



Caring People ♦ Quality Programs ♦ Exceptional Service

MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Brian Phillips, Assistant City Manager
Date: January 31, 2025
Subject: FY 2025/26 COTA Funding Recommendations

The Commission on the Arts (COTA) has prepared its FY 2025/26 funding recommendations. The City Council authorized COTA to allocate \$252,978 for the next fiscal year. This is an increase of \$12,047 (5%) increase from the budgeted amount for the current FY 2024/25 fiscal year.

Of the \$252,978 authorized by City Council, COTA has recommended allocating \$243,416 directly to agencies for FY 2025/26 annual grants and reserving \$9,562 for spring and fall special project grants.

COTA received annual grant applications from 22 agencies for FY 2025/26. This is an increase from 21 agencies receiving awards in FY 2024/25. New organizations to the process were Kids' Co'Motion (a previous COTA agency that did not seek funds in FY 2024/25) and Worldly Goods. One organization that requested funds in FY 2024/25 did not apply for FY 2025/26 (Friends of Roosevelt Park).

The following pages contain the individual agency recommendations for FY 2025/26, and brief descriptions of their activities.

2025 - 26 COTA Annual Grant Recommendations

	Organization	24-25 Award	25-26 Amount Requested	FINAL REC. AMOUNT
	ACTORS	\$ 19,300	\$ 25,000	\$ 20,200
	AIOFA	\$ 9,260	\$ 9,900	\$ 8,880
	Ames Chamber Artists	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000
	Ames Youth Choir	\$ 15,200	\$ 16,400	\$ 14,940
	Ames Choral Society	\$ 3,950	\$ 4,000	\$ 3,980
	Ames Community Arts Council	\$ 12,900	\$ 14,000	\$ 13,200
	Ames Chapter of Des Moines Metro Opera Guild	\$ 1,450	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
	Ames Desi Drama Association	\$ 4,800	\$ 6,000	\$ 5,260
	Central Iowa Symphony	\$ 13,900	\$ 15,000	\$ 14,000
	Creative Artists' Studios of Ames	\$ 4,800	\$ 5,016	\$ 4,500
	Dancercenter Dance Company Foundation	\$ 3,650	\$ 8,000	\$ 5,740
	Friends of Ames Strings	\$ 3,950	\$ 7,000	\$ 5,420
	Friends of Roosevelt Park	\$ 1,160	\$ -	
	Good Company	\$ 2,850	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,100
	India Cultural Association	\$ 9,600	\$ 12,000	\$ 8,000
	Iowa Youth Ballet	\$ 4,200	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,660
	KHOI	\$ 7,800	\$ 9,800	\$ 8,400
	Kids' Co'Motion	\$ -	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000
	Octagon Center for the Arts	\$ 46,100	\$ 50,000	\$ 44,600
	Senior Variety Show	\$ 4,900	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,900
	Story Theater Company	\$ 39,516	\$ 49,000	\$ 41,136
	Town & Gown	\$ 17,730	\$ 18,500	\$ 17,600
	Worldly Goods	\$ -	\$ 15,000	\$ 4,400
	AGENCY SUBTOTAL	\$ 233,016	\$ 288,616	\$ 243,416
	SPEC. PROJ. GRANT RESERVE	\$ 7,915	\$ -	\$ 9,562
	Total Requested	\$ 240,931	\$ 288,616	\$ 252,978

COTA 2025-26 Paragraphs

ACTORS, INC. - \$20,200

The Ames Community Theater (ACTORS) produces up to five main stage shows each year that are suitable for a diverse community. Community members are invited and encouraged to participate in a variety of theater activities such as performers, technicians, musicians, artists, and/or audience. All positions at ACTORS are staffed with volunteers. The income from each show is applied to the cost of the production, including a prorated portion of the overhead of the building. COTA funding supplements the costs of ACTORS' main stage productions each season, providing affordable, live entertainment for the people of Ames.

Ames International Orchestra Festival Association, Inc. (AIOFA) - \$8,880

The purpose of AIOFA is to educate and foster awareness of the value of classical music by bringing outstanding international and American symphony orchestras to Ames as part of the Performing Arts Series at Stephens Auditorium. AIOFA provides financial support and promotes these programs in an effort to reach audiences of all ages. COTA funding is used to underwrite artists' fees, outreach activities, and special discounts for students, and those who might never have attended a classical music concert.

Ames Chamber Artists - \$6,000

The Ames Chamber Artists (ACA) is an auditioned choir for men and women in central Iowa. ACA was organized to provide excellent choral performances of many styles of music to diverse audiences in Ames and the surrounding area. ACA performs at least two concerts per season, often with multiple performances of each program. Collaboration with other musicians expands the types of music performed, as well as the number of performances offered to the community. COTA funds allow ACA to promote lifelong choral singing opportunities for the community as well as reaching more potential audience members of all ages. ACA reaches youth audiences through performances with school choirs and children's choirs.

Ames Youth Choir - \$14,940

The Ames Youth Choir (formerly Ames Children's Choirs) (AYC) promotes musical excellence and joyful singing experiences with and among the youth of Ames and central Iowa. AYC is an inclusive environment for all learners. COTA funding enables AYC to guide young singers toward a life enriched by choral music, as well as serving the community through performance opportunities. COTA funding will also allow AYC to manage production costs for rehearsal and performance spaces. The coming season will see a variety of activities, community engagements, and development of collaborations.

Ames Choral Society - \$3,980

The Ames Choral Society (ACS) is a mixed chorus of singers (high school age and older) that provides all interested Ames residents with an opportunity to sing with a community chorus. ACS

performances include diverse, high-quality secular and sacred choral works. COTA funding allows ACS to acquire music, and to hire additional instrumentalists and solo vocalists. The funds also help ACS keep dues and tickets affordable and to assist with the costs for publicity and a web presence. ACS benefits Ames by providing a community chorus open to all interested singers in the Ames and central Iowa area without the need for auditioning. Its performances provide a variety of musical opportunities for the community (singers and audiences) to enjoy throughout the year.

Ames Community Arts Council - \$13,200

The Ames Community Arts Council (ACAC) is dedicated to celebrating the arts in Ames, serving local artists, art/cultural organizations and businesses, and Ames residents. ACAC is committed to building a strong sense of community, encouraging participation in the arts, and helping artists succeed. The funds granted by COTA will be used to help fund grants requested by members. This includes, but is not limited to, the Fall Studio Tour, independent murals created around the City of Ames, and Arts in Education.

Ames Chapter of the Des Moines Metro Opera Guild - \$1,500

The Ames Chapter of the Des Moines Metro Opera Guild has contributed to arts and culture in Ames for decades. It strives to promote opera in the Ames community for all ages. COTA funds will be used to assist Ames audience members with travel to Des Moines for the 2025 Opera Festival. This assistance helps those who want to attend but have no reliable way to get to the center.

Ames Desi Drama Association (ADDA) - \$5,260

The Ames Desi Drama Association's (ADDA) purpose is to enrich the cultural tapestry of Ames and its neighboring communities by offering high-quality, family-friendly Indian theater that is easily accessible to all. COTA funds will primarily support play production endeavors, including subtitle equipment and preparation. ADDA will produce at least one full play in 2025, which will be open to all who wish to attend.

Central Iowa Symphony - \$14,000

The Central Iowa Symphony is a community orchestra, united by a love of music and dedication to the art of orchestral performance, whose collective goal is to foster quality performances, offer satisfying musical experiences, and nurture educational and cultural growth in central Iowa. COTA funds will be used to assist in performing four concerts, plus the free August Bandshell Park pops concert.

Creative Artists' Studios of Ames - \$4,500

Creative Artists' Studios of Ames (CASA) provides space for artists to work, learn, and share their expertise with the public. The organization has nearly 40 artist-members, most of whom would not otherwise have studio space. CASA has recently added space that it is equipping as a Fiber Arts

Node and Origami Center. COTA funding will help to cover the additional expenses resulting from this new space in its inaugural year.

Dancer Dance Company Foundation - \$5,740

The Dancer Dance Company Foundation (DDCF) is a nonprofit charitable arts organization dedicated to providing volunteer and financial support for the education, development, and advancement of dancers while enriching the community through the art of dance. DDCF hosts the annual Dancer Dance Showcase with no attendance fee for all members of the Ames community. It features dancers performing in the genres of ballet, tap, contemporary, jazz, and musical theatre. COTA funding would be used to pay for expenses incurred from both the rental of the Ames City Auditorium for the Dancer Dancer Showcase and the Preshow to prepare for Showcase.

Friends of Ames Strings - \$5,420

Friends of Ames Strings (FOAS) is a local, 100% volunteer run, nonprofit with a mission to support local youth strings players and orchestra programs. It offers many education and performance opportunities throughout the year, including its Summer String Workshop. The Summer String Workshop has been an annual event since 1989 and currently serves 80 students. COTA funding will be used to support the FOAS 2025 Summer String Workshop, including partially covering the cost of staff honorariums including two conductors and six coaches, and any other workshop associated expenses.

Good Company - \$3,100

Good Company (GC), a women's choral ensemble founded in 1993, is a premier women's ensemble of Iowa. Good Company brings together women of all ages and walks of life to share the beauty of choral music with warmth, clarity of expression and verve. GC singers perform music in numerous languages and focus on music written by female composers. GC reaches out to all segments of the Ames community and the surrounding areas through participation and performance. GC requires a membership fee to participate, and COTA funds are used, in part, to help lower or maintain the current membership fee. GC seeks to educate and entertain audiences with rich variety of music. COTA funds allow the purchase of music rights, provide honoraria to guest instrumentalists, and support marketing outreach focused on building its audience and attracting new members. GC is proud to have served the Ames community for more than 30 years.

India Cultural Association - \$8,000

India Cultural Association (ICA) of Central Iowa is an Ames non-profit organization that aims to introduce and promote celebration of the cultural and secular heritage of India. ICA also works to enhance friendship and understanding with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Each year ICA sponsors several cultural events to promote a better understanding of Indian art, music, and culture among the people of Ames and Central Iowa. ICA events include, but are not limited to, celebrations of Indian art, music, and festivals accessible to all ages. COTA grant funds will be used to assist in funding dance, music, theater, and other performing arts.

Iowa Youth Ballet - \$4,660

Iowa Youth Ballet (IYB) offers a world-class dance education and professional-like performance opportunities to local dancers of all ages across central Iowa's communities. The largest performance for IYB is the 43rd annual Nutcracker Ballet at Stephens Auditorium. IYB will involve approximately 200 Central Iowa dancers rehearsing weekly to present the IYB's interpretation of this holiday celebration. The IYB's instructors are responsible for casting the ballet; then teaching choreography, rehearsing, staging, and cleaning; and supporting all dancers performing in the Nutcracker. The funds received from COTA will directly pay for instructors' and backstage crews' salaries, studio rental, prop and costumes repair and replacement, cleaning, and the promotion of professional dancers required for the principal parts the performance.

KHOI - \$8,400

KHOI is an Ames-based, noncommercial, volunteer-driven, community radio station. The mission of the station is to build community through grassroots communication, inform, and promote the arts in central Iowa through on-air broadcasts, internet, and live performances. The organization provides local and area residents access to local and national news, community events, musical and verbal arts, and opportunities to learn and participate in radio programming and production. KHOI encourages volunteer coordination and radio station management. KHOI will use COTA funds to support in-person events that highlight local talent, culture, and diversity, held at the KHOI's Studio C or remote locations such as Stephens Auditorium. These supported events will provide training and support for local people to access broadcast media as hosts and producers and generate increased exposure and funds for KHOI.

Kids' Co'Motion - \$3,000

Kids' Co'Motion (KCM), founded in 1989, offers a 3-week dance performance workshop designed to introduce and train children ages 8-18 in the Ames area in the art of creating and producing modern dance. Participants are trained in dance techniques, improvisations, and choreography. The program leads to a fully-produced show at the Ames City Auditorium. KCM works with all levels of experience and develops future leaders. In addition to acquiring dance skills, participants learn discipline and collaboration. COTA funding supports bringing in outside instructors and securing rehearsal and performance spaces to showcase the talent.

Octagon Center for the Arts - \$44,600

The Octagon Center for the Arts (Octagon) is a non-profit community arts organization that has offered art exhibits and quality education programs for children and adults since 1966. Octagon also holds special events and has a retail art shop promoting local artisans. The Octagon partners with ACCESS, ISU, YSS, Ames Public Library, local schools, and many other groups. COTA funds enable the organization to reach over 20,000 people a year in some form of art experience and expression through providing annual operational support workshops, supplies, marketing, shop artists, art festivals, and more.

Senior Variety Show - \$4,900

The Senior Variety Show is a senior-driven opportunity for entertainment and involvement that encourages, connects, and claims Ames as a place where successful aging takes place through the performing arts. In addition to encouraging senior talents in the performing arts, the Senior Variety Show inspires the community with the joy of aging through an uplifting and enjoyable afternoon and evening of entertainment. These shows have raised over \$200,000 for senior community projects. COTA funding would be utilized for general expenses involved in bringing this show to the public, including advertising, tech support, auditorium rental, and related expenses.

Story Theater Company - \$41,136

Story Theater Company's mission is to offer quality theatrical opportunities for area children and provide them with positive role models who teach the fundamentals of theater in a welcoming environment that encourages self-confidence, responsibility, teamwork, and inclusion of all. COTA funding helps to keep registration fees affordable, making it possible for families and children to engage with theatrical art opportunities in the Ames community. Additionally, COTA funds support annual operational expenses, including rehearsal and performance space rentals, supplies, utilities, and other associated organizational expenses.

Ames Town and Gown Chamber Music Association - \$17,600

Ames Town and Gown Chamber Music Association has a storied 75-year tenure in the Ames community. Its mission is to enrich the quality of life in central Iowa by presenting world-famous musical ensembles as well as brilliant emerging artists in intimate concert settings. By doing so, it aims to share the passion and love for chamber music with people of all ages and interests through educational outreach activities. COTA grant funding would support concert hall rental, printing costs, publicity, artists' fees, and many other necessary components to ensure the quality and diversity of the programs.

Worldly Goods - \$4,400

Worldly Goods is a non-profit with a storefront on Main Street in downtown Ames that organizes community events to highlight cultural experiences and products from around the world. Worldly Goods also hosts artist talks and demonstrations, aiming to bring arts experiences from various cultural backgrounds to the Ames community. COTA funding supports bringing diverse artists to the community and hosting events celebrating various cultures.