



What: General Operating Support for Artists.

Who: Artists that live in Rhode Island, and are over the age of 18.

Funds: Unrestricted funds for artists to move their career and art making forward.

Amount: \$6,000 per year, for three years.

The RISCA General Operating Support for Artists (GOSA) program provides grants of \$6,000 for each of three consecutive years (total of \$18,000) for artists to work towards large, specific, self-identified goals in their art practice. This funding is unrestricted, meaning artists can use the funds to support their goals however they need. This program includes a cohort community of current grantees, with meetings and learning opportunities that are driven by and focused on the grantees' needs. Grantees will need to submit a report once a year during their grant period and must remain Rhode Island residents for the full grant period. Grant funding could support things like: the ability to set aside time to work on art making; art materials; space rental; technology; paying collaborators; research and experimentation; marketing; documentation; and more. Each year, three artists will be selected for this program, for a total of nine artists receiving yearly grants at any given time.

We know for many applicants this is their first time writing a grant or this may be the only grant they apply to. For that reason, RISCA provides application support through grant workshops, one-on-one meetings, and drop-in office hours. Support from RISCA staff people extends beyond the grant application itself! In addition to being available throughout the application period to support you in developing your proposal, the Individual Artists Program Director will be in contact once you've received your award notification to provide advice and ideas.

For more information on what support opportunities are currently available, visit the RISCA website: <https://risca.online/>.

Meet RISCA's Individual Artists Program Director, Mollie Flanagan. Mollie is available to help you with your application!



Mollie Flanagan (she/her) is the Individual Artists Program Director at RISCA. She manages and oversees the agency's support for artists, including grants, programs, and services. After a decade long career as a lighting designer, stage manager, and production manager for a wide variety of performing arts, Mollie went to grad school for arts entrepreneurship and management. During grad school, she discovered a love for artist services – supporting individual artists in making art and making a living. She joined the RISCA staff in February 2017, and currently lives by the river in Central Falls. She is now a hobby crafter – knitting, crocheting, and making things out of cement (small planters, mostly). You can reach her by email at mollie.flanagan@arts.ri.gov.

Who is eligible to apply for this program?

To be eligible, you must:

- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Not currently be in an arts degree seeking program or attending high school full time.
- Have been domiciled in Rhode Island for at least two years at the time of application. This means your home in Rhode Island is your primary residence, and is the address you use for legal forms, state income taxes, car registration, driver's license or state issued id, and voter registration - regardless of whether you own or rent your home.
- Be a legal resident of the United States with a tax id number (either Social Security number or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number- ITIN). This includes refugees, immigrants, and temporary residents. This does not include people in the country on a tourist visa.
- Not be a staff member or council member of RISCA, or an immediate family member of a staff or council member.
- Be a practicing artist. RISCA defines practicing artist as: A person that intentionally creates or practices art in any discipline that:
 - Has sought learning or training in the artistic field from any source, not necessarily in formal academic institutions.
 - Is committed to devoting significant time to artistic activity, as is possible financially.
 - Is or is working towards earning some portion of their income from their art.
 - Disciplines include, but are NOT limited to: musician, painter, poet, choreographer, teaching artist, ceramicist, storyteller, performer, playwright, sculptor, photographer, wampum artist, printmaker, animator, cartoonist, textile and fashion designer, and filmmaker.

I have a disability – what kind of assistance can Mollie provide me with my application?

Applicants who need assistance completing an application should contact Mollie in advance of the deadline. Mollie can provide – or arrange for the provision of – whatever assistance you require. For individuals with disabilities for whom writing a grant is prohibitive, Mollie can arrange for transcription support if an applicant discloses their needs. Please contact Mollie at least three weeks prior to the deadline.

I'm not comfortable writing or communicating in English – what kind of assistance can Mollie provide me with my application?

Applicants who need assistance completing an application should contact Mollie in advance of the deadline. Mollie can arrange for the provision of translation support for your application. We recommend you notify Mollie at least three weeks prior to the application deadline as we work with outside translation services.

Before I even think about applying for this grant, what are the TWO most important things I need to know?

1. Mollie is here to help you with your application – it is a big part of her job. Your email will not annoy her but please understand that it might take her a bit to respond since she will have many requests from other applicants.
2. Read these grant guidelines at least twice before contacting Mollie as they will answer 95% of your questions and save you both time. That way you can spend your time together focusing on your project and your application.

What are the deadlines for this program and time periods for what they fund?

The deadline to apply for General Operating Support for Artists program is 11:59 pm on **June 30**.

What does this grant program typically fund?

The funding parameters of this program are intentionally broad, so it can be as responsive as possible to what communities and artists want or need over time. This grant is focused on enabling artists to further their art career. The proposal must have specific goals for what will happen during the funding period, but completion of work and/or public showings are not required.

What other rules do I need to know about the General Operating Support for Artists program?

- **The maximum grant award in this category is \$6,000 per year for three years, for a total of \$18,000.** No partial grants will be awarded – meaning you will either receive the full amount you apply for or no funding. Grant awards are determined by panels of different Rhode Island residents every grant cycle (see *Who makes grant award decisions at RISCA?*), how grant awards are distributed varies cycle to cycle.
- **Only one application per grant deadline per grant program.** An individual may only submit one application per grant deadline to the General Operating Support for Artists program. If you receive a GOSA, you are ineligible to apply for or receive another GOSA for six years.
- **If you receive a grant, you must credit RISCA on all marketing materials.** Grants awarded by RISCA are provided by the Rhode Island State General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, on behalf of the residents of Rhode Island. For that reason, awardees must credit RISCA on all printed material where funders and supporters are listed and on all printed programs (see *I got a grant award! What do I do now?* section for more details).
- **All RISCA grant awards are contingent upon the availability of funds from the Rhode Island State General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts.** Sometimes delays in passing the state budget will delay grant award notifications and processing of grant payments – we can't award grants if our funding has not been approved.
- **Grant applications are considered on a competitive basis.** Your application may meet all the eligibility criteria and be incredibly meaningful. But remember that there are

anywhere between 80-110 other applications in an application cycle that are also amazing! With so many high-quality applications, panels *always* wish to award more grant awards than they have funding for.

- **You must complete a yearly report to receive your next grant payment.**
- **If you receive this grant, you are ineligible for the Opportunity Grant, Community Engaged Grant, Make Art Grant, Folk Arts Fellowship, or Folk Arts Apprenticeship during your funding period.**
- **You must continue to be a resident of Rhode Island for the full grant period.** If you move out of state for any reason during your three-year funding period, you will not receive any of the remaining grant award payments. You will not have to repay previous grant payments.

What can I use my grant award for? And what CAN'T I use my grant award for?

The General Operating Support for Artists is unrestricted funding. We ask and expect you to spend the funds in a way that helps you advance your art practice and your art career, in alignment with your definition of success in your application. However there still many things your grant awards cannot be used for. Because we grant out money from the National Endowment for the Arts, we are obligated to follow these rules set forth by them. If you have any questions about these rules, contact Mollie. Expenses that cannot be covered by your grant award:

- **Capital projects.** The construction or renovation of buildings or additions to buildings, with the exception of accessibility improvements to cultural facilities.
- Any **fundraising** expenses – like creating rewards for a Kickstarter or hosting a fundraising event for any purpose.
- **Prizes and awards.** You cannot spend funds on a prize or award for another event/person/organization.
- **Alcohol and some Hospitality Expenses.** Purchase of alcohol with grant funds is strictly prohibited. Please contact Mollie with specific questions.
- **Expenses outside of award period.** Your grant award can't be used to cover expenses incurred or activities occurring outside of the funding period.
- **Regranting funds.** You may not use these grant funds to support grants to other artists or organizations through an application or award process.
- **Undergraduate or graduate school activities.** Activities which are part of a graduate or undergraduate degree program, or for which academic credit is received.
- **Religious activities.** Use of funds to proselytize or promote religious activities, or for activities which take place as part of a religious service is prohibited.

Who makes grant award decisions at RISCA?

Because RISCA is a state agency granting out taxpayer funds, RISCA staff does NOT make any funding decisions: panels of your peers do. This is great news for applicants! RISCA staff is then

available to answer questions and help applicants with their applications.

The panel composition and grant review process and is different for General Operating Support for Artists than most other RISCA grants. The grant goes through 2 stages of panel review. In the second stage where awards are decided, the panel is made up of five people:

- A minimum of two panel members will be BIPOC individuals.
- Three members of the panel will be Rhode Island residents, two will be from out of state.
- All panelists will be working professionals in the arts – artists; curators; faculty members; arts administrators; etc.

RISCA is committed to a peer review process that provides fresh and diverse input from an ever-changing field. In addition, RISCA will consider age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, geography, discipline of arts experience, relationship to arts and culture (e.g. being an artist, arts administrator, or arts enthusiast), and other factors when curating its application review panels. A panelist can serve on a review panel three times over the course of a three years – which encompasses 6 grant cycles. Panelists cannot serve on a panel in the same grant program during the three-year period. This ensures a changing and diverse array of individuals evaluating our grant applications and guarantees that panels are different every grant cycle.

Serving as a grant panelist is a fantastic way to learn about RISCA’s grantmaking process, as well as how to write grants in general. If you are interested in serving on a grant panel, please fill out this form. We can’t guarantee that we can accommodate your request because of our commitment to panel diversity, but we are always looking for new panelists. Panelists receive a small stipend for their time and expertise.

How are grant applications evaluated by a panel?

You can view the full rubric grant panelists use to score your application here: [LINK](#). The three review criteria are:

Artist Impact and Growth (50%)

- This grant will positively impact the applicant’s artistic practice and/or career in clearly identified ways.
- The work samples provided are relevant, cohesive, and speak to the potential of the artist to advance in their career.
- Success is clearly defined by the artist, with specific shorter term goals that support the artist’s definition of success.

Artistic Vibrancy and Intention (25%)

- Personal voice, vision, and authenticity shows in the proposal.
- Applicant demonstrates a clear understanding of and commitment to their craft, both in look and feel and technical skill.
- Application and support materials demonstrate a consistency of actions, values, methods, and goals.

Community of Practice (25%)

- This grant will positively impact the artist’s community of practice.
- The applicant clearly describes their community of practice, and their role within this community.
- This application supports this artist being an active and productive member of the Cohort and learning community.

What is involved with the cohort meetings and learning opportunities, and is it mandatory?

There will be four mandatory meetings with cohort members each year—approximately every three months, the first weeks of February, May, August, and November. These informal meetings will be facilitated by Mollie focused on peer support and discussion of current challenges and opportunities. There will also be one mandatory cohort specific workshop each year in August, focused on values identification and goal setting. Additionally, grantees will be required to attend a minimum of two of RISCA’s professional development workshops or classes per year, which are free and open to all Rhode Island artists.

What are the steps in the decision-making process for grant awards?

There are 11-steps in RISCA’s decision-making process for grant awards:

- **STEP 1: Mollie assembles the grant panels starting prior to the grant deadline.** While this starts prior to the grant deadline, it often continues after the grant deadline once it is clear how many applications have been received, how many are eligible, and how many panels are needed.
- **STEP 2: You submit your application by the grant deadline.** Once the application deadlines pass, no alterations or additions may be made to your application. Applications are reviewed by the grant panel based on the contents of your application only.
- **STEP 3: Mollie reviews applications and makes sure they are eligible.** Mollie reviews each application for compliance with eligibility and submission requirements. If Mollie detects any issues, she may contact applicants for more information.
- **STEP 4: RISCA staff provides orientation and training to panelists.** Panelists don’t receive the applications they are to review until they complete a two-part panel training: the first part focuses on implicit bias; the second part focuses on the logistics of being a panelist, including a review of the applications and rubrics.
- **STEP 5: Mollie sends all eligible applications to the panel(s).** If more than one panel is needed, Mollie uses a randomization process to randomly assign applications to panels.
- **STEP 6: The panel(s) review and score their assigned applications.** Using the evaluation rubric for the program, panelists have typically between 4-6 weeks to review applications and score each application prior to their in-person panel meeting. We estimate that the panelists spend approximately 30 minutes reading and scoring each application.

- **STEP 7: Mollie reviews the panel scores and narrows the applicants to the top 20.** Based on the panel’s initial scores, the top 20 scoring applications will be moved to the in-person review. Panelists will be notified about which 20 applications will be moving forward.
- **STEP 8: Panel(s) meet for an all-day Panel Review and make funding recommendations.** The panel then meets in person at RISCA offices or via Zoom to discuss the top 20 scoring applications. Panels typically spend between 10-15 minutes discussing each application. After each discussion, panelists have the option of privately updating their scores. Mollie facilitates the discussion but does not participate in or influence the discussions. Panel comments will only be provided to the artists that receive grants. At the end of the day, the panel is shown a spreadsheet that displays the applicants and their total panel scores (meaning the combined total of each panelist’s scores on a given application) in descending order. Using their rankings as a guide, panelists make funding recommendations.
- **STEP 9: RISCA’s Governing Council reviews and approves panel recommendations.** Mollie presents the panel’s award recommendations to the Governor-appointed Council that oversees RISCA. They are responsible for reviewing and approving panels recommended grant awards.
- **STEP 10: Applicants are notified as to whether or not they have received a grant award!** For applicants applying at the April 1st deadline, they will be notified about their grant award status one week after the state budget is signed by the Governor. This is a moving target – in an ideal year, the state budget will pass the legislature and be signed by the Governor in late June, with notifications happening around the first week of July. While you can of course reach out to Mollie and ask her the status of your April 1st application, her answer will typically be “you will be notified approximately one week after the Governor approves the state budget.”
- **STEP 11: Awardees will thoroughly read and sign their grant award agreements AND register with Ocean State Procures (if necessary).** We cannot process your grant payment until you are an approved vendor of the State of Rhode Island (by registering with Ocean State Procures) with an approved W-9 form and you have signed your grant agreement form. Once those things are completed, applicants can assume it will take anywhere between 4-8 weeks to receive their grant payment. Applicants should be aware of this possibility and plan their cash flow accordingly.

How do I apply for this grant and what things do I need to have to complete the application?

General Operating Support for Artists applications must be submitted online via <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=artsrischolarship>. You can view a PDF of the application form here: https://risca.online/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/GOSA-Application_FY24.pdf.

Since applications will be reviewed and scored by panelists on their own, outside of RISCA offices, all support material must be included in the online application. We recommend sharing links to audio and visual files rather than uploading the files themselves, as panelists may have

difficulty reviewing audio and visual files if not shared via an online platform like Vimeo, YouTube, etc.

What if I don't want my grant award because circumstances have changed and/or I can't complete the project?

Before deciding to decline your grant award due to changing circumstances or any other reason, we recommend you reach out to Mollie to see if you can accomplish your project with some modifications. If you do decide to decline your award, it is totally fine to do so. It will have no bearing on future grant applications you might submit to RISCA. You will send an email to Mollie indicating your desire to decline your award, and she will assist you.

Glossary:

Practicing Artist: A person that intentionally creates or practices art in any discipline that:

- Has sought learning or training in the artistic field from any source, not necessarily in formal academic institutions.
- Is committed to devoting significant time to artistic activity, as is possible financially.
- Is or is working towards earning some portion of their income from their art.
- Disciplines include, but are NOT limited to: musician, painter, poet, choreographer, teaching artist, ceramicist, storyteller, performer, playwright, sculptor, photographer, wampum artist, printmaker, animator, cartoonist, textile and fashion designer, and filmmaker.

Rhode Island residency: Have been domiciled in Rhode Island for at least one year at the time of application. This means your home in Rhode Island is your primary residence, and is the address you use for legal forms, state income taxes, car registration, driver's license or state issued id, and voter registration - regardless of whether you own or rent your home.

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/BIPOC>

Community of Practice: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Note that this definition allows for, but does not assume, intentionality: learning can be the reason the community comes together or an incidental outcome of member's interactions. Not everything called a community is a community of practice. A neighborhood for instance, is often called a community, but is usually not a community of practice. Three characteristics are crucial:

- **The domain:** A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people. (You could belong to the

same network as someone and never know it.) The domain is not necessarily something recognized as “expertise” outside the community.

- **The community:** In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other; they care about their standing with each other. A website in itself is not a community of practice. Having the same job or the same title does not make for a community of practice unless members interact and learn together. But members of a community of practice do not necessarily work together on a daily basis. The Impressionists, for instance, used to meet in cafes and studios to discuss the style of painting they were inventing together. These interactions were essential to making them a community of practice even though they often painted alone.
- **The practice:** A community of practice is not merely a community of people who like the same kinds of movies, for instance. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short, a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction. A good conversation with a stranger on an airplane may give you all sorts of interesting insights, but it does not in itself make for a community of practice. The development of a shared practice may be more or less, self-conscious. The “windshield wiper” engineers at an auto manufacturer make a concerted effort to collect and document the tricks and lessons they have learned into a knowledge base. By contrast, nurses who meet regularly for lunch in a hospital cafeteria may not realize that their lunch discussions are one of their main sources of knowledge about how to care for patients. Still, in the course of all these conversations, they have developed a set of stories and cases that have become a shared repertoire for their practice.

Source: <https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>.