OVERVIEW

OPERA America’s Innovation Grants support vibrant Professional Company Members (PCMs) in implementing innovative projects across opera’s most important areas of practice. This program continues in fiscal year 2019 with deeply appreciated funding from the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, and will provide up to $1.5 million in grants on an annual basis.

The program enables companies of all sizes to increase their investment in experimentation and innovation, and contribute to field-wide learning. Grants will support projects that are (a) efforts new to the field; (b) adaptations or applications of strategies that have been implemented elsewhere, but are new to the applicant company or its community; and (c) refinements or enhancements to proven organizational strategies that merit continued development. The most competitive proposals will be those that demonstrate effective leadership and an organization’s capacity to derive learning from the projects. In addition, OPERA America will coordinate research and documentation, and disseminate resources to share lessons learned from the projects.

BACKGROUND

The Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation has made significant general operating contributions to companies for many years. Beginning in 2012, the Foundation funded OPERA America’s Building Opera Audiences grants, supporting projects meant to promote new and more frequent attendance at live opera performances. The program proved the value of supporting new ideas and sharing effective practices within one critical area of activity. With Innovation Grants, the Foundation leverages OPERA America’s role as a national advocate and harnesses the opportunity for field-wide advancement, while expanding its investment in innovation beyond audience building to other essential areas. In shaping this program, the Foundation and OPERA America acknowledge that opera companies operate in a complex environment and are pressed to grapple with artistic trends, increased competition for board members and philanthropic dollars, changing consumer behavior, and immediate community needs.

The Foundation and OPERA America also note the inherent power of opera to make use of its multidisciplinary assets, rich traditions and collaborative nature. The field has reason to celebrate its recent collective successes in new work development that have given voice to universal and timely issues, audience-building activities that have opened new opportunities for participation, and partnerships that have increased opera’s visibility and impact in coordination with other sectors. These challenges and successes factor into this new support for the field’s ongoing innovation, adaptation, refinement of practices and cycle of learning.
GRANTS
Funds will support projects and a company’s capacity to derive learning from those projects. It is intended that approximately 15 outstanding companies across all of OPERA America’s five PCM budget categories will be awarded grants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PCM BUDGET CATEGORIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget I ($15,000,000 and larger)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget II ($3,000,000–$14,999,999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget III ($1,000,000–$2,999,999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget IV ($250,000–$999,999)</td>
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<td>Budget V ($249,999 and smaller)</td>
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GRANT AMOUNTS
OPERA America calculates the applicant’s eligible grant amount based on the organization’s most recently completed operating expense budget as it appears on the Dues Assessment Form. Grants will be awarded at the full eligible amount. No partial support will be awarded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPANY OPERATING BUDGET</th>
<th>GRANT CALCULATION</th>
<th>ONE-YEAR GRANT AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$15,000,000 and larger</td>
<td>Set Amount</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$750,000–$14,999,999</td>
<td>Budget multiplied by 1.5%, up to a maximum of $75,000</td>
<td>$11,250–$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$749,999 and smaller</td>
<td>Set Amount</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
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TWO-YEAR GRANTS
Companies that describe multiyear approaches may request consideration for two-year grants. Payment in the second year will be at the same level as the first. A company may only have one active Innovation grant at any time. Recipients of two-year grants in 2018 may not reapply for Innovation funding until 2020 (fiscal year 2021).

GRANT PERIOD
Grant activities may begin as early as July 1, 2019, and end as late as June 30, 2020 (for one-year grants) or June 30, 2021 (for two-year grants).

CONSORTIA
Projects involving collaboration between two or more PCMs are eligible. Each PCM may apply for funds related to its own role in the project.

ELIGIBILITY
All of OPERA America’s U.S. and Canadian PCMs in good standing are eligible to apply. To be in good standing, your organization must be:
- Current in the payment of membership dues;
- A PCM for at least one year (since July 1, 2018);
- Current in the completion of the most recent Professional Opera Survey;
- Current in updating the Membership Directory Staff Listings and Schedule of Performances; and
- Current in the submission of reports from any prior OPERA America grants.

An applicant should also have the correct OPERA America logo in a prominent location on its website, including a hyperlink to the OPERA America website. The OPERA America logo is available for download at operaamerica.org/PressRoom.
GRANT PRIORITIES

Grants will support innovative projects in the four areas of practice listed below. Projects may include allocation of funds for research, professional development and evaluation that will help the organization derive learning from the project. (Examples are provided to stimulate original ideas and should not be read as specific recommendations or limitations).

I. ARTISTIC VITALITY: Production activity that has the potential to advance the art form, demonstrate ambitious creativity and reflect exceptional artistic vision.
   Examples: Innovation in the areas of generative artist development (composers, librettists, dramaturgs), co-production/co-commissioning, new work development, alternative venues, repertoire treatment/interpretation or second/subsequent productions.

II. AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE: Projects that lead to new and more frequent attendance and enhance the attendee experience.
   Examples: New practices or refinement in patron recruitment, access and loyalty programs, solutions for barriers such transportation, engagement before/during/after performances, or digital/mobile enhancements.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: Changed structures, systems or operations that bolster the company’s ability to fulfill its mission.
   Examples: Changes to board recruitment, department structures and hiring/training practices, financial risk management, program evaluation, equity and inclusion strategies, or diversified revenue streams.

IV. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: Programs and partnerships that enhance the civic value of opera and opera companies.
   Examples: Distinctive programs that address community priorities, foster community dialogue, or establish or build on reciprocal partnerships with organizations serving specific populations.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Panelists will be looking for compelling and informed applications that meet the following criteria:

INNOVATION

- Project Design: The project addresses a specific opportunity that relates to one or more areas of practice and demonstrates a distinctive and courageous approach as (a) an effort new to the field; (b) an adaptation or application of a strategy that has been implemented elsewhere, but is new to the applicant company or its community; or (c) a refinement or enhancement of existing proven organizational strategy that merits continued development.
- Quality of Planning: The proposal conveys the organization’s ability to carry out the project with commitment from relevant constituents and a clear explanation of the financial scope of the project and how grant funds would be allocated upon approval, as well as sound plans for implementation.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

- Organizational Health: The application highlights organizational strengths and outlines plans for addressing any organizational challenges. The company has solid artistic and community leadership and effective management practices, and is in good financial health. Recent Professional Opera Survey/Cultural Data Profiles will be used to assess financial health.
- Mission Fulfillment: Programs and current practices are guided by established policies and priorities. The project has strong potential to advance the organization, is consistent with
overarching organizational priorities and has the full support of executive leadership and governing bodies.

LEARNING CAPACITY

- **Organizational Learning:** The organization has a track record of implementing change and/or a renewed willingness to experiment. The organization demonstrates an ability to stay informed of field practices, as well as local community dynamics, as it adapts and evaluates its own work.
- **Field Learning:** The project has strong potential to advance field-wide learning. The proposal includes methods for documenting and evaluating the activities, specifically to share practices more widely and help other companies understand lessons learned.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Go to [operaamerica.org/Grants](http://operaamerica.org/Grants) to apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 4, 2018</td>
<td>Applications open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 8, 2018, 11:59 p.m. EST</td>
<td>Intent to Apply deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 28, 2019, 11:59 p.m. EST</td>
<td>Application deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2019</td>
<td>Panel adjudication/notification</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 1, 2019</td>
<td>Grant start date</td>
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The Intent to Apply stage allows OPERA America to verify your organization’s eligibility, including grant award amount, and assess the number and type of requests in the applicant pool.

All completed applications will be reviewed by an independent panel convened by OPERA America and drawn from a pool of experienced leaders in opera, nonprofit arts leadership, program evaluation and other areas reflective of the proposed projects. No OPERA America board member or current employee of OPERA America or an OPERA America member company may serve on the panel. OPERA America staff coordinate panel preparation and deliberations but do not participate in the assessment of proposals or vote on any application. Individuals who stand to benefit from a grant are ineligible to serve. The panel decisions are final, and grantees will be notified by OPERA America.

GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS

Grantees will be asked to include acknowledgment of OPERA America and the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation on digital and printed materials in relation to grant activity.

Throughout the period of the grant, OPERA America will be in contact with company staff about the progress of the project. Grantees will be asked to submit brief written updates. This communication will help us capture and disseminate effective practices and offer customized assistance (e.g., connecting grantees with companies undertaking similar projects, suggesting experts, etc.) for the benefit of the individual companies, OPERA America and the entire field. Grantees wishing to reapply for funds in future years will need to be up to date on all reporting.

In addition, grantees may be asked to participate in interviews or share materials for the creation of case studies; create video documentation of specific programs; present at the annual conference or network forum meetings; and contribute to articles for *Opera America* magazine. Funding will be available to offset the exceptional costs of video documentation or case studies.

CONTACT

For more information, contact Kurt Howard, director of programs and services, at KHoward@operaamerica.org.