

Guidelines for US Applicants

**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**

**Digital
Accelerator**
for Arts & Culture

Information for Applicants

The Digital Accelerator provides funding, expert technical assistance, and leadership development over two years to strengthen the digital infrastructure of nonprofit cultural organizations with the principal goals of growing revenue, increasing fundraising, engaging audiences, improving operations, and developing programming opportunities.

Implementing a successful digital project can pose significant challenges even for the most well-resourced organization. This program was designed in recognition of those challenges, providing participants support and structure to develop a viable project plan, build internal alignment, manage the competing demands of implementation, and document what works and what doesn't to ensure organizational learning and growth. The program is cohort-based, with peer organizations from across the country and internationally sharing difficulties and successes to help build a broader base of knowledge about technology and culture.

The below provides important information about the grant and outlines our expectations for organizations selected to participate. It should help you assess whether this program is right for your organization at this time.

After reviewing this material, should you have additional questions, please reach out to arts@bloomberg.org.

Supported projects fall into the following categories:

- Content creation and distribution
- CRM/Ticketing (including donor management/fundraising systems)
- Digital Archives/Digital Asset Management
- Websites

Costs funded through this initiative include hardware, software, vendors/suppliers, staff time, and training. Note: content creation projects should focus on production infrastructure rather than fees for one-time digital projects.

Timeline

The two-year grant period has the following phases:

Project Planning

- Months 1-3: intensive work with assigned advisor
- Month 4: submit project plan
- Month 5: review for approval by Bloomberg Philanthropies

Implementation

- Months 6-12

Project Launch and Metrics/KPIs Reporting

- Months 13-24

Following the Project Planning phase, the exact timeline will be developed as part of your project's implementation plan.

Core Components

Expert Technical and Project Management Assistance: An advisor from [Arts Council England](#) (UK) or the [Lapine Group](#) (US) will provide guidance and tools throughout the grant period to aid in developing a plan to address your organization's specific digital infrastructure need, procuring the necessary

hardware and software, and managing organizational change throughout implementation.

Bloomberg Tech Fellow (BTF): Each grantee will designate a staff member to serve as digital project lead, coordinating the project on behalf of their organization. BTFs work one-on-one with the assigned advisor in putting together a project plan and budget. They also attend sessions on best practices in digital technology. BTFs should be prepared to dedicate 1-2 days per week (or longer for large/complex projects) to the project during the 3-month planning phase and then around 1 day per week (depending on the complexity of the project) over the following year. Selecting your BTF requires careful consideration, including whether parts of the individual's current work responsibilities role may need to be reassigned during the most intense period of this grant

See the "Program Details" section below for more information on the BTF.

Organizational Oversight: The board of each grantee organization will create a subcommittee to oversee approved projects in a manner appropriate and consistent with grantee governance structure. And for the duration of the grant period, the Bloomberg Tech Fellow will report directly the organization's chief executive about the project – regardless of whether or not that reporting structure is normally in place.

Metrics/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Organizations identify success metrics/KPIs as part of the planning phase that are then tracked throughout implementation. These include "early wins" as well as longer-term benchmarks to understand the impact of each project and contribute to field-wide learning about effective use of technology.

Network: Grantees join a group of over 140 organizations already in the program. We encourage and support knowledge-sharing, and continuously facilitate it among Bloomberg Tech Fellows. The grant period includes online workshops, roundtables, and an in-person convening to encourage professional skills-building benefiting organizations into the future.

Program Details

Eligibility

Non-profit cultural organizations in existence for at least 3 years based in the US or UK are eligible to apply.

Organizations must have 501c3 status

Organizations must have a budget of at **least \$500,000** in FY23

Application Process

Applications are managed via the [Submittable platform, which can be found here](#).

- Applications Due: March 13, 2024 at 11:59 PM ET
- Notification of acceptance: Spring 2024

Bloomberg Tech Fellow

Selecting a Bloomberg Tech Fellow (BTF)

- The BTF should be an existing, full-time staff member who has strong insight into the organization's operations and

strategic objectives and will be a successful champion of innovation and change agent among colleagues.

- The person does not need to be a technology expert or have “technology” or “digital” in their title. Senior staff members in Development, Marketing, Education, and other areas have been outstanding BTFs.
- This person will report to the CEO/Executive Director for the purposes of this project but does not need to be a direct report otherwise.
- Given the time commitment required, the CEO/Executive Director cannot serve as the BTF.

Training and Professional Development Program

- In addition to one-on-one work with an assigned advisor, BTFs participate in a series of professional development webinars on topics related to successful use of technology at cultural institutions.
- BTFs must attend at least 5 webinars including the program kick-off session led by Bloomberg Philanthropies.
- Session topics range from project-specific (e.g., CRM, content distribution, website accessibility) to more general (e.g., change management). Most sessions will welcome and encourage participation from BTFs.
- BTFs also have access to the Digital Accelerator website, which includes webinar recordings, presentations, documents, and other useful information to support continued learning throughout the program.

Time Commitment for the Bloomberg Tech Fellow:

- The Bloomberg Tech Fellow will have to dedicate meaningful time to the project during the “accelerated” phase of project planning (months 1-4 following acceptance into the program). In the first two cohorts, our BTFs spent 1-2 days per week on their Digital Accelerator project (or longer for larger/complex

projects) during the scoping phase and then around 1 day per week (depending on the complexity of the project) over the following year through substantial implementation.

Board Oversight

- The board subcommittee is responsible for overseeing and facilitating the project, ensuring it has full leadership buy-in. Accordingly, committee members should be available for regular updates about project progress so that they can be informed advocates for technology infrastructure investments long-term.
- In past cohorts, grantees have assigned an existing board committee responsible for this project or have created a new ad-hoc or permanent committee to oversee digital technology. In the case of the latter, some organizations have found this to be a productive way to engage younger board members.
- Note: UK organizations need only appoint a single board member to receive updates and advise on the project, though you are welcome to appoint a full committee too.

Project Planning

Project Planning Materials: Once selected to participate in the program, organizations will be assigned an expert advisor to work one-on-one with your BTF to develop and/or refine your project plan. This process will differ based on your project and how much planning has taken place prior to starting the program. All organizations will submit the following deliverables, which are intended to help your key organizational stakeholders reach consensus around the goals, specifics, and cost implications of your project – and to help us assess it and make a decision regarding funding.

- **Project Charter:** Concise reflection of the specific components and larger ambitions of your project including success metrics/KPIs.
- **Board Presentation:** Framework for informing and engaging your board.
- **5-year Budget Projection:** Financial impact of the project (revenue and expenses) both during the program and in the years that follow.
- **BP Grant Budget Template:** Funds you're requesting from BP.

Your advisor will work closely with your BTF on these documents to submit to Bloomberg Philanthropies for review and approval.

Project Types

We support projects that fall under the following categories:

- Content Creation and Distribution
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM)/Ticketing (includes fundraising systems)
- Digital Archives/Digital Asset Management
- Website Upgrades/Redevelopment

We appreciate that digital projects often impact multiple areas of operation, but this grant initiative supports a focused approach as a way of catalysing meaningful benefits.

Accordingly, the goal of the planning phase is to produce a scope of work that addresses a specific organizational need or opportunity and can be implemented within the 2-year grant period.

To that end, **we understand that guidance received during the planning phase may lead you to choose a technology**

solution different from the one proposed in your application – and that’s fine. We want to support your development of the right project scope that identifies the optimal digital package to advance your organization.

Metrics/KPIs

As part of this project, we will ask you to specify objectives and metrics/KPIs that help assess the effectiveness of your technology investment in addressing your organization’s strategic objectives. Please be sure the project your application presents is clearly related to your strategic objectives.

Should you wish to designate metrics/KPIs not included in the application’s list, feel free to do so: we welcome an understanding of how digital infrastructure can serve your organization’s mission and vision.

Following your project launch, your advisor will work with you to collect designated metrics/KPIs on a quarterly basis.

Grant

Grant Period: The grant will cover a two-year period which we anticipate beginning late-spring 2024. Most of the formal program activity will happen in the first six months – and the grant is front-loaded accordingly.

Grant Amount: There are two types of grants offered through this program.

1. Most organizations will receive grants of up to \$200,000 to implement proven technology that advances strategic objectives.

2. We will also consider applications for a higher amount for bold, innovative projects that could be replicable or otherwise have impact across the cultural field. Organizations wishing to apply for this funding should be able to demonstrate a track record of digital competence and innovation. Please complete the addendum to the application (available at the bottom of the Submittable application) if you are interested in applying for this track. Please note: **only a small portion of projects will receive this support.**

Payments:

- In Year 1, you'll receive \$175,000 approximately 6 months into the program after approval of your project plan.
- In Year 2, you'll receive \$25,000 following submission and review of your interim report.
- If you have made a good faith effort during the project planning phase of the program and your plan isn't accepted, you'll receive \$75,000 in recognition of the time and effort of your BTF during the planning phase.

Costs: Costs can include hardware, software, vendors/suppliers, staff time, and training. We do not cover additional overhead as we view all the costs of this project as supporting your organizational infrastructure. We also do not cover marketing costs unless they are directly related to building your digital infrastructure. For example, a consultant to help with SEO is acceptable; agency fees to run a digital marketing campaign are not. Your advisor will work with your BTF to help you build the project budget during the planning phase.

Matching Funds: No matching funds are required for this program, but if your project budget is larger than our funding, you'll be asked to provide details on other sources of funding when you complete the project planning materials.

Communications and Crediting: As part of our support, we ask that you include our logo and credit line (“Bloomberg Philanthropies”) in all materials, both digital and printed, related to the institutional or programmatic areas that our grant supports, and at the commensurate level of visibility that your organization implements for the level of funding. If you also receive support through a separate Bloomberg Philanthropies initiative (e.g., Bloomberg Connects) we’ll work with you to determine appropriate crediting. Further materials will be provided to organizations accepted to the program.

Reporting: In addition to regular metrics reporting to Arts Council England / Lapine as described above, an interim report will be due one year after the start of the program and a final report will be due one month after the end of the two-year grant period. Both reports will include narrative sections to share successes and challenges from your project, as well as a budget section to report on your spending. We will also ask for periodic updates on key metrics following the conclusion of the grant program to better understand the long-term impact of digital upgrades on the nonprofit cultural field.

SMU DataArts: SMU DataArts is a service organization for cultural organizations that helps collect and report on financial and operational data in a consistent and field-benefiting way. We ask that organizations submit a Funder Report at the end of the first and second year of the program containing their most recently completed fiscal years. **If you have never completed an SMU DataArts Funder Report before, you can learn more about this process here.**

Information Sessions

Online information sessions will be held on February 8, 2024. Organizations interested in attending one of these optional sessions can register for the time of their preference via the links below:

- **[8 February, 2024 at 9:30-10:30 ET](#)**
- **[8 February, 2024 at 2:00-3:00 ET](#)**

The sessions will be recorded and available on this page for future reference and for those who are not able to attend.

Frequently Asked Questions

We will be updating the FAQs as we receive questions. Please send inquiries to arts@bloomberg.org.

Q: When is the application due?

A: Applications are due March 13, 2024 at 11:59 PM ET

Q: What projects are supported?

A: Supported projects fall into the following categories:

- Content creation and distribution
- CRM/Ticketing (including donor management/fundraising systems)
- Digital Archives/Digital Asset Management
- Websites

Q: How long is the grant period?

A: The two-year grant period has the following phases:

Project Planning

- Months 1-3: intensive work with assigned advisor
- Month 4: submit project plan
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Implementation

- Months 6-12

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- Months 13-24

**By using the below link, you will be redirected to
digitalaccelerator.applications.bloomberg.org.**

[Apply Here](#)

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