



GRITTY TO PRETTY PLACEMAKING PROGRAM

MURAL GRANT 2026 Eligibility, Criteria, and Application Form

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Gritty to Pretty consists of three grants: the Mural Grant, the Façade Lighting Grant, and the Open Grant. The Mural Grant and Open Grant are each offered in General and BIPOC streams. Together, these funding grants support the Downtown Halifax Business Commission's (DHBC) strategic placemaking goals by fostering vibrant, engaging, high-quality public art installations throughout Downtown Halifax.

The program provides financial support toward the costs of creating and delivering new, inspiring installations in prominent Downtown locations. These projects are aimed at improving the image of structures, enhancing the streetscape, and contributing to the overall pedestrian experience, while also supporting local regeneration. Gritty to Pretty offers artists, designers, collectives, property owners, and organizations the opportunity to bring creative ideas to life and showcase their talent in the public realm.

As part of DHBC's commitment to advancing equity and inclusion in public art, dedicated funding streams exist to support artists and organizations that identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Colour (BIPOC), including BIPOC-led, BIPOC-focused, and BIPOC-serving organizations. DHBC recognizes the systemic barriers faced by BIPOC communities and is committed to addressing these inequities by increasing access to funding, participation in placemaking initiatives, and representation within Downtown Halifax's public art landscape. Through this integrated approach, the program seeks to amplify diverse voices and ensure that public art in Downtown Halifax reflects a broad range of cultures, histories, and lived experiences.

Since a key objective of Gritty to Pretty is to add colour to the Downtown core and enhance the pedestrian experience, priority will be given to proposals that are playful, engaging, and thoughtfully consider elements of surprise and unexpectedness within the urban environment. Applicants may also apply to have their mural equipped with façade lighting to further enhance the installation's visibility and impact during the evening and nighttime hours.

All funded murals and installations must demonstrate exceptional design and quality. Projects must use high-quality, durable materials suitable for outdoor application and capable of withstanding normal wear and tear, as well as harsh weather conditions. Murals must be designed and executed by qualified artists or muralists with demonstrated experience and technical knowledge appropriate to the scale and medium of the project.

GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARY

The Downtown Halifax district is defined as: the geographic area between the waterside of Brunswick Street to the Halifax Waterfront and from the south side of the Cogswell interchange to the south end of Barrington Street.



Figure 1: DHBC Boundary Map

REQUIRED SUBMISSION MATERIALS:

1. **Application Form** – Complete and sign the application form attached to this document.
2. **Artist CV** – Supply an artist curriculum vitae for all those working on the mural project. This should include an outline of previous work and achievements including exhibitions, awards, projects, commissions, and reviews, etc. Clearly indicate a project lead or project manager for the team and the roles and responsibilities of various team members (if applicable).
3. **Past Work** – Applicants must submit a maximum of 10 samples of past work that best illustrate their qualifications for this project. Submit each image on a separate page, portrait format, and include title of work, artist(s), location, commissioning agency, date, and budget. If submitting as a team, the team submits no more than 10 images.
4. **Visual Representation** – Include a coloured rendering of proposed mural with dimensions.
5. **Budget** – Submit a budget for the project, including costs for prepping the wall, permits, paint, etc.
6. **Schedule** – Include a schedule for proposed work; provide a start and end date and detail all key stages, including development, implementation, and delivery.
7. **Property Owner Agreement Form** – Complete and sign the property owner agreement form attached to this document.
8. **Site Photos** – Include photos of proposed project site and physical surroundings.
9. **Insurance** – Provide proof of \$2 million (\$2,000,000) general liability insurance (options include but are not limited to www.palcanada.com).
10. Please create, if possible, a single file including all attachments and images.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

- April 13:** Completed application proposal and supporting materials submission to DHBC by email: jonathan@downtownhalifax.ca or by mail: Jonathan Goldson, Placemaking Manager, Downtown Halifax Business Commission, 1546 Barrington Street, Suite 104, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3X7.
- May 18:** DHBC notification to applicant of acceptance or decline.
- June 1:** Project implementation including final design, permissions, implementation, and installation timeline.
- July 2:** Mid-project status report to DHBC.
- August 15:** Completion of placemaking project and notification to DHBC. Completion may happen before this date.
- September 1:** Submission of final report and receipts to DHBC.

GENERAL AND BIPOC ELIGIBILITY

The **General Grant** stream is open to professional artists and arts organizations, including but not limited to art collectives, galleries, artist-led community groups, artist teams, curators, designers, muralists, and visual artists.

The **BIPOC Grant** stream is open to professional artists and arts organizations who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour (BIPOC), including but not limited to art collectives, galleries, artist-led community groups, artist teams, curators, designers, muralists, and visual artists.

We strongly encourage applications from Black artists, Indigenous artists, artists of Colour, newcomer and refugee artists, young and emerging artists, artists located outside our geographic boundary, and BIPOC-led, BIPOC-focused, and BIPOC-serving organizations, collectives, galleries, and community groups.

For the purpose of this program:

- ‘Black’ refers to African descendant people across the diaspora including but not limited to African Canadian, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, East African, West African, Southern and Central African, Afro-Arab, Afro-Indigenous, etc.
- Considering the diversity of indigenous peoples, rather than defining ‘Indigenous’, we acknowledge and understand the term to refer to individuals that:
 - Self-identify as indigenous peoples at the individual level and are accepted by the community as their member.
 - Possess historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, as well as a strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.
 - Have distinct social, economic, or governing systems.
 - Have distinct language, culture, and beliefs.
 - Belong to non-dominant groups of society.
 - Maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.
- ‘Person of Colour’ refers to a person whose skin pigmentation is other than and especially darker than what is considered characteristic of people typically defined as white.
- ‘BIPOC-led’ refers to organizations where the majority of leadership at all levels identify as BPOC.
- ‘BIPOC-focused’ refers to organizations whose primary objective is to meaningfully support and engage BIPOC communities.

- ‘BIPOC-serving’ refers to a substantial portion of projects, programs and initiatives geared towards serving BIPOC communities.
- A ‘collective’ refers to two or more artists working together under a group name, either on a single project (ad hoc) or on an ongoing basis. For collectives of two artists, at least one must be BIPOC. For collectives of more than two artists, the majority of members must be BIPOC.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS:

Accessibility: Mural is located in a place that is viewable by the public and meets city accessibility codes.

BIPOC Relatability: Mural depicts imagery that members of BIPOC communities can appreciate, celebrate and gravitate towards. *(Required for BIPOC grant applications)*

Feasibility: Reasonable budget, timeline, and qualifications of participants.

Originality: Unique expression – the commission is for an original artwork or design.

Permanence: Uses high-quality materials that will last a minimum of one (1) year and are resistant to vandalism, weather, and ultraviolet deterioration.

Structure: Proposed material (i.e. wall, wood, window etc.) should be structural sound and not have a moisture problem.

Representation: Incorporates BIPOC-related visuals and/or stories that can be appreciated by these communities. *(Required for BIPOC grant applications).*

DESIGN CRITERIA:

- Artistic quality/excellence: strength of the artist’s concept and demonstrated technical skills and experience.
- Artistic integrity:
 - Ideas that are compelling and clearly articulated.
 - Ideas that aim to activate the city in interesting, engaging, and interactive ways.
 - Ideas that contain a consideration of the intended site, community, and the public realm.
 - Ideas that enhance the pedestrian experience and consider the experience during both the day and night.
- Must be durable and easily maintained.
- Does not advertise for a business, advocacy movement, religion, or political party. Cannot include text that advertises a specific business or product, advocacy, religious, or political message. Additionally, trademark symbols, text, and business or artist names are not permitted in any mural. One exception is the 10% up to one-square meter at the bottom of a mural where artist names as well as sponsors may be listed, including, “DHBC Gritty to Pretty Mural Grant Program.”
- No tags or acronyms are permitted in the artwork, only wording meaningful to the public at large.
- Must not include any inappropriate or controversial wording or images in the artwork.
- Must be suitable for public of all ages.
- Artists are encouraged to consider mixed media proposals.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Art professionals are responsible for all materials and equipment on site.
- Art professionals must have \$2 million (\$2,000,000) general liability insurance for the project. If you require insurance, we recommend www.palcanada.com.
- Art professionals are required to always maintain a clean and safe working environment.
- Art professionals are responsible for all required permits.
- Mural must be completed with a high-quality primer (e.g. zinger bull eye 1-2-3 or Durex Brush Coat or approved equivalent).

- Mural must be sealed with an anti-graffiti coating to prevent future tags from permanently defacing the mural.
- If the proposed location is on a Registered Heritage Building, HRM Heritage Staff must be contacted prior to submission of proposal.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

1. Applicants should demonstrate the ability to address the vision of the program.
2. All submissions will be evaluated based on the art professional's experience and qualifications; the creativity of their previous work; as well as evidence of ability to meet design criteria.
3. For BIPOC grant applications, representation and inclusion of BIPOC artists and community members in your project and/or BIPOC involvement in the decision-making process will also be evaluated.
4. The clarity of purpose behind the submission and reasons for applying.
5. The quality of the material/images supplied.
6. The ability for the project to be completed.

COPYRIGHT AND MORAL RIGHTS

Copyright including any and all designs, drawings, maquette, and final works of art shall remain the property of the artist. Moral rights remain with the artist. DHBC has permission to reproduce the images for non-profit publicity purposes. DHBC does not own any project or project assets made possible through the Mural Grant program. The applicant will retain ownership, unless arrangements are made with the other partners, i.e., the developer/property owner, HRM (if on public land), or other funders. The final image must be the same as the image submitted in the application and not changed without prior written consent and agreement from DHBC.

ACTIVITIES NOT FUNDED

- Travel and accommodation.
- Murals located outside the DHBC boundary.
- Murals that include political messages or parties or sectarian or religious facility or activity.
- Capital works, facility maintenance, and improvements.
- Parking or other infringement fines.
- Illegal graffiti.
- Projects which do not have prior written permission from the landowner/developer.
- Ongoing running costs.
- Items of equipment or clothing of a personal nature.
- Purchase and/or maintenance of vehicles such as cars, vans, minibuses, etc.
- Provision of meals and snacks.
- Social events and parties.
- Retrospective proposals, for example, installations that have already begun or where equipment has been bought or ordered.

FUNDING

Successful applications can receive up to 100% of the grant request. The exact amount depends on the project and is at the sole discretion of the selection committee. Grants awarded are usually between a few hundred dollars and up to \$10,000. Funding for larger grant requests may be considered. Grant funding is limited, and each grant is subject to a cap. Funding, of up to \$10,000, requested through this program, can be used to cover costs such as artist fee, infrastructure and equipment, collaborator or consultant fees, and support for securing permits. Other funding partners are allowed and encouraged to increase the quality and feasibility

level of the project. All other funding partners and contributing dollar amounts should be included in the budget submitted to DHBC.

GRITTY TO PRETTY JURY

Your application will be considered by DHBC's Gritty to Pretty Jury. This jury is a diverse collection of individuals from different professional backgrounds ranging from placemaking, public art and urban planning. They possess extensive expertise in managing and producing public art installations within urban environments.

PAYMENT

DHBC will issue grant money by cheque in installments. Vendor/supplier invoices will be required before grant cheques are issued. Receipts and an expense report with HST breakdown will be required within 30 days of completion of the project.

PERMISSIONS FROM THE DEVELOPER/PROPERTY OWNER

If a proposed project is located on public property, applicants must obtain written authorization from the appropriate authority (e.g., Halifax Regional Municipality, the Province of Nova Scotia, or other relevant government departments or agencies).

Projects located on private property require written consent from the property owner. Securing permissions can be a lengthy process. Applicants are strongly encouraged to initiate discussions as early as possible – ideally prior to submitting an application. As part of the evaluation process, DHBC assesses the overall feasibility of each proposal; evidence that permission discussions are underway or confirmed will be viewed favourably.

Obtaining and coordinating all required permissions is the sole responsibility of the applicant. The Downtown Halifax Business Commission (DHBC) does not secure approvals on behalf of applicants.

All applicants must complete the application form, whether applying to a DHBC pre-selected site or an artist-selected site.

- Applications for **DHBC pre-selected sites** do not require property owner approval at the time of submission.
- Applications for **artist-selected sites** should include confirmed written property owner approval where possible.
- Applications for artist-selected sites without confirmed approval may still be considered if there is clear evidence that discussions with the property owner have begun; however, proposals with confirmed approval will be prioritized.

OVER-BUDGET PROJECTS

The grant amount awarded at the time of acceptance is fixed. No additional funds will be granted to the applicant by DHBC through the Gritty to Pretty Mural Grant Program for that particular project. Expenses above and beyond the amount awarded by DHBC are the sole responsibility of the applicant or other partners, if applicable.

PROJECT RECOGNITION

A Gritty to Pretty plaque, provided by DHBC, must be visibly placed below the mural. "Downtown Halifax

Business Commission” must be recognized as a “Funding Partner through the Gritty to Pretty Mural Grant Program” when the project is referred to in print, online, or in media releases. Other funding partners, if any, will be recognized at the discretion of the project organizer/owner.

SIDEWALK ACCESS

Work zones on sidewalks generally fall into one of two categories: a walkway at least 3ft wide is maintained around the work area or the sidewalk is closed, and pedestrians are detoured to the other side of the street. If the sidewalk can stay open then the permit will cost \$125, but if it needs to be closed then it would be \$200. A request for a Streets & Services permit can be submitted to HRM via their online permitting process. For more information on this process visit the following link: <https://www.halifax.ca/home-property/building-development-permits/streets-services-permits>. If the sidewalk needs to be fully closed, you will require a Safety Plan to be provided by a third party. Absolute Traffic and Sign Solutions can provide a Safety Plan for approximately \$300.

MOVEABLE ART

You may want to consider creating your mural on plywood or other removable materials so that the mural may be moved in pieces or intact to a new location if the agreement with the building owner to host the mural has expired.

PAINTING ON VINYL

You may want to consider painting your mural on vinyl material. Vinyl can be applied to surfaces and painted on. The vinyl is durable but also removable. This is useful for buildings and locations that are interested in semi-permanent or removable murals. Vinyl can be purchased from The Printing House in Halifax. Please keep in mind that there would be separate costs associated with using vinyl material and installation.

APPLICANT FORM

Name of Applicant:

Phone:

Email:

Brief description of mural project proposed (max. 2,000 characters):

SUMMARY BUDGET

Please provide a balanced budget for the proposal, indicating how much you are requesting from this grant, and provide an itemized breakdown of how funding would be spent. Total Expenditure must equal Total Income.

Amount Requested:

Itemized Breakdown:

Total Expenditures:

PROPOSAL

In addition to the items listed on Page 1 and 2, this section must be completed, giving a full answer to each of the questions to indicate how the proposal meets the purpose of this mural program.

Site Type (Check One): DHBC Pre-Selected Site Artist-Selected Site

1. Please give a concise overview of the proposed mural, including title, theme and/or concept, along with a short statement about your current work and artistic practice. Briefly describe the proposed mural's relation to the building, the surrounding neighbourhoods and the community served by the business or agency where the mural will be painted. For BIPOC grant applicants, please expound on how BIPOC artists and community members are involved in your project and/or decision-making process (max. 3,000 characters)

2. What site/location have you chosen for the mural? Describe the wall and site where the mural will be located, including the size of the mural in relation to the actual wall size, street intersection, direction the mural will face, and public accessibility. Include photos. (max. 2,000 characters)

3. What is the current condition of the chosen site? Will renovation or repairs be required before you begin the project, e.g., cracks, leaks, concrete, wood, porous walls, etc.? (max. 2,000 characters)

7. What type of work platform will be you be using (e.g. cherry picker, scaffold, boom lift, basket crane, hydra ladder, etc.)? What experience do you have in using this equipment? Please describe the procedures used to ensure the safety of the artist and the public while painting the mural. (max. 2,000 characters)

8. Specify type of paint or other materials to be used and include technical information about the materials durability, longevity, and toxicity. (max. 2,000 characters)

9. **MURAL LIGHTING** – Murals are significantly enhanced when professionally lit and visible at night. Applicants may request up to \$2,500 in additional funding to support lighting infrastructure directly related to the mural. The amount awarded will depend on the scope and feasibility of the project and is at the sole discretion of the selection committee.

Lighting proposals must be designed to enhance and illuminate the mural itself, rather than to highlight adjacent businesses or tenants. Written permission from the building owner is required for the installation and ongoing maintenance of all lighting components.

While the lighting component is supplementary, applications that incorporate a thoughtful lighting plan may receive additional consideration during the evaluation process. Approval of mural funding does not guarantee approval of lighting funding; the lighting component may or may not be awarded alongside a successful mural application.

Total dollar amount requested for lighting (including HST breakdown):

Lighting budget breakdown (including confirmed funding partners, professional services, hardware, installation and indicate placement of lighting on building/mural).

I hereby confirm that the information in this application is true and correct, and I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to inform the Downtown Halifax Business Commission immediately of any changes that could affect the interpretation or context of the application.

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

PROPERTY OWNER APPROVAL FORM

Please do not fill out this form if you have chosen a DHBC pre-selected site.

Name of Artist Applicant:

Address of Proposed Mural Site:

Name of Property Owner:

Property Owner Phone:

Property Owner Email:

I, (name): _____ acknowledge that I am the owner, or
owner's authorized representative of the property located at (address): _____ .

I authorize (artist's name): _____ to erect a Mural on my property. I
acknowledge that I have viewed the mural design and approve all aspects of the proposed project.

I authorize the installment of lighting hardware if funding for a lighting component is awarded by the selection committee.

I understand that, if necessary, I am responsible for ongoing maintenance or repairs for all aspects of the mural installation for one year after its completion.

Signature of owner or authorized representative of the property:

Date: