

2026 TORONTO ARTS FOUNDATION AWARDS ARTS FOR YOUTH AWARD DESCRIPTION & ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

Nomination Deadline: November 26, 2025

The Toronto Arts Foundation Awards are designed to heighten public awareness of the arts in Toronto by recognizing artistic excellence and achievement. The awards celebrate artists, cultural leaders and organizations whose work contributes to the artistic and cultural life of Toronto.

The Toronto Arts Foundation Awards are presented in recognition of a body of creative accomplishment rather than for specific works or achievements. The awards are generously funded by individuals and sponsors. Toronto Arts Foundation presents these awards annually at a variety of events.

Award Description

The Toronto Arts Foundation **Breakthrough Artist Award** is a \$10,000 cash prize, with finalists receiving \$2,000. The award celebrates the accomplishments and future potential of an emerging Toronto artist working in any discipline, and is intended to support the development or completion of new work. Established in 2006 as the Emerging Artist Award, it was renamed the Breakthrough Artist Award in 2021 and the age restriction for finalists was removed. The award is supported by The Azrieli Foundation. The finalist awards were established in 2014. The Breakthrough Artist Award is presented every year at the Mayor's Arts Lunch.

Basic Eligibility Requirements

Individuals:

- must have demonstrated an ongoing association with Toronto;
- must have contributed significantly to the arts and culture of Toronto;
- must be living at time of selection;
- may not nominate themselves for the award;
- are not eligible to nominate or receive Toronto Arts Foundation Awards while serving as an executive board member or staff of Toronto Arts Foundation or Toronto Arts Council.
- must be an artist in the early stages of their professional career who has produced a small body of work and achieved some local recognition and/or has limited public exhibition experience
- should have between 2 and 7 years of independent arts practice in their nominated discipline
- must have completed training (not necessarily at a formal educational institution) in their discipline

- undergraduate and college students are not eligible to apply.

With the exception of the Newcomer Artist Award, no person or organization may be selected for more than one Toronto Arts Foundation Award within any given year, and no person or organization may receive the same Toronto Arts Foundation Award twice. This does not preclude a recipient from being considered for a different Toronto Arts Foundation award in the future.

Nominations for Multiple Awards

Please note that nominees are not eligible to be nominated for more than one award in a given year. If the same individual or organization is nominated for multiple awards, the nomination that was submitted first chronologically will be the one considered. All other nominations will be considered ineligible and removed from the submissions.

Individuals or Organizations with Multiple Nominations for the Same Award

Due to the volume of nominations, Toronto Arts Foundation is no longer accepting multiple nominations of the same individual or organization for each award. We encourage you to reach out directly to the artist or organization you would like to nominate to ensure they are aware of your submission on their behalf. The nomination that was submitted first chronologically will be the one considered for the given award. All other nominations will be considered ineligible and removed from the submissions.

How to Nominate

To nominate an individual, a collective or organization for the Breakthrough Artist Award you must:

- Visit the [Toronto Arts Foundation Nomination Portal](#)
- register an account on Toronto Arts Foundation's Nomination Portal or sign into your existing account
- submit the nomination online, complete with supporting material.

Notes:

Along with the name of the individual or organization you are nominating, the Nomination Portal will ask for a biography, a nomination rationale, and accompanying support material in the form of visual, audio or text-based attachments.

Nominators can save their application at any time before submission by clicking 'Save Draft.' Nominators can log-in and out of Toronto Arts Foundation's Nomination Portal as many times as needed before clicking 'Submit.'

*Please ensure you are on/ register through **Toronto Arts Foundation's** Nomination Portal and not Toronto Arts Council's 'TAC Grants Online.'

Award Selection Process: Policies and Procedures

Appointment of Awards Assessors

An award panel of up to ten assessors selected by the Award Manager will review nominations and recommend a shortlist and a recipient for final approval by Toronto Arts Foundation's Board of Directors. Participants in each panel include practitioners of the arts, organizers, programmers, producers, curators, critics, commentators and lay specialists. Panelists must have recognized expertise, credibility, and experience along with a sense of history and perspective.

The final list of assessors is made public in the form of an announcement distributed to media and Foundation stakeholders and posted on the Foundation's website.

Details of Nomination and Selection Process

Members of the arts community and public are invited to nominate individuals and arts organizations to be considered by the assessors. Nominations must be submitted through Toronto Arts Foundation's Nomination Portal. Where appropriate, nominations may include accompanying support material in the form of visual, audio or text-based attachments. Award assessors are precluded from participating in the nominating process.

The assessors will be informed of Toronto Arts Foundation's criteria and the unique aspects of each award.

In addition to specific requirements for each award, deliberations will be guided by the following assessment criteria:

- artistic strength and achievement
- strength of the candidate's artistic goals and objectives
- contribution to the development of arts and culture in Toronto
- the nominee's overall public impact including community engagement and animation

The assessors endeavor to reach unanimous decisions in its selection process. In the event that unanimity is not achieved, a decision may be reached by majority vote. All deliberations are strictly confidential.

Following deliberations, the assessors will recommend a shortlist and recipient for each award. The shortlist will be made public in advance of the official awards presentation. The recipient will be announced the day of the official awards presentation event.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to a situation in which private interests or personal considerations may affect an award assessor's judgment in the assessment process.

Specifically, a conflict of interest exists where an assessor has a financial interest in

the success or failure of a candidate; has a personal interest in a specific candidate or has any other reason which makes them unable to objectively evaluate the candidate.

If in the course of the assessment deliberations, any assessor has a conflict of interest, that person is expected to declare such conflict and withdraw from the selection/voting process.

Toronto Arts Foundation reserves the right to amend these Policies and Procedures, without notice to any party.

For question about the awards and eligibility please contact:

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