



## 2026 GRANT INFORMATION & APPLICATION GUIDE

### TIMELINE FOR **ROCKET GRANTS** 2026-27:

Wednesday, May 6, 2026 – Applications open via Submittable

Wednesday, June 17, 2026 – **Letter of Interest** due, at 11:59 PM CST

Wednesday, July 22, 2026 – Artists notified about invitation for full application + interview process

Wednesday, August 19, 2026 – **Full applications close** online, at 11:59 PM CST

Thursday, August 27 and Friday, August 28, 2026 – Artists' presentations at **Selection Panel\*** meeting in Kansas City

Tuesday, September 1, 2026 – Award recipients notified

Thursday, September 17, 2026 – Public Announcement of Rocket Grant Awards

Thursday, September 24, 6 PM – **Awards gathering at Charlotte Street**

Friday, October 1, 2027 – All projects must be complete

\* If you progress to the final round of the selection process, ALL individual artists, or AT LEAST ONE TEAM MEMBER (maximum 3) of each artist group, **MUST be present** at the Selection Panel meeting, in Kansas City on **AUGUST 27-28**. You will be asked to give a 5-minute presentation of your proposal with a 5-minute question and answer period immediately following. **Selected artists will be notified on July 22 if they have been invited prepare a full application and to present to the Selection Panel. Please hold the dates of August 27-28 open.**

### VISION:

**Rocket Grants** receive support from the **Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts**, and are developed and implemented through a partnership between the **Charlotte Street Foundation** in Kansas City, MO and the **Spencer Museum of Art**, at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS. These grants provide opportunities for Kansas City area artists to make and share experimental work and ideas in public spaces around the region - by providing direct support for exceptional, under-the-radar, artist-driven, and artist-centered projects.

### **Rocket Grants** fund projects that:

- add energy and diversity to the arts in our region
- happen in unexpected places
- challenge mainstream methods of thinking, making or presentation
- encourage the development of new kinds of audiences
- connect with, and provide opportunities for creative growth, to **either** the artist community, or the general public (projects could address both)

### ELIGIBILITY:

- Artists, curators, collectives, collaborative groups, partnerships, and artist-run spaces residing within an 80-mile radius of the Kansas City metropolitan area are eligible to apply. See [map](#).
- If applying as an artistic group, this group can be long-standing or created specifically for this project.
- Nonprofit, 501(c)3 organizations are **NOT** eligible to apply.
- All artists must be over 21 at the time of the application, and may not be full-time students at any time during the application or award period (May 6, 2026 to October 1, 2027).
- All exclusions apply for the entire period of the application and award (May 6, 2026 to October 1, 2027).
- Artists may not be awarded a **Rocket Grant** for two sequential rounds of funding. Artists who are part of incomplete projects may not reapply until a year after the project is completed.

### DESCRIPTION:

The **Rocket Grants** program for 2026-27 will provide grants in the amount of \$60,000 total.

- **Full Project Awards:** Cash grants of **up to \$6,000** each, to area artists, performers, curators, and writers - as individuals or groups - to support the creation and presentation of **NEW** work/projects. **Artists with ongoing projects or practices are welcome to apply, providing the application proposes significant evolution or adaptation that will open up entirely new directions in the work** – even if for only one year. The majority of grants are awarded at or near the \$6000 level.

Supported projects may include **visual art, performance, film screenings, video, new media, writing, public programming, social practice and interdisciplinary projects**. Performing artists and writers are eligible to apply, but **ALL work should include a strong VISUAL component**, and performers/authors are encouraged to form collaborations with visual artists.

## SELECTION PROCESS:

A panel composed of both local and national artists and arts professionals will review applications and select projects for funding. There are **two rounds** in the process:

☆ **Round 1 of jurying is a letter of interest (LOI) and will be based SOLELY on:**

- 1) **A 500-word letter describing the proposed project summary, the artists involved, the intended audience, the specific context or venue of the work, the budget needs, and the relevance of the project**
- 2) **Up to 5 digital images**

☆ If your project is invited to make a full application in **Round 2**, you will revisit the application site to submit additional application materials, including timelines, partners, artist bios, etc.

☆ You will then be asked to make a brief presentation of your application to the selection panel, and to address any collaborative or community networks you are planning or developing. Please see the **timeline** above to confirm your availability.

## Selection Criteria:

The strength of your proposal will be judged by the following standards:

- Is your proposed project fresh/inventive/under-the-radar/exceptional, and does it encourage new ways of thinking, making or doing for you & the KC region? (**innovative**)
- How does it reflect or challenge this particular time and place? (**thoughtful context**)
- Do you have the skills, networks and experience to do the project, or are you reaching out to others to help you achieve this? Is the project manageable and well planned? (**feasibility**)
- Do you have a carefully chosen site that does NOT involve a traditional or established arts venue, etc.? (**appropriate venue**)
- How will your project affect a specific community, the arts in this region, or other artists? (**meaningful impact**) This may include:
  - How is your project **relevant** to the arts community; how will it connect to a public audience or help build a new one?
  - Will it **invite and involve** community members (including other artists)?
  - How might it benefit an **underserved regional or cultural audience**?

## Funding Priorities:

**Rocket Grants** give individuals and groups of artists the opportunity to **take new risks** with their work, **push the scope and scale** of their activities, **develop and pursue collaborative projects**, and **engage with members of the public, the public realm and other artists** in inventive and meaningful ways.

**Rocket Grants** seek to **create ripple effects** - so that supported artists, processes, and projects will engage, inspire, and propel other artists; spark new ideas and ways of working; and contribute to a regional culture characterized by unconventional and expansive forms of interaction, exchange, provocation, and surprise. ***We anticipate that awarded artists will remain in the Kansas City region for the entire duration of their award.***

Projects must **have a public life** – they must be made accessible to the public via **process, presentation, production, or publication**. This could include:

- **exhibitions and curatorial projects**, with a strong, inventive public component, occurring **outside of** traditional or established arts venues/districts, and **involving local artists** in some significant way
- **temporary art projects** in public spaces, especially ones that may not secure more traditional types of arts funding
- **public programs**
- **events**
- **performances, outside of** traditional or established arts venues/districts
- **film or video screenings or festivals** that challenge or go beyond mainstream presentations
- **online projects**
- **programming and development of residency programs**
- **programming and development of artist-run spaces**
- **publication projects** with a strong visual focus, involving significant collaboration with artist(s) from **this geographic region**, and contributing substantially to **this region's** contemporary art and cultural discourse. (that is, our 80-mile footprint: [map.](#))

Projects that will **reach or connect artists and/or diverse communities** from different parts of the region (e.g. bridge between Kansas City & Lawrence, or involve underserved communities such as those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited) are strongly encouraged, as are those that **directly stimulate a stronger and more critical artists' community**.

#### **Venues:**

This grant program supports **unconventional or under-recognized art forms** as a high priority, but encouraging artists to **develop new kinds of audiences** is equally important. Consequently, projects that propose the use of traditional or established arts venues – such as galleries, museums, theaters, arts districts and so on – will not be strong candidates for funding unless there is a compelling reason for this choice. All artists are recommended to specifically address their choice of venue in a deliberate and meaningful way, and to explore how a well-chosen location could introduce new and surprising experiences to a chosen audience.

Artists are also encouraged to consider how entry fees or other costs connected with any events they schedule might affect the public accessibility of their projects.

Exhibition venues operated by either of the regional partners (Spencer Museum\*, Charlotte Street) are specifically NOT allowable for programs funded by the Rocket Grants program.

**\*This exclusion does not include the grounds of the University of Kansas.**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):**

Answers to frequently asked questions that will further clarify the funding priorities and application process for this grant, may be found [here](#).

You are strongly encouraged to view work by [previous award winners](#) on the **Rocket Grants** website to make sure that your idea is a good fit for this opportunity.

**Artist Responsibilities:**

Awarded artists will be expected to maintain prompt communications with the Program Coordinator. They should prepare all project-related materials in a timely manner.

Awardees will be required to complete a short written report after completion of the project.

Artists will be held legally responsible for all events, materials and outcomes connected with their projects.

**Summary of kinds of projects that will NOT be funded:**

- Projects proposed by a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
- Projects in which the lead artist/organizer, or the majority of artists, or the key visual artist live outside the 80-mile radius zone, or are not resident in this area at the time of application.
- Projects that do not have a public component, that are not accessible and presented to the public, that are a continuation or completion of traditional, private studio practice, or that do not exemplify inventive or experimental practices.
- Projects that request funding solely or primarily for travel or equipment purchase.
- Projects that request the use of venues run by partner institutions (Charlotte Street and the Spencer Museum of Art), or that propose to use traditional or established arts venues without a compelling reason for doing so.
- Projects in which the lead artist/organizer/curator or any of the key participants is under the age of 21, is enrolled in any full-time or undergraduate study program at the time of application (or will be at any time during the period of the award), or has graduated from an undergraduate program since May 2026.

Contact: **Kimberly Kitada**, Gallery and Programs Manager, [kimberly@charlottestreet.org](mailto:kimberly@charlottestreet.org)

# FULL APPLICATION GUIDE

Applications open May 6, 2026 | Deadline June 17, 2026

<https://charlottestreet.submittable.com/submit>

If you are applying as an artist group, organization or curatorial project, the group can either be long-standing or created specifically for this project. Please identify one member to serve as the **lead contact** for the project. We will assume that the artist or curator who is making the online application will be serving as the lead artist/contact for the group.

Before the application deadline (**June 17, 2026**), you should register on Submittable, and create a free username and password.

If **applying as a group** of any kind, please create a username for the group (this could be the same as your project name), but use the lead artist/curator's information for the contact name and email. On the registration page, indicate that you are a team, and enter the names of up to three partners. (If there are more than four people in your team, including the lead artist, you will find space on the actual application form to enter all the names.) By doing this you will be able to upload work by multiple artists without confusing authorship.

You should allow plenty of time for preparing and uploading your images to the Submittable site. You will find easy-to-follow instructions (including digital resources) on the site after you register. You will also need to prepare any additional time-based, web-based and written work samples as described below. Last-minute applications often encounter frustrating, unforeseen issues, and may not show your best potential. **APPLY EARLY!**

You are advised to locate and prepare the following information as a Word document **before** completing the online application. Be sure to keep a backup copy of your written materials - for reference and in case your computer system crashes. All writing should be persuasive, relevant, and concise. **Please respect all word count limits.**

**Please be especially clear about why the VENUE you have chosen for this work will be surprising, meaningful, experimental or accessible, and meets funding priorities for this grant.**

## PHASE 1: Letter of Interest and 5 Images

### 1. LETTER OF INTEREST

Describe the project you would like to develop. Please include:

- **Letter of Interest** (500 words) including:
  - Describe the form your project will take (exhibition, public art project, series of public programs, performance, publication, etc.). Broadly, how will you use the

money? What will 'success' look like for you? Why is your proposal inventive, timely and exciting? Why have you chosen your venue?

- Your reasons for proposing the work, the big ideas behind the project, and its relationship to past work (by you or others)
- Anticipated impact in regional communities (this will vary by project type):
  - Specific target communities you plan to engage
  - How your work will contribute to an experimental arts culture
  - Support for/involvement with other local artists in or through the project
  - How the project might serve as model/inspiration for other projects
- **Public access:** a nuts and bolts description of the steps you will take to make your project accessible to your chosen public – venue, cost, publicity etc.
- If your project will take place in a community or neighborhood, please explain what **connections** you have to the **community**, and which **resources** you have located to help you learn more about your chosen site. You will be asked more about this if you advance to the final interview
- If your project requires a **venue** but you have not secured one yet, please explain your plans to do so
- If your project is a print or internet-based publication or project, please talk about your plans and **timeline for distribution/dissemination**

## 2. WORK SAMPLES\*

Both the professional quality of images and the relevance of work samples to your project will significantly impact the success of your application. **Relevant** samples show skills or experience that will be necessary to complete your proposal, or samples of work/sketches that describe the actual project you are planning. This grant requires that all projects should have a strong visual impact. Therefore, artists working in **all media** are required to submit **compelling visual documentation** connected with their project. This means up to five digital images.

- Up to **5 digital images** – Please prepare your images as described on the Submittable site. These need to be **.jpg or .jpeg, under 5 MB**.

## PHASE 2: Full Application Materials

The jury selection panel will review all the Letters of Interest, and make selections for the full applications. If invited for the Full Application, you will need to prepare:

### 1. PROJECT SUMMARY

Summarize your project. Include brief information about **the reason you want to do this, the form/media you will use, the audience you will reach, how you will use the money, why this project is fresh, valuable or important, and what will be your venue** – anything that will help a jury member see your project as a good fit for this

opportunity and want to learn more. Try writing the longer description first and then making a summary from that.

## 2. PROJECT TIMELINE

Provide detail on the project's timeline, and describe the phases and implementation of each part of the project.

## 3. COMMUNITY + PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Describe why this is a public-facing work, project, performance, etc. Why does this need to happen in public space? How do you envision the audience or various audiences interacting with the work? What are the desired outcomes of this work?

## 4. ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Please write a short biography (maximum 300 words) about yourself, your group, collective, or organization. If you have additional key participants in your group please use the additional space to submit short biographies for all (maximum 300 words each participant). This application does not require a typical resume, so this is where you will indicate your experience and skill sets required to carry out your proposed project.

## 5. DETAILED BUDGET

**Rocket Grants** will award **up to \$6,000** to selected artists or artist groups. The amount you request must be fully justified by a thorough, realistic and balanced budget submitted with this application. Typically, selected projects are awarded the amount they request, though there may be exceptions when this does not apply. Fifteen percent of the award (up to \$900) will be withheld until the project is completed and final documentation has been submitted.

- Your budget may include in-kind contributions (anything other than cash) as long as the donation matches an expense shown in your project.
- You will need to download a [budget form](#) from the **Rocket Grants** website, fill it out, and upload it to the Submittable website.
- There are three formats available: .xls, .doc, and .pdf. The .xls (Excel) file is the preferred format, and will do the math for you! Please modify the budget form in any way necessary to meet your project's needs.
- Please also download the **budget instructions** file, and carefully follow directions for filling out, saving and uploading your form. You will find additional information on the FAQ page that will clarify some questions about the budget process.
- The most important things to remember are that 1.) Your budget should **BALANCE (total income \$ = total expenses \$)**, and 2.) That it should be well enough researched to credibly reflect the sum you are requesting.

When you have completed the form, depending on the format you choose, you should **save** it as **YourProjectTitleBudget.xls**, .doc or .pdf and upload it as part of your online application (for example, the budget for a project called *Soup Cans in the Park* in Excel format would be called: [SoupCansInTheParkBudget.xls](#)).

In all sections of the application, you are advised to keep your writing brief, persuasive and to the point. Please proofread before submitting.

**PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO HIT THE "SUBMIT" BUTTON when you have completed your application, or it may not be received prior to the deadline.**

**MORE INFORMATION:**

There will be a series of two outreach sessions in Lawrence, KS and Kansas City, MO, where applicants will find out more about this grant and how to make a strong application.

See the list of top 10 [Rocket Grants Application Tips](#) and the [Scoring Criteria](#) used by jurors.

*Please note that staff from **Spencer Museum of Art at KU/Charlotte Street Foundation** do not vote on the jury panel, and cannot advise you on ways to create a winning application – that will always, ultimately, depend on the quality of your work and ideas, and their relevance to this particular opportunity.*

Please be sure to check all sources of information available to you (including the FAQ pages and the [Rocket Grants website](#) in general) before contacting staff for further assistance.

**BEST OF LUCK!**