

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for the Helen E. Ellis Charitable Trust Grants

What are we looking for in the Helen E. Ellis Charitable Trust Grant applications?

As in the past, all programs must directly benefit the Westport community. Our goal is to reach new audiences and hold events in all areas of the town. The Council encourages quality programs throughout the town of Westport. We are especially interested in programs that celebrate Westport's diverse culture and/or its history as well as participatory programs that engage children and families. We continue to encourage creative work by young people and invite applications that are developed by or with emerging artists. In addition, we're excited to see proposals from individuals or groups who have not received awards in the past.

What types of projects are eligible?

There is a wide range of opportunity for grant funding, including but not limited to the creation of works of art for public places, theatrical and musical performances, art, science and nature educational programs, scientific or natural exhibits and documentation of Westport history through books, video or photography. Projects are expected to be completed within one year of receipt of grant. Individuals as well as organizations are encouraged to apply. Please review the "Grants" page at www.westportculturalcouncil.org to see programs funded in the past.

Will there be awards made for programs that take place outside of Westport?

Yes. The Cultural Council values programs that benefit the wider Westport community. If a program is proposed that occurs in a nearby community the application must describe how the program will benefit residents of Westport and detail the process for engaging the Westport community.

What is the range of funding for the Helen Ellis Trust awards?

In the past, the range of funding has been from \$150 to \$8,000. However, all applications are given equal consideration despite the amount of funding requested. Each award is considered on the basis of the project's quality, cost and its potential impact on the community. The number of awards to be considered and the funds available to the Cultural Council are also a factor.

Who makes the decisions on awards?

The Westport Cultural Council members participate in a decision-making meeting after they have reviewed all applications. At that meeting, each proposal is considered and evaluated on the merits of the idea, the benefits to the community, the quality and experience of the people involved in relation to the project and the detail and reasonableness of the budget. In addition, the Council considers the group of proposals as a whole. The goal is to have a comprehensive grant package that consists of a diverse group of experiences that will reach all segments of the Westport population and that will take place throughout the town of Westport.

What are some of the reasons that grants are declined?

Applications are declined in such circumstances when there is not enough detail; have no connection to Westport either by artist or audience; do not include any documentation of the applicant's related work or no supporting letter from the host organization; include budgets without any detail or budgets that are excessive for the work proposed. Often there are grant requests beyond the funds available in which case the Council must make difficult choices.

What are my responsibilities if I have a host or a sponsor for a project?

Not every project involves a host. For example: producing a booklet or calendar or creating a video tape or holding a photography contest would not necessitate a sponsor. However, many projects have a host sponsor or cooperating organization. In this instance, you must plan and review your project with the sponsor and request a letter of agreement from them. For example: all programs involving use of a specific location must have a letter from the responsible person at that institution. Library-based programs must include a letter from the head Librarian, Susan Branco. Programs at the Westport Senior Center must have a letter from the Acting Director. Programs to be held in the Annex gymnasium must include a letter from the chairman of the Recreation Commission. Without a sponsor letter your project will be declined.

What if I want to involve the Westport Community Schools?

Any involvement with the Westport Community Schools must include a letter of approval from the School Superintendent. Examples include any program that would take place within the school day, the use of a school building or school-based distribution of materials promoting an out of school project. The involvement of teachers for their advisory role on a project must be approved in advance by the Superintendent.

What if I don't have a confirmed date for the proposed event?

You can explain the process through which the date will be set and include an estimation of when you can provide that information. We will need to have a confirmed date at least two months before the event or activities are scheduled to take place.

How do I find out if I received a grant?

The Westport Cultural Council will send notification to all applicants shortly after they vote on grants. This notification will be sent by mid April at the latest.

When and how do I get my grant money?

Money is dispensed on a reimbursement basis only. We will provide a reimbursement form and a description of reporting materials required with the award letter. You must fund your project first and send in the original receipts, along with the completed, requested project report in order to receive reimbursement. As noted in the award letter, you will need to include copies of newspaper articles as well as photographs of your event or project that we might use for display or on the Cultural Council website and Facebook page.

What is the Westport Cultural Council and where do they get funding for grants?

The Westport Cultural Council is a town appointed volunteer group of citizens who manage two cultural grant programs in the community. One grant is awarded in the fall; the (LCC) grant that comes from the Massachusetts Cultural Council's annual allocation to the Town of Westport, funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The second grant, awarded in the spring is the Helen E. Ellis grant supported by funds that the Westport Cultural Council applies for annually from the Helen E. Ellis Charitable Trust Fund. Historically, the Mass Cultural Council funding is a much smaller amount than the Helen E. Ellis Charitable Trust. The award of individual grants for each program reflects the funding available under each grant.

Questions?

Please visit our website at: www.westportculturalcouncil.org or contact:
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