



GRITTY TO PRETTY PLACEMAKING PROGRAM

OPEN 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 Open Grant provides financial support for projects that enhance and beautify Downtown Halifax, delivering aesthetic, artistic, and/or interactive benefits to the area. Designed to support high-impact initiatives, the grant encourages the activation of underutilized or overlooked spaces, streetscape enhancements, and creative placemaking efforts. Funded projects must make a meaningful contribution to the pedestrian experience and create a positive impact for visitors, businesses, and the broader community.

In alignment with DHBC's commitment to equity and inclusion, dedicated funding is available through the BIPOC Open Grant stream to support artists, designers, collectives, 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 seeks to address these inequities by expanding access to funding opportunities, increasing participation in placemaking initiatives, and amplifying diverse voices within Downtown Halifax's streetscape.

As part of the program's broader intent to add colour, vibrancy, and energy to the Downtown core, priority will be given to proposals that are playful, engaging, and thoughtfully incorporate elements of surprise and unexpectedness within the urban environment.

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. **Project Description** – Include comprehensive descriptions, details, and logistics of the proposed project.
3. **Visual Representation** – Include coloured sketches/renderings of proposed project demonstrating quality and detail in design plans.
4. **Budget** – Submit a detailed budget for the project.
5. **Schedule** – Include a schedule for proposed work, including a start and end date and detail on all key stages, including development, implementation, and delivery.
6. **Property Owner Agreement Form** – Complete and sign the property owner agreement form attached to this document.
7. **Site Photos** – Provide photos of proposed project site and physical surroundings.
8. **Insurance** – Provide proof of \$2 million (\$2,000,000) general liability insurance (options include but are not limited to www.palcanada.com).

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 12:** 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 BIPOC.
- ‘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.

THE SUBMISSION MUST ALSO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS BELOW:

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

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

Effectiveness: The installation is visually appealing, eye-catching, and conveys the intended artistic message.

Engagement: The installation provides an interactive experience – visually, hands-on, or through motion.

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

Originality: Unique expression – original artwork or design is preferred.

Permanence: Uses high-quality materials that will last the minimum time that the artist specifies, and are resistant to vandalism, weather, and ultraviolet deterioration.

Structure: Proposed project area should be structurally sound and safe for public interaction.

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 (if applicable) 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 on the installation. One exception is the 10% up to one-square meter at the bottom of a project where artist names as well as sponsors may be listed, including, “DHBC Gritty to Pretty Open Grant Program.”
- No tags or acronyms are permitted on the project, only wording meaningful to the public at large.
- Must not include any inappropriate or controversial wording or images on the installation.
- Must be suitable for public of all ages.
- Artists are encouraged to consider mixed media proposals.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Grant recipients are responsible for all materials and equipment on site.
- Grant recipients may require \$2 million (\$2,000,000) general liability insurance, depending on the project.
- Grant recipients are required to always maintain a clean and safe working environment.
- Grant recipients are responsible for all required permits.
- If the proposed location is on a Registered Heritage Building, HRM Heritage Staff must be contacted prior to submission of proposal.

- Grant recipients are responsible for ongoing maintenance of the project to maintain the original artistic standards, the original permit standards, as well as maintaining a structurally sound and safe area.
- Grant recipients are responsible to produce the project as described in the application and must not alter the project without written consent and agreement from DHBC.

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 materials/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 grant recipient. Moral rights remain with the grant recipient. DHBC has permission to reproduce images of the installation for non-profit publicity purposes. DHBC does not own any project or project assets made possible through the Open Grant program. The grant recipient will retain ownership, unless arrangements are made with other partners, e.g., developer/property owner, HRM (if on public land), or other funders.

The final installation must be the same as the concept submitted in the application and not changed without prior written consent and agreement of DHBC.

ACTIVITIES NOT FUNDED

- Travel and accommodation.
- Projects outside of the DHBC boundary.
- Projects 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 activities.
- Projects that do not have prior written permission from the landowner/developer.
- Ongoing running costs.
- Items of equipment or clothing of a personal nature.
- Purchased and/or maintenance of vehicles, such as cars, vans, minibuses, etc.
- Provision of meals and snacks.
- Social events and parties.
- Retrospective proposals, e.g., installations that have already begun or where equipment has been bought or ordered.

FUNDING

Grant funding is limited, and each grant is subject to a maximum amount. 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. Funding can be used to cover costs such as artist fees,

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 the grant money in installments by cheque. 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.

OPEN GRANT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. If the project has more than one artist, does everyone have to identify as BIPOC?**
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.
- 2. My project is in the planning stages, how detailed does my application/proposal need to be?**
Provide as much detail as possible. The selection committee will need enough information and supporting material to make an informed decision. This may include, but is not limited to design plans, sketches/renderings, photos, examples from other cities, timelines, full budget, detailed descriptions, letters of support, etc.
- 3. Can I apply to paint or make other improvements to the façade of a building?**
No, unless the improvements include creative and artistic elements. The Open Grant is intended to beautify Downtown Halifax and provide aesthetic, artistic, and/or interactive benefits to the area, its visitors, the businesses, and the community. For examples of the types of projects that would be accepted, please see question #11. For façade lighting projects, please refer to the Façade Lighting Grant application form, or for mural projects, please refer to the Mural Grant application form. Both application forms can be found at: www.downtownhalifax.ca/grittytopretty.
- 4. What kind of permissions would I need – other than from the developer/property owner?**
If the project is located on public property, permissions will be required by either the Halifax Regional Municipality and/or the provincial government, or other organizations. Please be aware that this can be a lengthy process. It is suggested that you start the permission process as soon as possible, even before grant acceptance notification. It is not DHBC's responsibility to acquire or coordinate permissions.
- 5. Can I add other funding partners?**
Yes, other funding partners are allowed and encouraged in order 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.
- 6. Do I need insurance for my proposed project?**
It would depend on the project. Insurance is the sole responsibility of the project organizer/owner. DHBC is not responsible for acquiring or paying for insurance or being named in the insurance policy. If you require insurance, we recommend www.palcanada.com.
- 7. How much can I receive in grant money?**
Successful applications can receive up to 100% of the grant request. The exact amount depends on the project and is at the discretion of the selection committee. Grants awarded are usually from a few hundred dollars up to \$10,000. Funding for larger grant requests may be considered. Grant funding is limited, and each grant is subjected to a maximum.
- 8. How will the grant funding be issued?**
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.

9. What if my project goes over budget?

The grant amount awarded at the time of acceptance is fixed. No additional funds will be granted to the applicant by DHBC through the Open Grant within the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Expenses above and beyond the amount awarded by DHBC are the sole responsibility of the applicant or other partners, if applicable.

10. Who owns the project once it is complete?

DHBC does not own any project or project assets made possible through the Open Grant program. The applicant will retain ownership, unless arrangements are made with the other partners, e.g., the developer/property owner, HRM (if on public land), or other funders. Ongoing maintenance or repairs for all aspects of the installation will be the responsibility of the applicant.

11. Who needs to be recognized once the project is complete?

A Gritty to Pretty plaque, provided by DHBC, must be visibly placed on or near the installation. "Downtown Halifax Business Commission" must be recognized as a "Funding Partner through the Gritty to Pretty Open Grant Program" when the project is referred to in print, online, or in the media releases. Other funding partners, if any, will be recognized at the discretion of the project organizer/owner.

12. Can I see examples of past projects?

Yes. Visit www.downtownhalifax.ca/grittytopretty to see examples.

13. What about 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.

APPLICATION FORM SECTION 1 – CONTACT INFORMATION

Submission Date:

Project Name:

Project Organizer or Organization Name:

Project Organizer Main Contact Name:

Contact Phone:

Contact Email:

SECTION 2 – PROJECT OVERVIEW

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

Description of project, including relevant history. For BIPOC grant applicants, describe how BIPOC artists and community members are involved in your project and/or decision-making (max. 3,000 characters):

Project location/venue(s):

SECTION 3 – GRANT REQUEST DETAILS

Total dollar amount requested (including HST breakdown):

Project budget, including confirmed funding/partners. (max. 2,000 characters)

Project Effectiveness:

- a. Describe the conditions of the site and why it requires improvement. Include site photo. (max. 2,000 characters)

- b. Describe how the project will enhance the proposed site. Include a sketch or rendering of the proposed project. (max. 2,000 characters)

Project Engagement:

- a. Describe how, if at all, the project will be interactive for/used by the public. (max. 2,000 characters)

- b. Describe how the neighbouring businesses are anticipated to participate in the project. (max. 2,000 characters)

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 Project 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 public art installation on my
property. I acknowledge that I have viewed the installation's 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
installation for one year after its completion.

Signature of owner or authorized representative of the property:

Date: