

**Department of
Environment and Planning**
Commissioner Daniel Castle, AICP

Erie County 2027 Cultural Funding Applicant Briefing

February 25, 2026 | 5:30pm | Buffalo & Erie County Central Library

Presentation will be recorded. Recording will be available on Erie County's YouTube page.



Agenda

1. Welcome & Announcements

Zaque Evans, Deputy Commissioner & Chief Economic Development Officer, Erie County Dept. of Environment & Planning

2. Application and Changes

- **2026 Summary & 2027 Overview**

Patricia Johnson, MBA, CPA, CFE, CGMA

Erie County Arts & Cultural Advisory Board

- **Live Demo**

*Colette Balisteri, Assistant Project Coordinator,
Dept. of Environment & Planning*

3. Closing & Questions





**Arts
Services**
INC

Arts Services can help!

ASI can provide general grant preparation guidance and best practices.

Please contact them early in the process if you want assistance.

Contact:

Holly Grant

holly@asiwny.org

Jen Swan

jen@asiwny.org

(716) 833-3004

www.asiwny.org



2026 Summary

118 Arts & Cultural Orgs
awarded

\$8,628,959 in funding

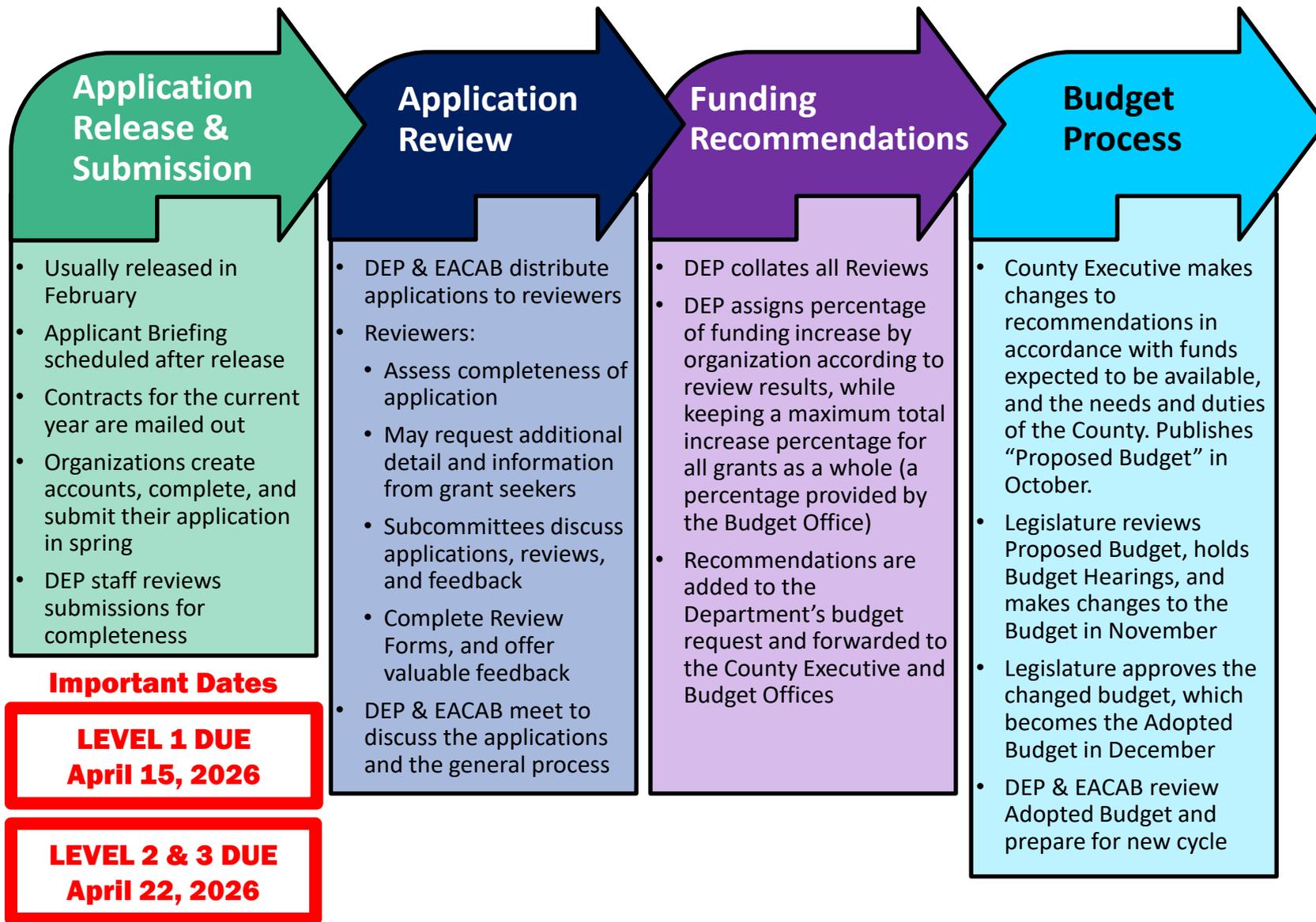
Mean **\$73,000** (*up from \$72,000*)

Median **\$10,000** (*same as last year*)

Mode **\$50,000** (*up from \$3,500*)



Funding Cycle



EACAB & DEP Staff

The application review process engages the 14 member EACAB along with DEP Planners

BOARD



Patricia Johnson
Chair



Lila Balali



Matthew Clohessy



Jennifer Colwell



Mary Craig



Jason Daniels



Russell Davidson



Michael de Freitas



Kathryn Franco



Susan Kirkpatrick



Patrick Long



Carolyn
Morris-Hunt

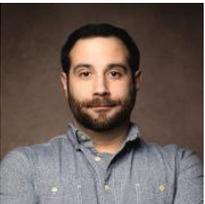


Gina O'Neill



Davida Tolbert

STAFF



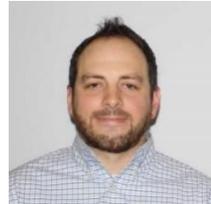
Zaque Evans,
Deputy
Commissioner



Sarah Gatti,
Principal Planner



Tim German,
Planner



Dave Hall,
Senior Planner



Mariely Ortiz
Senior Planner



Briana Zuchowski,
Assistant Planner



Colette Balisteri,
Asst. Project
Coordinator



Hailey Whitney,
Planner



EACAB & DEP Staff Reviews

Do NOT evaluate art or the programming content (but may comment on it)

Provide an annual check-up of organizations in the areas of:

- Governance
- Management and planning
- Fiscal health
- Community impact
- Alignment of programming with mission
- Recognition of Erie County
- Demonstrated ability to be equitable, diverse, and inclusive in their work

Independent reviews lead to stronger, more competitive, sustainable organizations

Provide avenues for feedback to organizations that underscore both strengths and weaknesses, and where improvement is advised. (Note: feedback process may change)



Scoring

- Financial Health
 - Data
 - Narrative Responses
 - Attachments B thru D
- Governance
 - Data
 - Narrative Responses
 - Attachments F thru H
- Management & Planning
 - Data
 - Narrative Responses
 - Attachment I
 - Prior Grantees
 - Funding Acknowledgement

-
- Services & Programs
 - Data
 - Narrative Responses
 - Reach & Impact (inc. Diversity)
 - Data
 - Narrative Responses

-
- Bonus - e.g., above and beyond efforts, more diligence or preparedness than expected for organization size, etc. Primarily from "Additional Info" section.
 - Deductions - e.g., late, incomplete, unresponsive, etc.

The scoring framework allocates equal weight to two primary criteria: **organizational operations** (50%) and measurable **community impact** (50%)

Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
9	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong (model and standard for field or discipline with essentially no weaknesses)
8	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
7	Excellent	Very strong with some minor weaknesses
6	Very Good	Strong with numerous minor weaknesses
5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
4	Satisfactory	Strong but at least one major weakness
3	Fair	Some strengths but with some moderate weaknesses
2	Marginal	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
1	Poor	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
0	Concerning	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses



Tips/Best Practices

Clarity and Consistency

- Respond directly to each question
- Avoid repetition
- Ensure consistency throughout the application

Vision for 2027

- Clearly articulate the organization's goals and vision for 2027

Gather Required Documentation

- Submit clear and legible documents
- Provide the most recent adopted or submitted materials requested
- Final documents are required (**drafts will not be accepted**)
- If documents are being updated, submit the most recently adopted version and note the update status in “additional information” sections

Reference Application Resources

- Carefully review all application instructions
- View the applicant briefing recording for FAQs on Erie County's YouTube page
- Refer to the Application Guide for technical assistance



2027 Changes - Application

1. Throughout Application:

General clarification/rephrasing of select questions

2. Funding Acknowledgement ~~and Feedback~~

Organizations do not need to provide a narrative on how feedback was addressed

3. Financial Information Section:

Addition of questions related to Erie County Comptroller Monitoring Reports



Request Structure

LEVEL	MAX . GRANT REQUEST	MAX. % OF ACTUAL OPERATING EXPENSES
1	≤\$50,000	≤20%
2	>\$50,000 up to \$200,000	≤20%
3	>\$200,000	Funding requests exceeding 20% of your Actual Operating Expenses are discouraged and will be scored lower

- An organization may complete and submit a lower level application, as long as the percentage and grant amount are within the thresholds as listed above.



Eligibility

- Located and provide services in Erie County
- Be a 501(c)(3) organization with tax exempt status (at least 1 year)
 - Must be registered with the NYS Charities Bureau (if exempt, organization must know exempt status)
 - Must be able to provide a copy of a SUBMITTED IRS tax filing*
- Have at least **ONE** of the following descriptions of a Cultural Organization as a **PRIMARY** mission of the organization**:
 - An organization that operates on a countywide or recognizable community level, which by the nature of its cultural activities and/or collections, is unique, distinctive, and of significant quality
 - An organization that provides visitors with access to programs and displays of the performing, visual, literary and media arts, and/or to exhibits and collections, which preserve and interpret our cultural, natural and scientific heritage
 - An organization that particularly serves the cultural needs of significant segments of the County population, thereby contributing to the quality of life in Buffalo and Erie County

**Acceptable tax filings include 990, 990-EZ, and 990-N. 990-PF and other non-profit tax filings are inconsistent with the purpose and eligibility requirements.*

***Organizations such as social and/or multi-service, educational, athletic, after-school, or religious organizations for which cultural activity is not a primary purpose are not eligible.*



Application Levels

erie.gov/cultural/application

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
Your organization meets <u>Eligibility</u> criteria		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant request is not more than \$50,000 Request does not exceed 20% of most recent FY Actual Operating Expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant request is more than \$50,000 but not more than \$200,000 Request does not exceed 20% of most recent FY Actual Operating Expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant request is more than \$200,000 Funding requests exceeding 20% of most recent FY Actual Operating Expenses are discouraged and will be scored lower
ITEMS REQUIRED		
Application Level 1	Application Level 2	Application Level 3
A. Examples of Recognition of County Funding (<i>N/A for NEW applicants</i>)	A. Examples of Recognition of County Funding	A. Examples of Recognition of County Funding
B. Management Prepared or CPA Compiled Financial Statements	B. Independent CPA Reviewed Financial Statements*	B. Independent CPA Audited Financial Statements**
C. Financial Worksheet - Level 1	C. Financial Worksheet - Level 2	C. Financial Worksheet - Level 3
D. Tax Filing	D. Tax Filing	D. Tax Filing
F. Bylaws	F. Bylaws	F. Bylaws
G. Conflict of Interest Policy with completed Disclosure forms for all board and Key Persons	G. Conflict of Interest Policy with completed Disclosure forms for all board and Key Persons	G. Conflict of Interest Policy with completed Disclosure forms for all board and Key Persons
H. Whistleblower Policy	H. Whistleblower Policy	H. Whistleblower Policy
N/A	I. Strategic Plan	I. Strategic Plan

*NOTE: NYS changed the maximum threshold for CPA Review from \$750K to \$1M for Fiscal Years Starting after 7/1/21

**NOTE: NYS changed the minimum threshold for CPA Audit from \$750K to \$1M for Fiscal Years Starting after 7/1/21



Grant Use Criteria

Eligible Use

General Operating Support only, including:

- Salaries & fringe benefits
- Program costs
- Rent & utilities
- Office supplies & equipment

Not Permitted

- Capital projects or improvements
- Offsets against accounts receivable
- Activities outside Erie County
- Re-granting or delegation of grant duties

Funding requests are not guaranteed

All applications are evaluated based on:

- Financial management
- Governance
- Programming

Funding is distributed in accordance with available 2027 funds.



Time
for
LIVE DEMO



QUESTIONS?

CONTACTS

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Assistant Project Coordinator

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Website

erie.gov/cultural

THANK YOU

Briefing recording will be available on Erie County's YouTube page.

