

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 537**Are you a 501(c)3 organization in good standing with the IRS?**

Yes

According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?

Hartford

Where will your project be performed or exhibited?

Hartford

Will this activity occur after May 1, 2026 ?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

Yes

Enter your Report Code

429120-Roberts2022

Organization Name

Out Film CT, Inc.

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

222990670

Principal Contact Name

Jennifer Kaplan

Title

Director of Marketing and Operations

Emailjenkap12@gmail.com**Phone**

(617) 997-6511

Address

PO Box 231191
Hartford, Connecticut 06123
United States
[Map It](#)

Website<https://www.outfilmct.org>

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 537**Amount requested this application**

\$7,500.00

What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

Out Film CT's mission is to entertain, educate and promote community through the exhibition of LGBTQ+ film. Our vision is to provide an essential forum for original, creative voices, opinions and viewpoints, which are often not available in the mainstream media, particularly in the greater Hartford area. We provide an important outlet for the art of independent film, with the hope of fostering diversity, understanding and acceptance which can inspire positive change for the LGBTQ+ community.

Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

AlteRnaTiveS (as it was originally known) was founded in 1987 by Bill Mann and a small group of volunteers as a gay and lesbian cultural organization in Hartford. The organization initially included theater, film, a gay history project and a literary journal. The festival struggled to build an audience in the early years, but leadership changes reinvigorated the festival, with an increased focus on publicity.

In 2007, the name of the organization was officially changed to "Out Film CT" to better reflect the focus on film events, and the name of the festival was also changed to the Connecticut "LGBTQ" Film Festival to capture the broad inclusiveness of the organization.

In the past 15 years, the festival has grown in prominence and has increased its international impact by hosting several U.S., international and world premieres, with filmmakers attending from across Europe and South America. The festival expanded from its home at Cinestudio theater in Hartford to become a multi-venue event with screenings at RAW, the CT Science Center and the Wadsworth Museum. In 2020, the pandemic forced the festival to go "hybrid" with the bulk of the film screenings and filmmaker Q&As offered online. The festival has since returned to in-person screenings, but continues to offer virtual screenings as well.

Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.

The audience of the film festival is comprised of 55% gay men, 35% lesbians, 5% transgender and 5% heterosexual allies. The vast majority of attendees are 35-64 years of age; however, we have some under 30 and some above 65 as well. Attendees come from all over CT with the majority coming from the Greater Hartford area. [10% Hartford, 41% Greater Hartford, 23% other parts of CT, and 26% out of state]

Describe your organization's governance.

There are a total of five board members including Pres., VP, Treasurer, Secretary and Board Member-at-Large. Board meetings are scheduled on an as-needed basis. A volunteer committee meets weekly via Zoom to discuss all festival business including the review of films which have been assigned each week. The Secretary sends the minutes out to the entire committee. The leadership has remained the same for the past three years, and Shane Engstrom has been the Festival Director since 2008.

Ethnicity/Race + %

20% Hispanic

Ethnicity/Race + %

20% Female

Ethnicity/Race + %

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 537

60% caucasian male

Ethnicity/Race + %

0

Ethnicity/Race + %

0

Ethnicity/Race + %

0

What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?

100%

Project Name

Connecticut Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Film Festival

Is this project related to the Visual Arts?

Yes

Will the artists associated with this project be financially compensated?

Yes

Project Description

Out Film CT screens LGBTQ films from all over the world that are not typically shown in mainstream theaters or available through sources like Netflix, Hulu, etc. We provide an essential forum for original, creative voices and viewpoints. We present the film festival as a community service in general and enhance the festival by bringing in visiting artists who highlight issues reflected in their films and answer attendees' questions about the filmmaking process.

The organization was founded 39 years ago in 1987, with the first film festival held in 1988. Throughout its history, the festival has increased in number of days, films shown, and improved processes for screening films (including virtual programming) and enriching the festival with visiting artists.

Our 9-day festival includes feature-length fiction, documentary and short films from all over. Our festival draws over 1,800 people from all over Connecticut, Western MA and NY State (and beyond with virtual screenings).

Total estimated project budget

\$97,500.00

Project start/opening

06/12/2026

Project end/closing

06/20/2026

Project venue

Primarily at Cinestudio on the campus of Trinity College

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 537

Project town

Primarily Hartford, CT

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

All screenings are open to the public. Regular admission is \$13 regular, \$11 students/seniors. Opening and Closing nights (which include receptions, DJs and dancing) are \$30 & \$25. Passes are available at discounted rates, and all student tickets are free. Comp tickets are available to sponsors.

Attendance is estimated at 1,800+ at our in-person and online screenings. Over the 9-day festival, we'll host ~12 in-person programs and ~17 virtual programs extending an additional week.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

A full-color brochure with all the screenings listed is mailed to our mailing list and distributed to area LGBTQ organizations and businesses (approx. 7,500) prior to the festival.

Our primary means of promoting the festival is through social media outreach via our festival social media subcommittee promoting festival events through TikTok, Instagram and Facebook. Media firm BuzzFeed manages our paid online marketing campaigns & coordinates free media outreach to print, radio and TV outlets.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

We would like to use Roberts Funding to bring in visiting artists at our opening and closing night films and throughout the festival to encourage in-person attendance and help enrich the film-going experience for our attendees. We also would like to utilize some of the funds to implement specific suggestions from IronBloom Partners, our marketing research firm, to help us locate and target new audiences in the state of CT.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

In the attached sponsor flyer, you can see the benefits listed for both the Title Sponsor (\$10,000) and Diamond Sponsor (\$5,000).

What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?

Artistic excellence requires some or all of the following: mastery of skills and techniques, professional approaches to process and presentation, and/or communication of unique vision or perspective.

For Out Film CT, artistic excellence is the ability of a filmmaker to transport and immerse audience members in a world that they may not be familiar with. The best films have the ability to combine visually captivating cinematography, realistic acting, and intriguing storytelling that illuminate and celebrate the LGBTQ experience.

For a documentary, many of these same elements apply in addition to offering perspectives and insights into a subject matter in which the viewers were not aware. These films provide the opportunity for deeper understanding about history, LGBTQ culture, feminism, transgender community challenges, international issues facing the LGBTQ in other countries and more.

How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?

We apply the above definition when evaluating which films are selected for the festival. Our volunteer committee screens over 650 films annually (with a record 750 submissions in 2023), rating each film on a scale of 1 to 5. The film can be technically well done but not connect with viewers. Or the film can have an overall important message or script but be edited poorly.

There are many factors to consider when rating films. In selecting the final lineup, the committee starts with the highest rated films, and then assembles the most well-rounded program that balances film genres, subjects, and areas of interest for our very diverse audience. The film festival is also known for screening a significant number of short films. In this way, a broader

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 537

representation of international LGBTQ content is able to be presented in Connecticut.

The films we select advance our mission by allowing us to screen a depth and range of excellent films from around the world.

How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?

The community benefits by seeing films that they would not be able to see elsewhere. There are a few films that are broadcast on television or streaming services and even fewer that make it to mainstream theatres. The rest of the films would never be seen without festivals like Out Film CT. Attendees see films that reflect their own lives, which can help them feel less isolated. Our viewers also watch stories or hear perspectives they might not see anywhere else. Because of the geographical diversity of our films (from places like India, Japan, Israel, Taiwan, Russia, Australia, Spain, Mexico, Finland and Brazil), audience members benefit from increased cultural awareness and understanding from exposure to this diversity. We bring in many racially diverse films so that those in the BIPOC community know they are welcome and have a place at our film festival.

How will this project be evaluated?

All films are evaluated by the attendees with ballots that are collected after each screening, so we have a sense of what films resonated and which did not. Audience members rate each film on a five point scale (with 5 being the highest). Our goal is to have the vast majority of films to be rated 4.0 or greater, which indicates a "very good" scoring. In 2025, we had a very high in-person response rate of 95%. We met our goals for features and documentaries with an average score of 4.24 for Feature Films, and 4.71 for Documentaries, but just missed our goal for Short Films with an average score of 3.82.

We also will be emailing a survey and posting a link on our Facebook page about the film festival afterwards, asking for demographic information as well as how they heard about the festival, what their favorite parts were and what could be improved. Free tickets to next year's festival are awarded to random winners from those who complete the survey.

Cover letter

- [Roberts.pdf](#)

Board list

- [Board-List Out-Film 2026.pdf](#)

IRS 501(c)3 determination letter

- [501c3-Letter-Out-Film-CT-copy.pdf](#)

Financial statement

- [2024-990-Form.pdf](#)

Last year operational budget

- [2025-Out-Film-CT-Budget-to-Actual-FINAL.pdf](#)

Current year operational budget

- [2026-Out-Film-CT-Budget-FINAL.pdf](#)

Balance sheet

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 537

- [Out-Film-CT-Balance-Sheet-FYE2025.pdf](#)

Project budget

- [2026-Out-Film-CT-Budget-Roberts.pdf](#)

Does your organization produce an annual report?

No

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

No

Does your organization have a formal policy or organizational commitment to ensure that visual artists are financially compensated?

No

Grant Report

- [Out-Film-CT-Inc.-Grantee-Reporting-Form.pdf](#)

Other materials?

- [SPONSOR-FLYER-2026-final-.pdf](#)
- [Detailed-Event-Description.2026.pdf](#)

We so appreciate the supports of the Robert Foundation for the Arts for our LGBTQ Film Festival. It has helped us bring in artists from Europe, South America and the United States to enhance our festival immensely.

Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?

Yes

Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?

Yes