



## Cultural Resources Economic Fund Application Guidelines 2027-2029

**Eligibility:** Capital construction projects of \$150,000 or more, occurring after September 1, 2027-June 30, 2029

**Deadline for proposal:** June 1, 2026 (Phase 1); August 1, 2026 (Phase 2)

**Contact:** Sue Hildick, Senior Advisor of CACO, 503-816-4701, sue@oregonculture.org

### Cultural Resources Economic Fund (CREF) Purpose

CREF was established by the Oregon Legislative Assembly in 2013. Its goals are to:

- Leverage art and cultural resources to create vibrant public spaces that integrate art and cultural and natural amenities
- Sustain Oregon’s rich arts and cultural experiences
- Enhance a strong sense of place and community identity

To improve and strengthen the economic vitality of Oregon communities, the Oregon legislature may allocate Lottery Bonds or General Fund dollars through CREF as designated grants for capital projects in the cultural sector including new construction, building acquisition, historic preservation, and reconstruction.

### Qualifying Core Criteria

- Must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit established for at least five years and have site control of the property. Must have legal authority to improve subject property for at least five years.
- Must be a member of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon (CACO). Applicants are encouraged to support CACO through a financial contribution at a level meaningful to your organization, as CREF is a significant part of CACO’s advocacy funding.
- Must propose a capital project aligned with the purpose of CREF and supports increased access to arts, heritage, or the humanities and produces a quantifiable economic impact.
- Must demonstrate an organizational commitment to equitable policies and practices that advance justice, inclusiveness, equity, and belonging.
- Must propose a project that can be completed within the designated period. Priority will be given to shovel-ready projects.
- Must request no more than 50% of construction costs for capital budgets exceeding \$150,000.
- Project budget can include limited administrative costs such as organization staffing/project management directly related to the capital construction project, but no more than 10% of the project budget.
- May include soft costs such as engineering if it is a part of a design-construction project that will end with a complete, constructed project. Lottery Bond-funded projects cannot include design or planning projects only.



### Points of Emphasis:

This process is strengthened by broad geographic representation and diverse artistic disciplines. The success of the entire CREF slate depends on project readiness, geographic location, diverse cultural missions, and garnering political support from legislators across the state and political backgrounds. Because of the increase in requests in recent years, the CACO groups projects by geographic region.

While CACO has a mandate to recommend a slate of CREF projects, we can make no guarantees of support or funding. CACO recommends a carefully considered slate of projects, which we must then work diligently to encourage the legislature to fund. We have had years where funding levels have been cut arbitrarily, or sessions like 2023 when CACO's CREF slate was seemingly forgotten in a chaotic end of session.

This is NOT a simple grant process. We do not pick winners and losers; we select projects that, based on the information provided, are best prepared to be completed successfully and that represent Oregon broadly. If you are not selected, we encourage you to apply again as you gain more donations, grants, and support.

Phased projects may apply for funding more than once. If funded, they must take one biennium off before reapplying, and CREF funds should account for no more than 50% of the total project budget.

If an applicant is accepted into the slate of projects and, because of the choices made by the legislative process, only receives partial funding, they must take one biennium off before reapplying.

An FAQ video is available [on YouTube](#) and [on the CACO website](#) to help your team draft a strong proposal.



## **CREF Project Proposal, Phase 1: Establishing Eligibility**

Due June 1, 2026

Successful Phase 1 applicants will be notified approximately on June 15 and will be assigned to a CACO board member/mentor whom they will meet with regularly if needed, to assist them through Phase 2.

Project proposals should be built in Word answering the following questions. Submit the final document in pdf format to [Sue Hildick](mailto:Sue.Hildick@cacofund.org) via email. All attachments must be sent in pdf format as well.

- Organization name:
- Organization address (City, State, ZIP):
- County:
- Tax ID #:
- Project name:
- Name, title, email, and phone number of the primary contact for this application:
- Contract signatory name, title, email:
- Name, title, email, and phone number of the organization primary contact (if different):
- State representative name of the subject property and if they have been contacted by your organization:
- State senator name of the subject property and if they have been contacted by your organization:
- Organization mission statement:
- History of the organization (2-3 paragraphs):
- Project summary (2-3 paragraphs)
- Statement of need with a description of the problem and the solution this capital project provides for the community
- Has work begun on the project already (yes or no); if yes, please describe where you are at with the project at the time of writing
- Description of how the capital project directly advances access to arts, culture, heritage, and humanities and aligns with the purpose of the Cultural Resource Economic Fund
- Description and examples of your organization's commitment to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower justice, inclusiveness, and equity

### **Property:**

- Physical address of the project location (address, city, state, ZIP)
- Useful life of the facility:
- Owner of the property if other than the organization:
- Estimate the project's economic impact to the community and the work you have done to assess the economic impact of this project

### **Budget:**

- Total project budget:



- Project budget for the phase/s for this request, if applicable:
- Your CREF request:

**Required Attachments:**

- Names of board of directors including key committee members, addresses, phones, and emails
- Organization annual operational budgets for the last 3 years (last 2 years and current year budget)
- Lease, Memorandum of Understanding, or other documents proving your organization has legal authority to improve the property
- Current project budget, which should reflect the application of Oregon's Prevailing Wage Laws, if the project receives more than \$750,000 in public funds, including but not limited to CREF funding
- Name, firm, primary contact, and contact details the architect, engineer, and general contractor
- Fundraising plan and project phases and timeline

During Phase 2 of the CREF process, you will be provided with budget templates from Business Oregon to provide further funding details.

**Required for Projects over \$2 Million:**

- Feasibility study or other documents demonstrating project need, support, and feasibility
- Cost estimates, design plans, and specifications or drawings from architects, engineers, or general contractors; also include the name, firm, primary contact, and contact details

**Optional Attachments for Projects under \$2 Million:**

- Feasibility study or other documents demonstrating project need, support, and feasibility

## Phase 2

If your project is selected to move to Phase 2, you will be asked to share a greater level of detail about the capital project.

A review panel of arts and culture peers appointed by CACO will evaluate the project proposals and develop recommendations for endorsement to the CACO board. Projects will be given to a mentor to be a primary point of contact for questions and support. Projects will be grouped for review in geographic regions to ensure legislative support.

Successful Phase 1 applicants will be invited to submit the following information by August 3, 2026, sent as attachments in pdf format. Please title each file with your organization name and the document title.

- Schematics of the proposed project
- Detailed revenue and expense projections for the project
- Updated estimated economic impact of the project



- Signed letter from the Board of Directors of their approval of the application, that they understand their role with advocacy for the project, and that if selected they will ensure the proposed project is at a significant level of fundraising and planning that the work can be completed in the timeframe in this process
- Letters of support from:
  - State representative
  - State senator
  - Relevant partners with the project (examples): city or county leadership, local/regional economic development partners, travel and tourism partners, key community stakeholders, or others who can share the impact and importance to your community
  - Letters of support from potentially adversely affected parties or community outreach plan
- Business or sustainability plan with new operational budgets/costs
- Restoration or rehabilitation plan (if applicable)
  - Letters of support from local authorities detailing plans around historic renovations, local design review, or state historic preservation needs or challenges
- Risks or planning consideration that may materially affect timing, funding, completion, including how you may have to scale the project
- Other documents that may be requested based on your Phase 1 proposal (your mentor will review those with you)

### **Endorsed Projects: Preparing for Legislative Advocacy**

After the panel review and approval of the CACO board, CACO will notify endorsed organizations no later than September 4, 2026. CACO will work with the endorsed organizations to prepare for legislative review. CACO will formally request funding on behalf of the package of endorsed projects, coordinate lobbying efforts among organizations, and manage the sector's Ways and Means request through the 2027-2029 session. Please review the attached timeline for key dates. **An endorsement by CACO does not guarantee approval of legislative funding.**

### **Is Your Project Shovel Ready and Mostly Funded?**

One of the common questions we receive is: what happens if your board starts this process and then chooses to pull out? The CREF process is complex enough that you should not start the process unless you are confident that if selected, you can proceed. Pulling out during Phase 1 or Phase 2 creates no political implications, as it is an internal discussion.

**CREF funding is intended for projects that are certain to occur whether or not CREF support is approved.** You should not apply if your proposed project is still in the feasibility stage of planning or fundraising, or if substantial funds toward its completion have not already been raised. Organizations that withdraw from the approved slate of projects or decline CREF funding or cancel a project after approval by the legislature will be ineligible for future CREF funding for a period of four years.

After CACO and the CREF committee have completed our process and selected the slate, we conclude our work with your team. We turn you over to CACO staff, lobbyists, the Oregon Arts Commission, and Business Oregon. They will be



your contacts moving forward. We would be thrilled to be notified of grand openings as we spend a great deal of time volunteering to support these projects and are deeply invested in your success!

If the slate is passed by the legislature, then you wait! Nothing is guaranteed until the Governor signs the bill. **Do not spend money or start work until you are notified by Business Oregon on when you can begin.**

**Suggestion for Larger Projects**

CREF projects have become more complex and are under tremendous pressure from external economic forces that drastically affect budgets. If you have a multi-phased project or a project with a budget over \$1 million, you should consider hiring a construction manager who works for your nonprofit board to assist in navigating the CREF process and then implementing your project. It could also be a current or retired contractor or building professional who sits on your board or building committee. Smaller budgeted projects or boards with little experience in capital projects should consider a volunteer or hired manager.

CREF funding is a reimbursable program and all projects over \$750,000 are subject to Oregon Prevailing Wage Laws.

**Cultural Resource Economic Fund Timeline, 2027 – 2029 Biennium**

Date	Action
May 1, 2026	Applications open for Phase 1: Establishing Eligibility FAQ & overview webinar available on CACO website
June 1, 2026	Applications due for Phase 1: Establishing Eligibility
June 1-15, 2026	Phase 1 application review
June 15, 2026	Phase 2 applications are notified and assigned CACO mentors
August 3, 2026	Phase 2: applications due
August 3-15, 2026	Committee review
August 15-30, 2026	Select projects for endorsement
September 4, 2026	Notify applicants
October/November 2026	Oregon Arts Commission/Business Oregon informational meeting
September 4, 2026 – end of session 2027	Advocacy for CREF slate
August/Sept 1, 2027 (pending Governor’s signature)	Funding available for projects receiving general funding
Fall/winter 2027	Receive general funding
Spring 2029 (March/April)	Funding available for projects receiving lottery bond funding



## 2027-2029 CREF Committee of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition

Chair: Ginger Savage, Crossroads Carnegie Art Center, Baker City  
Peter Bilotta, Chamber Music Northwest  
Jordan Anderson, OPB, CREF recipient (2016)  
Scott Woodward, Ovation Television, retired  
Josh Neckels, Eugene Ballet, CREF recipient (2017)  
Judy Margles, Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, CREF recipient (2021)  
Dan Thorndike, Medford Fabrication  
Rachel Record, Portland Art Museum, CREF recipient (2017, 2021, 2024)

### Nonvoting advisors:

Sue Hildick, Senior Advisor, Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon  
Tristian Perrotti, Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon and Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon Foundation  
Liora Sponko, Senior Program Manager, Oregon Arts Commission/Oregon Cultural Trust  
Shelby Gonzales, Regional Project Manager/Team Lead for Business Oregon  
Ryan Fisher, NW Public Affairs, CACO lobbyist

## Glossary of Terms:

**Shovel ready:** Describes a construction project that is at an advanced enough stage of development for building to begin soon. The term generally implies that planning is more or less complete, approval permits are in place, and laborers can get to work once sufficient funding is secured.

**Phased construction projects:** Construction works that are planned as a series of stages or phases, rather than as one continuous process. This can be useful when a complex sequence of events needs to be followed (such as a densely occupied or complex site), or when a project has several distinct components, particularly an attempt to maintain some level of business operation during construction. In such cases, the project work can be divided into a series of smaller projects, spaced out over months or even years. Phasing construction works can be beneficial in allowing a project to move forward despite there being no guarantee of funding being available to complete it. Completing certain sections of work can make funding more attractive to potential lenders and investors than if the project has yet to begin. It can also enable the client to begin to generate income from the completed parts of the development.

**General fund or lottery fund:** General fund comes from the Oregon general budget. General funds or lottery funds will be more quickly accessible to you once the bill passes and once the Governor signs the bill.

**Lottery bonds:** For larger projects (typically requests over \$1 million), the legislature can fund CREF projects from the sale of lottery bonds. Funds cannot be available until the bonds have sold; plan for spring 2029, likely March or April. The general fund, lottery funds, and lottery bonds are distinct pots of funding and have separate rules around them. Your assigned project manager will assist you.

**NOTE:** CACO, Business Oregon, and the Oregon Arts Commission has no control of how the CREF slate might be funded; that is decided by the Oregon Legislature.



## **Cultural Advocacy Coalition History, Vision, and Mission**

The Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon was formed in 1998 to advocate for policies and funding to create a thriving environment for art, heritage, history, and the humanities across Oregon.

CACO's vision is a state where Oregonians can access and engage in arts, heritage, and the humanities in their community without barriers; where students have equitable access to quality arts education throughout their academic careers; and where arts and culture organizations can provide innovative, world-class programming that allows for the export of ideas, innovation, and creative work, while contributing to Oregon's economy and quality of life.

CACO is committed to cultural equity and strives to embody values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in development of arts policy; support of artists; nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.

CACO advances its mission and vision by lobbying the state legislature on behalf of Oregon's cultural community in support of its legislative agenda, which includes both policy matters and funding for capital projects. Before each odd-year legislative session, CACO reviews and endorses a package of capital construction requests from cultural nonprofits representing a diversity of regions and disciplines. Our process looks for readiness of projects based on a set of rigorous criteria.