

2025 State Arts Agency Grant Making Facts

General Operating Support

What Is General Operating Support?

General operating support (GOS) grants are a mechanism for providing flexible, unrestricted funds to grantees. Rather than funding a particular project, these grants provide support to the organization as a whole and can be used for either programming or administration. State arts agencies (SAAs) are an important source of GOS, which is not available from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and which many foundations and corporate funders do not offer.

Why Provide GOS Grants?

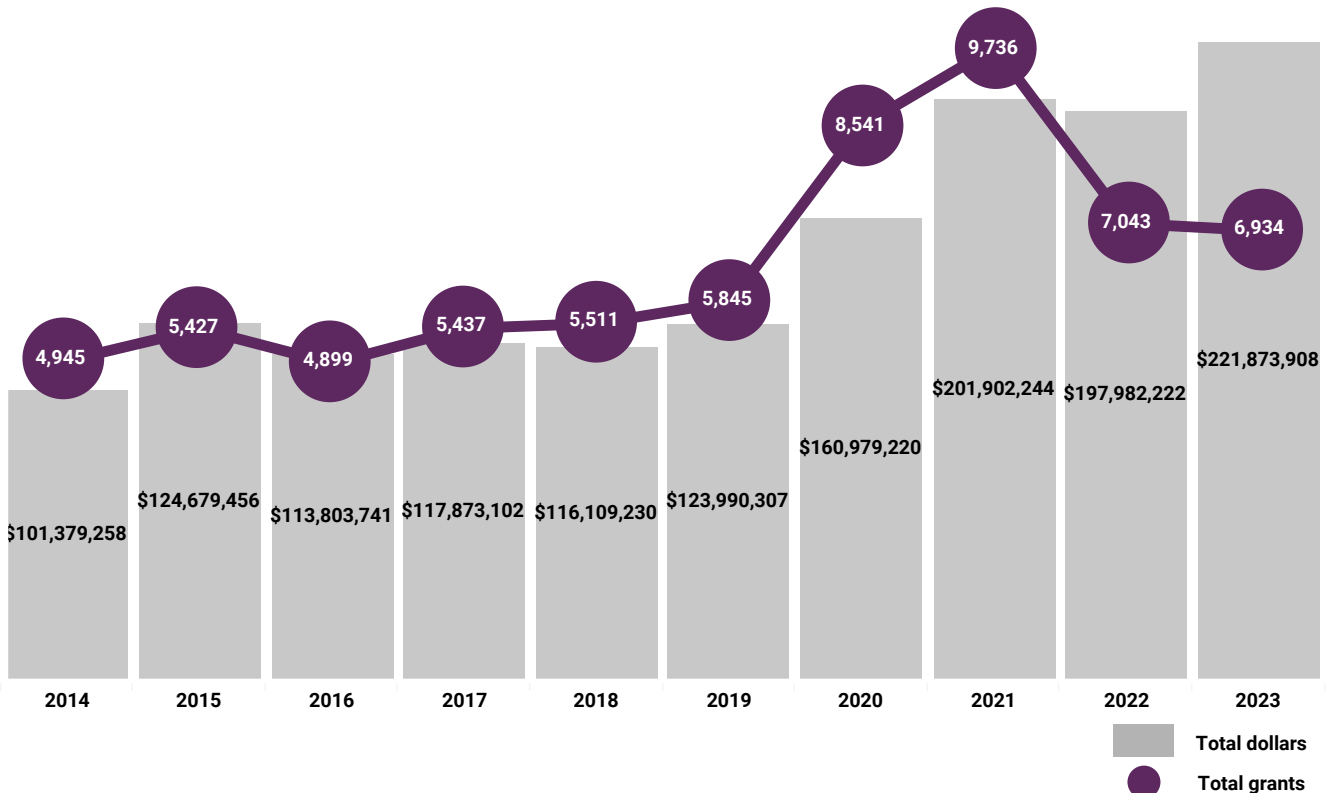
- GOS grants maintain the autonomy of grantees, allowing them to allocate the dollars to their most pressing needs.
- GOS awards tend to be more predictable over time.
- GOS funds are more flexible than project grants.
- Grants for GOS incentivize and perpetuate good business practices among arts organizations.
- Because the grantee defines the activities for which GOS funds are used, this funding mechanism can reduce "mission drift" among grantees.
- GOS awards strengthen the nonprofit arts infrastructure within a state and deepen working relationships between funders and core grantees.

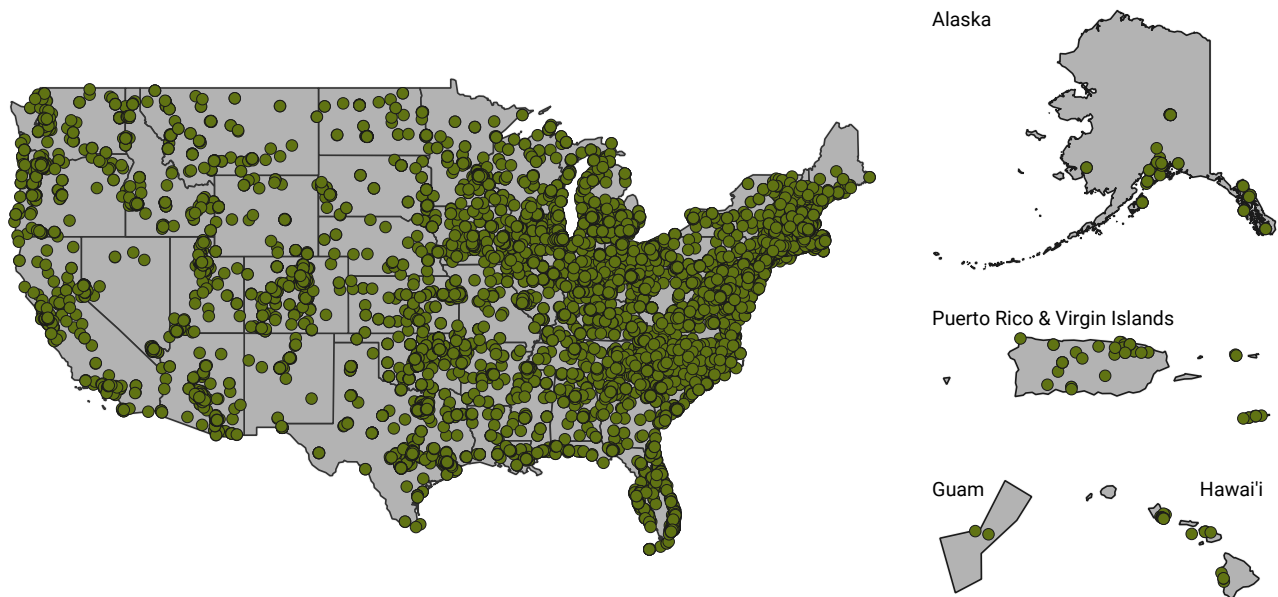
State Arts Agency Grants for General Operating Support FY2023

Total dollars awarded	\$221,873,908
Percentage of all grant dollars	31%
Number of grants awarded	6,934
Share of all SAA grants	20%
Median award size	\$13,000
Communities served*	4,281

*Communities served is based on unique census tracts receiving grants or where activities took place.

GOS Grant Making 10-Year Trend





How Do State Arts Agencies Use GOS Grants?

Many state arts agencies offer GOS funding on a multiyear basis. Funding organizations over a longer period of time provides a more stable source of income, streamlines grants administration for the state arts agency and reduces the reporting burden for grantees. For organizations seeking operating support for the first time, many state arts agencies offer entry points through separate programs geared to meet the needs of new applicants.



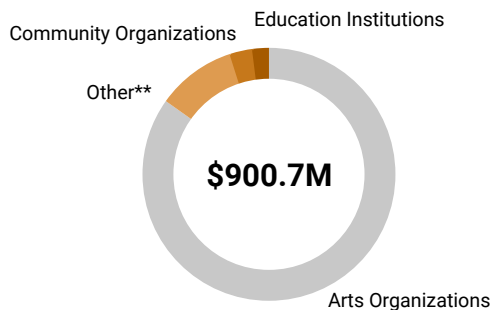
Capacity building and technical assistance: In addition to funding, many state arts agencies offer targeted training and technical assistance for new, emerging and small arts organizations. State arts agencies also offer consultation and training to address specific areas of concern, such as financial health, leadership development and long-range planning. Some state arts agencies also offer tools to help organizations self-assess their institutional strengths and weaknesses.



Networking and peer learning: State arts agencies convene constituents in a variety of ways to facilitate learning and collaboration. These convenings include statewide conferences, smaller gatherings for groups of constituents focused on specific topics and site visits where peers offer guidance and advice for a single organization.

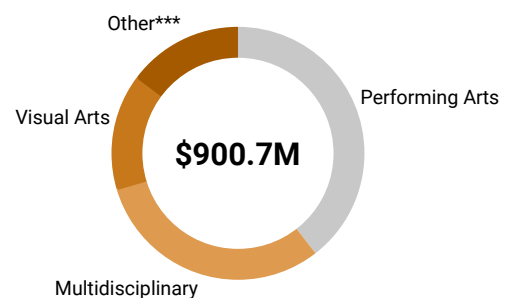
What Do GOS Grants Support?

Institutions Receiving GOS FY2019-2023



**Other recipients include non-arts museums, historical societies and humanities councils.

Artistic Disciplines Receiving GOS FY2019-2023



***Other artistic disciplines include media arts, interdisciplinary and design.

This report draws on data from state arts agencies' Final Descriptive Reports of grant-making activity submitted annually to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and NASAA. NASAA's collection of grant-making statistics is supported in part through a cooperative agreement with the NEA. For more information on the work of state arts agencies, call 202-347-6352, email nasaa@nasaa-arts.org or visit <https://nasaa-arts.org/>.