it to the municipal treasurer.

**Progress payments**, if requested, should be proportionate to the percentage of the project that has been completed.

If the council is not satisfied that the project was completed as promised, the council must contact the grantee with their concerns. Two council members and the grantee may work out a **compromise solution**.
GRANT CYCLE TIMELINE

August
- LCCs publicize the grant program locally.

September
- LCCs post council priorities on their council profiles by September 1.
- MCC notifies LCC of their allocation amounts.

October
- Grant applications due to LCCs by October 15.
- LCC Account Form due to MCC by October 15.
- Section 2 of Annual Report due October 15.

November – December
- LCCs determine the total amount available for granting.
- LCCs conduct their grant cycle voting meetings.
- LCCs send disapproval notifications.
- LCCs handle any reconsideration requests.
- LCCs enter grant decisions and grant cycle voting meeting into the online office.

January
- LCCs submit annual report to MCC by January 15.
- Council Program final report from previous year due.
- MCC transfers funds to LCCs.
- LCCs send approval notifications and publicize grant awards.
- LCCs begin processing reimbursement requests.

Spring
- LCCs process reimbursement requests.
- LCCs ensure grant recipients acknowledge MCC and LCC funding.
- LCCs attend funded projects and invite elected officials.
- LCC conduct their community input process.
QUESTIONS?

- Visit www.mass-culture.org for more information.
  - Review the LCC guidelines.
- Contact your MCC staff contact.