

# Bibb Administration Launches Transformative Arts Fund, Nearly \$3 Million in Grants Now Available to Local Artists

Between 6 to 12 Cleveland-Centric Projects Will Receive Awards Ranging from \$250,000 to \$500,000

Wednesday, January 31, 2024 — Cleveland — Mayor Justin M. Bibb announced nearly \$3 million is now available for local artists through the City's Transformative Arts Fund (TAF) grant program. The program will provide funding for projects and initiatives led by Cleveland-based artists. The application portal opened today and those who are interested have until 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, March 30 to apply.

"Our local creative community provides the heartbeat that keeps our neighborhoods vibrant and alive — they inspire our children, bring difficult societal challenges to light, and empower us to take action," said Mayor Bibb. "This transformative-level of funding we will be providing is designed to award artists who propose projects that will have a sustained, positive impact in the community long after they are completed."

The TAF is dedicated to empower artists, creators, and communities to collaborate and create art that reflects the diversity and richness of Cleveland. Grant amounts will range from \$250,000 to \$500,000 — meaning that at least 6 and up to 12 projects will be awarded. The application must be completed by the lead artist(s), with a commitment from a partnering institution who will provide organizational support and administrative assistance for the project. As a Cleveland-centric program, the following criteria must be met in order to be eligible to receive an award:

- The lead artist must be 18+ years old and live in the City of Cleveland
- The partnering institution must be located in the City of Cleveland
- The proposed project must be based in the City of Cleveland

Artists across the various types of creative disciplines — painting, music, film, culinary, fashion, and others — are all encouraged to apply. Applicants can collaborate with any institutional partner — which could include community development corporations, social service agencies, nonprofits, schools, religious groups, or private businesses. Special consideration will be given to project proposals that amplify/address vacant land reutilization, the environment, food insecurity, violence prevention, safe spaces in the city, social determinants of health, and matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Applicants will be required to provide



work samples, a detailed budget, an institutional partner letter of commitment, and other documentation when submitting the application.

"Arts is all about nurturing creativity, and innovation while providing entertainment outlets for people of all ages. As a child, I played instruments for hours after school. This sparked a creative fire in me and kept me out of trouble," stated Councilman Kevin Conwell. The arts are a catalyst for innovation, pushing boundaries, and challenging the status quo. This is a big deal for Cleveland. It's cool beans that we were able to get this up!"

Those who are interested in learning more about the eligibility requirements, necessary documentation, application process, and overall program can find additional information on the TAF webpage.

The Assembly for the Arts will serve as the administrative partner for the program — providing the specialized technology, network, personnel, and resources needed to ensure that all interested artists can easily apply. This will also allow money to get into artists' hands quicker upfront while they are working on their projects, rather than through the City's typical reimbursement process once projects are completed.

Once the application period closes, all applications will be thoroughly evaluated and scored by the seven-member volunteer TAF Advisory Committee. The artists-led Committee — representing various creative disciplines and neighborhoods across Cleveland — was directly involved in developing the vision, mission, and guidelines of the TAF program. Several aspects of the program were based on feedback provided directly by members of the creative communi-

ty. The TAF Committee will make final recommendations to the Mayor and City Council representatives. Awardees will be notified in the summer of 2024 and will be required to provide quarterly progress reports to the City to ensure projects are on time and on budget.

The City will host 6 informational sessions (i.e. 3 virtual and 3 in-person) to assist with the application process. The first session will be held virtually at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 8. Dates, times, and locations for the other sessions will be communicated on the City's social media pages. Anyone with questions about the information sessions or TAF program overall should email [transformativeartsfund@clevelandohio.gov](mailto:transformativeartsfund@clevelandohio.gov).

"The arts foster community engagement and social cohesion. They bring people together, promote dialogue, and encourage collaboration. By supporting the arts fund, we invest in projects and initiatives that bring diverse communities together, bridge social divides, and promote understanding and empathy," shared

Council President Blaine A. Griffin. I commend my colleague Councilman Kevin Conwell for his leadership and push to make this transformative arts fund a reality."

Artists can find more resources — like information on community support organizations who may be able to assist with insurance, networking, additional funding opportunities, technical assistance, business development, marketing, and other services — by visiting the Assembly's website.

Additional Statements of Support:

"We are grateful to the City of Cleveland and City Council for their work in funding and approving the Transformative Arts Fund," said Jeremy Johnson, President and CEO for Assembly for the Arts. "The artist-led projects that are awarded will be a testament to the power of arts and culture to inspire creativity and spark collaboration between artists and organizations to address some of our City's most pressing social issues and positively impact our communities."

"Simply applying to the Transformative Arts Fund will do two things right from the start — foster new connections bridging hidden and unseen gaps in the community, and giving hope to possibilities that could heal the City of Cleveland through art," said artist and Mateza Gallery owner Gina Washington. "And although the funds are limited and the number of participants will be too, the momentum it generates to create and collaborate must continue."



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