



Raleigh
Arts



2026-2027

Raleigh Arts Commission

Operating Support

Grant Guidelines

Application Submission Deadline:
Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 4 p.m.

Grants Program Calendar

November 14, 2025, 10am	How to Write It Right – New Grant Writers Workshop
November 18, 10am	Returning Arts Partner Grant Workshop
December 17	Final Day Arts Grant Director Available to Review Draft Applications and Meet with Applicants

January 8, 2026, 4pm Grant Application Submission Deadline

February 16 – March 2	Grant Panel Interviews (Mondays, 3-8:30pm)
March	Raleigh Arts Commission Approves Grant Award Recommendations
April	Grant Award Recommendations Presented to City Council
June	City Council Approves Grant Awards
July	Grant Awards Letters and Contracts Sent

Raleigh Arts Contact Information

Raleigh Arts, part of the City of Raleigh's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department, administers the programs of the Raleigh Arts Commission and the Public Art and Design Board and supports the Pullen and Sertoma Arts Centers.

Mailing & Street Address

City of Raleigh – Raleigh Arts
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Arts Grant Application Contacts

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Arts Grant Director

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Katie Jo Fulks

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Project Manager

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About the Raleigh Arts Commission

The Raleigh Arts Commission, established in 1977 as the official advisory body and advocate for the arts to the Raleigh City Council, proudly holds the distinction of being the first municipal arts commission created in North Carolina. Serving as the leading force to champion the arts with Raleigh citizens and their representatives, the Commission's myriad activities foster, support, and promote the arts in the Capital City. Twelve citizens broadly representative of all fields of the arts are appointed by City Council to serve on the Arts Commission.

Funding for the Commission:

The City of Raleigh Arts Grant Program is the official vehicle for municipal support to the City's arts organizations and to arts programs presented in Raleigh. A major example of the City Council's dedication to the cultural development of Raleigh, the Arts Commission receives an annual appropriation of \$5.00 per capita in arts funding.

Raleigh Arts Grant Program Mission:

The City of Raleigh Arts Grant Program fosters and sustains Arts in our community by allocating municipal funding to help shape Raleigh as a creative cultural capital and create an environment where everyone can participate in the arts.

Raleigh Arts Grant Program Core Values:

- *We value* municipal funding for the Arts;
- *We value* the Arts as a key element in creating desirable places to live, work, and visit;
- *We value* the economic stimulus the Arts provide for our region;
- *We value* Arts that are accessible to the community and artists;
- *We value* freedom and diversity of artistic expression;
- *We value* artistic excellence;
- *We value* responsible stewardship and accountability;
- *We value* a transparent, open, and honest process of grants decision-making;
- *We value* knowledgeable and committed Arts staff and Commissioners, and the Commission's role as advocates for the Arts;
- *We value* the creation of original works of Art as well as the preservation of classic works;
- *We value* mentorship and encouragement of Arts organizations and artists in our community;
- *We value* the principles of artistic collaboration and partnership;
- *We value* a community in which everyone has the opportunity to learn about, participate in, and enjoy the Arts.

General Eligibility Requirements

Financial assistance may be requested by an organization for arts activities if it meets all applicable requirements in these guidelines, including those specified for individual grant categories.

1. **Raleigh Headquarters:** The organization's corporate headquarters must be located within the City of Raleigh.
2. **Not-for-Profit Status:** City of Raleigh Arts Grants may be awarded only to not-for-profit organizations, chartered by the State of North Carolina, that have federal and state tax-exempt status. Copies of the letters of determination from the Internal Revenue Service and the State of North Carolina's Department of Revenue recognizing the applicant organization as a not-for-profit corporation must be on file at Raleigh Arts. Each year, to ensure continued status as a tax-exempt organization, City staff will review each organization's IRS Form 990 for its most recently completed fiscal year. (The IRS automatically revokes the tax-exempt status of any organization that does not submit a Form 990 for three years in a row.)
3. **Fiscal Agent:** Organizations that do not have federal tax-exempt status under Section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code must apply through a non-profit fiscal agent and, to be eligible for funding, must be in the process of securing such status. Organizations applying through a fiscal agent may not be established for-profit entities and must submit documentation demonstrating that not-for-profit status has been sought.
4. **Individuals:** Individuals are not eligible to apply directly for funding, but many artists are hired through organizations that receive City arts funding and by the City of Raleigh itself.
5. **Serving the General Public:** The use of City of Raleigh funds to serve only the applicant organization's membership is deemed inappropriate. Requests from membership organizations must emphasize service to the general citizens of Raleigh. When participation in activities is based on invitation or jury process, the means to ensure systematic, unbiased selection should be delineated. In summary, all programs to be funded by the City must be open to the general public, whoever the sponsor is or wherever the program is presented.
6. **Nondiscrimination:** City of Raleigh Arts Grants may be awarded only to organizations that certify they will comply with the City's nondiscrimination policy, a clause in the contract.
7. **Accessibility:** Applicants must demonstrate that facilities and projects will be accessible to people with disabilities.
8. **Excess Budget Surplus or Budget Deficit:** An organization is **ineligible** for any City Arts Grants if:
 - It has undesignated cash reserves, exclusive of assets listed in parentheses (endowment, capital improvement, and other restricted funds and donated works of art) in excess of one year's operating expenses; or

- It has budgeted a deficit in the fiscal year for which funds are requested. (In the case of an accumulated standing deficit, the organization must submit with its application a feasible plan for eliminating the deficit.)
9. **City of Raleigh Grant Programs:** The City has three grant programs (Raleigh Arts Commission Grants, Community Enhancement Grants, and Human Relations Commission Grants).
- Organizations may apply for funding in up to two City grant programs per year.
 - Organizations that apply for Community Enhancement or Human Relations Commission funding will be ineligible to apply for Operating Support through the Raleigh Arts Commission Grant program.
 - Arts organizations with multi-year agreements with the City are ineligible for funding from the Community Enhancement and Human Relations Grant Programs.

Funding Requirements

Except for extraordinary cause, The City of Raleigh restricts Arts Grant Program funding as follows:

1. Arts organizations may apply for one arts grant per year in one of the following categories: Operating Support, Program Support 1, or Program Support 2.
2. Non-arts organizations may only apply for one arts grant per year in the Program Support 1 Grant category to fund arts projects they produce.
3. A foundation that exists as a whole or in part to support one specific organization may apply in the grant category(ies) for which the organization it supports is eligible to apply.
4. Organizations with special leasing arrangements with the City of Raleigh may apply for one Program Support 1 or Program Support 2 Grant per year only. To be eligible, such organizations' combined annual City funding, including the Arts Grant request, cannot exceed the limits specified in the paragraph below.
5. **Total grant support will be limited to no more than 25% of an applicant's total actual operating expenses for the last completed fiscal year (2024-2025), or \$175,000, whichever is less.**
6. All Program Support 1 and Program Support 2 Grants require at least a one-to-one match. "One-to-one" dollar match means that the applicant must cover at least half (50%) of the expenses for a project or program with its own income. (In-kind contributions of time and services cannot be used.)
7. No grant funds may be used for out-of-county travel expenses.
8. City of Raleigh Arts Grant funds may **not** be used for capital improvements (building or construction), purchases of large equipment or other depreciable assets, fundraisers, food or beverages, or elimination of an accumulated deficit. Public art projects where the primary

focus is beautification or enhancement of sites are not funded by the Arts Grant Program. Please see the City's website for other ways that the City of Raleigh supports public art. Design project requests will be considered for research, planning, and conceptualization only, but not for construction, reconstruction, or other things that could be considered capital expenditures.

9. All events sponsored in part or whole by the Commission must be open to the public.
10. Applications from colleges or universities or other institutions of higher learning must emphasize non-academic community involvement in planning and implementation. The final product, if any, must include members of the community.
11. Applicants should be aware that applications are reviewed on their merits. An award granted one year does not imply Commission support in subsequent years. Grants are not renewable.
12. Organizations may request funding to strengthen and expand existing or previously funded programs. Though the Commission welcomes the vitality of new projects and activities, organizations should not plan new projects that are beyond their means and cannot be sustained without continued Commission funding once they become established.

Any questions about eligibility or funding requirements should be directed to the Arts Grant Director before the application is made.

Informational Grant Workshops

Raleigh Arts staff present a number of informational grant workshops in November. These workshops cover all aspects of the grant application process and provide opportunities for potential applicants to ask questions about requirements. This year, grant workshops are required for **all organizations**.

Applicant organizations are required to attend either the How to Write It Right workshop (if this is the first or second time staff is writing the grant application) or the Returning Arts Partner workshop.

See page 1 of the Grant Guidelines for a list of this year's workshops. To determine which workshop is right for you, go to the Raleigh Arts' Grants web page for more information about the sessions and to register online: <https://raleighnc.gov/arts/services/arts-grants/raleigh-arts-commission-grants>

Intent to Apply and Pre-Application Meetings

Applicants are welcome to schedule additional meetings with the Arts Grant Director no later than Wednesday, December 17. Organizations new to the Arts Grant Program, returning organizations with new grant writers, and those interested in applying for a different type of funding than they have in the past must notify the Arts Grant Director of their intent to apply and are required to schedule at least one meeting with her as well.

Universal Accessibility

The Raleigh Arts Commission is committed to making sure the application process is accessible to people with disabilities. Guidelines and application forms can be made available in large print or recorded format. People with disabilities are welcome to meet with Raleigh Arts staff virtually, in the Raleigh Arts office, which is wheelchair accessible, or in another location that may be more convenient. Sign language interpretation and/or other meeting accommodations can be arranged as well.

Submitting a Grant Application

- It is important that potential applicant organizations carefully review the guidelines for each grant category to determine the most appropriate match for submitting funding requests.
- The deadline for submitting grant applications is **Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 4pm. Applications received after the deadline date will be ineligible.**
- Applicant organizations will use the Arts Commission's online application system to submit grant applications.
 - To access the application, go to the Raleigh Arts Commission Grants webpage: <https://raleighnc.gov/arts/services/arts-grants/raleigh-arts-commission-grants>.
 - For accessibility questions or accommodation requests (such as a different digital format or paper copies of the guidelines or application forms), contact Arts Grant Coordinator Brooke Kesterson (919-996-4570 / brooke.kesterson@raleighnc.gov).
- An incomplete or inaccurate application will jeopardize funding.
- Applicants should be aware that good grantsmanship is a significant factor in a favorable review of proposals. While an application may be declared technically eligible, a miscalculated budget, incomplete responses to narrative questions, or a failure to itemize expenses and income, etc., will make the application less competitive and will result in a negative evaluation.
- Applicants should be aware that **all previous year's reports, including audits, must be up-to-date and submitted according to deadlines** for consideration for the next fiscal year's funding. Arts organizations with a history of **non-compliance** with deadlines (for required reports, audits, contracts, etc.), must contact the Arts Grant Director to discuss current eligibility prior to applying.

Once a Grant Application Is Received by Raleigh Arts

From mid-January through March, the Arts Commission's Grants Committee reviews each proposal and interviews each applicant in a panel process. The grants panel interview is a requirement of the application process and will not be rescheduled if missed. A missed grant panel interview will jeopardize funding and, at a minimum, result in a grant compliance score of zero. Applicants may bring a maximum of four people to their grant panel interview.

In March, the committee makes its funding recommendations to the Raleigh Arts Commission. Upon approval, the recommendations are subsequently presented to City Council for inclusion in the annual budget process. By June 30, grant awards are approved by City Council during the adoption of the annual budget. Arts Grant contracts are sent to grant recipients in July.

Applicants are strongly discouraged from commencing operation in anticipation of City of Raleigh funding prior to formal notification.

Appeals Process

An applicant has a right to appeal any decision denying an application for a grant in whole or in part and/or to request an exception to the guidelines. Any appeal must be in writing, addressed to the Arts Grant Director, and shall specifically state reason(s) for the appeal.

- Any request for an exception to the guidelines must be filed no later than 45 days prior to the deadline of the grant category at issue. It will be reviewed at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting.
- Any appeal that contests the denial of a grant, in whole or in part, must be filed within 10 working days of the notification of the grant recommendation. An applicant may appeal an award decision if there is a question regarding the application of policy or guidelines during the evaluation process. Dissatisfaction with the denial of an award or with the award amount is not grounds for appeal. An ad hoc Appeals Committee is formed to review the appeal.
- Decisions for the arts funding recommendations of the Arts Commission will be final and will be presented to City Council. Council will approve final allocations.

Grant Evaluation

The City of Raleigh views evaluation as an ongoing process throughout the funded period. As part of the application process, applicants are required to state clearly the desired outcomes for their project. Evaluations will affect recommendations for subsequent funding.

Contractual Requirements

Upon approval of grant awards by City Council, a contract is sent to the grant recipient specifying the terms of the grant, procedures for payment of funds, and reporting requirements. The recipient organization must sign and return the contract by the deadline, signifying agreement to the terms.

Contractual Requirements for All Grants:

- Assurance of compliance with
 - the City's nondiscrimination policy,
 - NC Companies Boycotting Israel Divestment Act,
 - NC Iran Divestment Act,
 - federal E-Verify program;
- Demonstration that the grant recipient
 - meets City insurance coverage requirements,
 - has an organizational conflict of interest policy,
 - adheres to generally accepted accounting principles;
- Specified credit of the City and Arts Commission inserted into marketing materials;
- Provision of audited financial statements to the City for grants of \$25,000 or more;
- Review and/or audit of grant recipient work, materials and or financial, performance and compliance records by City staff if requested;
- Grant payments made on a reimbursement basis with verification of expenses paid required.

For a full description of the contractual requirements, see pages 12-14.

Reporting Requirements

Reporting Requirements:

- **Board Approved 2026-2027 Organizational Budget** – due November 2, 2026.
- **Interim Report** – due February 1, 2027.
- **Final Report** – due August 2, 2027.

General Funding Criteria

As the grant panelists review each application, they consider, score, and allocate with the following general criteria in mind:

1. Administrative and managerial quality of the applicant.
2. Artistic merit.
3. Community involvement and outreach.
4. Financial accountability.
5. For past recipients, panelists will review grant compliance.

In addition, the arts program(s) of the applicant organization must meet most of the following criteria, which are considered during the evaluation processes:

- **The program has artistic merit.** Qualified persons are involved in planning and implementation. Professional artists are involved in the process/preparation and the product/presentation.
- **The program will benefit the citizens of Raleigh.** The program will contribute to the cultural opportunities made available to the public, enhancing the quality of life.
- **The program is innovative.** The program focuses on arts activities not currently offered, targets populations previously underserved, or contributes to the cultural development of Raleigh in nontraditional ways.
- **The program has qualified personnel.** The administrators and artists have sufficient training and experience directly related to the needs and objectives of the program.
- **The program has community support.** This is demonstrated by volunteer efforts; contributions of cash, goods or services; participation and attendance – especially from those not directly involved in the program.
- **The program is accessible.** Program planning and implementation are addressed by those sensitive to (or who are themselves) people with disabilities, senior citizens, members of diverse racial and ethnic groups, and/or those who are disadvantaged. Facility accessibility is required by City regulation. The Americans with Disabilities Act also regulates program and facility accessibility.
- **The program has had adequate planning.** Planning was systematic over a sufficient period of time, addressing each facet of the program, including the method of evaluation and the program's continuation.
- **The program is well promoted and publicized.** To ensure full participation, there is a systematic plan to reach the targeted recipients of the program's benefits through a variety of avenues.
- **The organization is financially sound and has a realistic budget.** Income and expense projections are reasonable for program and operating budgets.
- **The applicant organization has the resources necessary to implement the program successfully.** Resources include sound finances, adequate and accessible facilities, and sufficient staff and board.
- **Organization has a racially/ethnically diverse board of directors.** Every effort is made to ensure commitment to racial and cultural equity issues as appropriate to meet the needs of the City of Raleigh community.

[Please see following pages for information pertaining to specific grant categories.](#)

Operating Support is available to established arts organizations and provides non-project assistance toward ongoing administrative costs for qualifying organizations. Funding may be restricted to cover facility-related costs and critical salaries. The actual amount of an applicant organization's grant for Operating Support will depend upon its rating in the panel review process and the total funds available for allocation. Funds awarded in this category range from \$10,000 to \$175,000.

Eligibility:

Follow General Eligibility and Funding Requirements (see pages 3-5).

Also:

- Organizations must be established, arts-committed organizations that provide a quality cultural product or service with wide-ranging impact on the City of Raleigh and that are responsible for their own programming, (e.g. symphonies, festivals, ballets).
- In addition to having an artistic mission and not-for-profit, tax-exempt status, organizations must comply with the following conditions:
 1. The organization must have year-round managerial leadership;
 2. The organization must have an active board of directors that is reflective of the community it serves;
 3. The organization must display ongoing fiscal responsibility;
 4. Funding may be restricted to facility-related costs/critical salaries.
- First time Operating Support applicants must have received Program Support 2 grants and successfully completed the funded projects for three of the past four years.

A Note About the Emerging and/or Student Artist Evaluation Criteria:

The Raleigh Arts Commission defines emerging and/or student artists as follows –

- **Emerging Artists** – Emerging artists may be NC residents either embarking upon or having recently begun professional careers as artists.
- **Student Artists** – Student artists are NC residents training to become artists through formal and dedicated arts education programs with focused instruction in art making techniques.

Evaluation Criteria:

The following are the weighted criteria used to evaluate all Operating Support grants.

Artistic Merit (30%)

1. High quality artists selected to participate.
2. Professional, creative, innovative artistic leadership with vision.
3. Artistic need for organization in the community.
4. Employment opportunities for Raleigh and/or North Carolina artists.
5. Commitment to support of emerging and/or student artists.

Management (25%)

6. Effective administration and leadership among paid staff.
7. Careful planning for successful implementation of operations and programs.
8. Advertising and promotion sufficient to support organization goals.
9. Comprehensive evaluation tools and review process in place.
10. Active and appropriately sized board of directors and established committees.

Financial Accountability/Grant Compliance (25%)

11. Realistic budgets.
12. Ongoing financial oversight/accurate accounting processes.
13. Long term financial planning.
14. Financial stability.
15. Grant application is comprehensive, clearly written, and presented when due. (For previous grant recipients, prior year grant compliance was complete, comprehensive, and timely.)

Community Engagement (20%)

16. Demonstrated community support for organization (financial and in-kind contributions, volunteers, etc.). Collaborations and shared resources with other organizations.
17. Participants (staff, artists, constituents, volunteers) reflective of and programming responsive to racial and cultural diversity of Raleigh.
18. Board of Directors reflective of Raleigh's demographic diversity or a traditionally underserved population.
19. Successfully engages with people who have disabilities. Organization, programs, services, websites, and facilities are or are working toward universal accessibility.
20. Successfully engages with people who have limited arts or cultural opportunities due to economic constraints.

A. All grants are contingent on funds appropriated by City Council.

B. Conflict of Interest Policy:

The grant recipient's board of directors or program administrators must include in the organization's bylaws or have adopted by resolution a conflict of interest policy. The policy should state that the board members and employees shall avoid conflicts of interest and any conduct which may suggest the appearance of impropriety when exercising their responsibility to the organization. This statement should preclude board members and employees from benefiting directly or indirectly from the organization's activities except in their role as board members or employees.

C. Non-Discrimination:

The grant recipient must agree not to discriminate in any manner on the basis of actual or perceived age, mental or physical disability, sex, religion, creed, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial or marital status, economic status, veteran status or national origin as it relates to its grant-funded programming. The grant recipient must also agree to conform with the provisions and intent of Raleigh City Code §4-1004.

D. E-Verify Compliance:

The grant recipient must comply with E-Verify, the federal E-Verify program operated by the United States Department of Homeland Security and other federal agencies, or any successor or equivalent program used to verify the work authorization of newly hired employees pursuant to federal law and as in accordance with N.C.G.S. §64-25 et seq. In addition, to the best of the grant recipient's knowledge, any subcontractor employed by the organization in connection with funded programming must also be in compliance with the requirements of E-Verify and N.C.G.S. §64-25 et seq.

E. Iran Divestment Act:

The grant recipient must certify that it is not on the Final Divestment List as created by the State Treasurer pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 147-86.55, et seq. To be in compliance with the requirements of the Iran Divestment Act and N.C.G.S. § 147-86.59, the grant recipients must also not utilize any subcontractor that is identified on the Final Divestment List.

F. Companies Boycotting Israel Divestment Act Certification:

The grant recipient must certify that it has not been designated by the North Carolina State Treasurer as a company engaged in the boycott of Israel pursuant to N.C.G.S. 147-86.81.

G. Fiscal Requirements:

1. **Accounting Procedures:** Grant recipients must follow the generally accepted accounting principles below in maintaining accurate, current and complete records, which must be satisfactory and agreeable to the City, and the grant recipient must agree to have adequate internal controls to assure protection of all assets:
 - a. The agency's books and bank statements are reconciled monthly. Expenditures of agency funds are subject to a formal review and approval process.
 - b. The board of directors approves a formal annual budget.

- c. Substantial fixed asset purchases are capitalized and depreciated.
 - d. The agency has a voucher system for documentation of expenditures (that includes original documents from vendors/providers that goods and services were delivered and paid for).
 - e. The grant recipient must agree to retain all records supporting the disbursement of funds for a period of three years; and must agree to keep bank account records for a period of three years.
2. **Loans/Accounts Receivable:** All outstanding loans and/or accounts receivable a grant recipient has with the City of Raleigh must be current. If at any time during a grant award period a grantee agency becomes delinquent, that is greater than 60 days in arrears, on loans and/or accounts receivable with the City, grant funds not yet disbursed will be withheld until the delinquent conditions are resolved.
 3. **Unused Funds:** All funds unused as of June 30, 2027 must be accounted for and the unused share returned to the City through Raleigh Arts by July 31, 2027.
 4. **Audit Requirements – grants of \$25,000 or more:** The grant recipient must submit annual financial statements inclusive of the grant award audited by a certified public accountant licensed in North Carolina within 120 days of fiscal year-end. The audit report must be accompanied by one of the following – the auditor’s management letter, board communications letter, or a letter signed by the recipient organization’s executive director or board president attesting that no management letter was issued. Failure to comply with this requirement will preclude the organization for ongoing consideration in the City’s grant program. The City, at its discretion, may require an examination of any grant recipient's financial records by the Controller’s Office staff.
 5. **Audit Requirements – grants of less than \$25,000:** An audit is recommended but not required by the City. If a grant recipient does receive an audit, however, the audit should be submitted to the City within 120 days following the end of the agency's fiscal year, along with one of the following – the auditor’s management letter, board communications letter, or a letter signed by the recipient organization’s executive director or board president attesting that no management letter was issued. The City, at its discretion, may require an examination of any grant recipient's financial records by the Controller’s Office staff.
 6. **City Audit:** During the funded year and for three years after final payment is made, the grant recipient shall permit any City of Raleigh authorized representative to inspect all work, materials, payrolls, financial records, and other data with regard to the agency's operations; and to audit the books, records and accounts of the recipient agency at the City's discretion.

H. **Insurance:**

1. During the funded year, grant recipients must maintain, on a primary basis and at their own expense, the following insurance coverage:
 - a. **Commercial General Liability** – Combined single limit of no less than \$1,000,000 each occurrence and \$2,000,000 aggregate.

- b. **Umbrella or Excess Liability** – Grant recipients may satisfy the minimum liability limits required above under an umbrella or excess liability policy as long as the annual aggregate limits are not less than the highest “Each Occurrence” limit for required policy above.
- c. **Workers’ Compensation & Employers Liability** – The North Carolina Workers’ Compensation Act requires that all corporations employing three or more people obtain workers’ compensation insurance with statutory limits and employers liability of no less than \$100,000. Grant recipients must confirm that they are, and will remain throughout the funded year, in compliance with all North Carolina General Statutes with regard to workers’ compensation and employers liability insurance.

2. All insurance companies must be authorized to do business in North Carolina and be acceptable to the City’s Risk Manager or his/her designee.

I. **Manner of Payment:**

All grant payments are made on a reimbursement basis based on verification of funds expended (i.e., paid invoices, cancelled checks). Funds must be requested by the grant recipient in writing via an invoice and other appropriate documentation (i.e. form, report, etc.).

J. **Compliance:**

Failure to comply with any of the requirements above may result in suspension of funding awarded and/or elimination of future funding.