

FY26 Arts in Education (AIE) Creative Start Project Grant – Guidelines

[CLICK HERE](#) to apply for the Creative Start Project Grant

FY26 AIE Creative Start Project Grant

The Creative Start Project Grant helps fund projects that integrate the arts to support learning for preschool to 3rd grade students. This one-year grant focuses on helping students grow creatively, academically, and emotionally, with a strong emphasis on equitable access to arts education. It encourages partnerships between educators, schools, families, teaching artists, and organizations to create inclusive and culturally relevant arts experiences for students.

Want to learn more about arts integration? [Click here for a quick video explanation.](#)

Funding request amounts

- \$10,000 (*only full amounts awarded*).
- No matching funds required
- Grant amounts may vary depending on available funds and number of applications received.

Important dates

- Application opens: January 6, 2025
- Upcoming Info sessions:
 - FY26 AIE Grants Info Session #1, Jan.14 [Registration link](#)
 - FY26 AIE Grants Info Session #2, Jan.23 [Registration link](#)
- Application closes: February 13, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
- Notification of grant award: by May 9, 2025
- Grant-funded project activities: July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026
- Final report due: July 31, 2026

Is your organization eligible?

Applicants must be one of the following:

- Head Start or Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Public school, school district, or Educational Service District (ESD)
- Tribal, state, or municipal government agency
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit

Applicants must also:

- Be located in Washington State.
- Propose projects that focus on PreK to grade 3 students, families, and educators in Washington State.
- Propose projects that focus on arts integration: teaching and learning that connects an arts discipline with non-arts curriculum in a way that meets standards and learning outcomes for both.
- Propose projects that provide tuition-free learning for all participating students.
- Propose projects that provide sequential arts integration teaching and learning (not one-time events).

Who is not eligible?

- Individuals
- For-profit organizations
- Fiscally sponsored organizations
- Political or advocacy organizations
- Organizations seeking to fund projects or programs that promote religious content or observance
- Organizations based outside of Washington State

Ineligible projects:

- Materials and equipment only (however, materials and equipment can be up to 25% of your overall project budget).
- One-time events, assemblies, performances, or projects that do not include sequential learning opportunities, curriculum and related learning outcomes.
- Tuition-based projects.
- Projects that replace or fund in-school instruction already part of basic education.
- Projects focused on grades 4 & up.

Allowable Expenses

What we can fund:

Many costs that support the approved AIE projects can be covered. Common project expenses include:

- Fees for project staff:
 - Artists, teaching artists, and partnering community organizations
 - Staff time for project planning, curriculum, and resource development
 - Project management, coordination and/or in-state consultants
- Stipends for youth participation and leadership
- Fees for professional learning for educators, parents, caregivers, or community members
- Travel expenses for in-state teaching artists and consultants
- Materials, supplies, software, and technology aligned with project goals. **Material costs cannot exceed:**
 - 25% of your Grant Award Amount for Sustaining Project Grants
 - 25% of your Grant Award Amount (\$2,500) for Creative Start Project Grants
- Administrative expenses including printing costs, postage, and other administrative fees
- Fees for project related student tickets and transportation expenses
- Fees for increasing access to programming such as closed captioning, translation services, interpreters, differentiated curriculum/material development, or consultant support on these efforts

What we cannot fund:

- Materials and equipment **exceeding** 25% of your overall project budget.
- One-time events, assemblies, performances, or projects that do not include sequential learning opportunities, curriculum and related learning outcomes.
- Hospitality expenses such as food, flowers, receptions, and similar items.
- Food and beverages are allowable if they are purchased in support of learning goals outlined in project.
- Building construction, renovation, event rental equipment such as tents and other temporary structures, or other permanent capital projects.

- Stand-alone field trips, events, or assemblies not aligned with project goals.
- Travel out of the state of Washington, or fees to out-of-state contractors.

NEA Unallowable expenses:

For more information regarding National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) unallowable activities and costs for art projects, visit the [NEA Website](#).

Can organizations apply for multiple ArtsWA grants?

Due to limited funding available for Arts in Education (AIE) grants at this time, applicants can only apply for one of the following grants within the AIE Program:

- Creative Start Project Grant
- Arts in Education Sustaining Project Grant

Larger regional agencies such as Educational Service Districts, School Districts, Tribal governments, and others with different site-specific projects may be eligible to apply for multiple AIE grants. Please set up a meeting with Alexis Sarah [here](#) to see if your organization is eligible.

Applicants can apply for and receive grants from other ArtsWA programs if they support different expenses and services. See [here](#) to explore grants from other ArtsWA programs.

Required Documentation

UEI (SAM): Organizations must have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) to receive grant funds from the state. The UEI is a 12-digit alphanumeric identifier that replaced the use of DUNS numbers after April 4, 2022. Anyone with a current registration at SAM.gov now has a UEI. To view your UEI in [SAM.gov](#), log in to your registration and follow the steps outlined in [this guide](#). If you do not have a SAM.gov account, complete the steps outlined in the *Guide to Getting a Unique Entity ID* [here](#).

Federal Tax ID (EIN): An EIN is a federal tax ID number for businesses, tax-exempt organizations and other entities. You can get an EIN for free directly from the IRS in minutes. [Apply online](#).

SWV number: Organizations must have an [SWV \(Statewide Vendor\) number](#) to receive grant funds from the state. Applicants do not need an SWV number to apply but they must have a registered and up to date SWV number before they can receive funds. The SWV number registration process can take up to three weeks. If your organization has received payment from Washington State in the past, it is likely you already have an SWV number. You can check on the status of your SWV number by using the [vendor number lookup](#).

Application Components:

The online application has required sections including:

- Eligibility quiz
- Applicant information
- Conflict of interest transparency. [Read our full Conflict of Interest policy](#).
- ADA compliance verification
- Project information and narrative questions for each scoring criteria (arts integrated learning, project design, equity and access, and educator and artist support)
- **Work Sample:** Samples should be no more than three years old and may include any combination of curriculum samples, lesson plans, student work, or assessment and evaluation documentation.

- **Option 1:** A single PDF document with a maximum of (5) pages that illustrate what and how students will be learning through this project.
- **Option 2:** A single video file at a maximum of (5) minutes.

Apply in Submittable

Online application

Applicants must submit their application through the online grant platform, [Submittable](#). ArtsWA will accept applications in Submittable starting January 6, 2025, through February 13, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

Please see ArtsWA's [Submittable FAQ](#) for additional information on using this platform.

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY](#)

What happens after you apply?

Screening for eligibility: ArtsWA staff will screen your application to make sure your application meets eligibility requirements.

Panel: A panel of arts education leaders, ArtsWA Commissioners, and staff evaluate eligible grant applications. Panelists use the scoring criteria below to give a numerical score to each application. Final scores are determined by the combined average of all panelists' scores plus points added for applications that meet agency funding priorities (see below). Applicants receive a percentage of requested amount based on the final ranking score order until available funds are exhausted.

What are the criteria used to score applications?

Panelists will assign each application a score between 0-100 using the criteria and point system below. Up to 15 additional points will be added to applications that meet agency funding priorities. 115 points is the highest possible score.

1. **Arts integrated learning:** *(30 points possible)* The proposal describes arts-integrated activities that clearly connect both arts and non-arts learning goals that can be measured and celebrated.
2. **Project design:** *(30 points possible)* The proposal describes an achievable project plan demonstrated by a project timeline, key partnerships, work sample, and budget.
3. **Equity and access:** *(25 points possible)* The proposal describes strategies that aim to increase access and positive learning outcomes for a diversity of learners with a strong focus on closing the opportunity gap in early arts education.
4. **Educator and artist support:** *(15 points possible)* The proposal describes financial support, planning time, and professional development opportunities for contributing educators and artists.

Funding priorities

This grant is supported by a combination of state and federal funds (from the National Endowment for the Arts). Allotments to support Arts in Education grants are limited and subject to change each fiscal year. Due to funding limitations, ArtsWA applies priorities to ensure that funds reach a variety of organizations and geographic locations.

- All eligible organizations and projects are encouraged to apply and will be scored by a panel using the scoring criteria above. Up to 15 additional points will be allotted to applications that meet the funding priority criteria below.

- Organizations based outside of King County, City of Tacoma, and City of Olympia. *These locations include resources associated with a cultural access program.* (5 points)
- Projects serving students located in counties identified by the state as a [distressed area](#): Clallam, Jefferson, Mason, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Lewis, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Skamania, Klickitat, Yakima, Kittitas, Grant, Franklin, Garfield, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Ferry, Okanogan. (10 points)

Board Approval: Recommendations will go to the ArtsWA Board for approval by May 7th, 2025.

Notification of grant award: ArtsWA will send notifications to Arts in Education (AIE) Project Grant applicants as soon as possible after the ArtsWA Board of Commissioners meets and approves final panel scores. Applicants will receive notifications via email no later than May 9, 2025.

Additional Information:

Payments: ArtsWA will send payments after the recipient's deliverables and invoice forms are completed and approved. Grant recipients are paid in two (2) equal payments per fiscal year after Project Updates are completed and approved. Grant amounts may vary depending on available funds and number of applications received.

Documentation: Grant recipients must track expenses, keep clear records, and provide appropriate and timely documentation.

Final reports: Grant recipients must submit a final report to ArtsWA by July 31 of each fiscal year after projects have been completed.

Accessibility: Federal and state funded projects must be accessible to people with disabilities. You can use this [accessibility checklist](#) when planning your programs. You do not need to check all boxes to be eligible for funding; this is simply a worksheet and resource for your organization.

ArtsWA accepts grant applications via an online form. If you require an alternate format or assistance to access the application, please reach out to us at the contact information below or Alexis Sarah, ArtsWA Accessibility Coordinator, alexis.sarah@arts.wa.gov or at 360-228-6359.

Civil Rights: All applicants for funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) are required to certify that they are following the civil rights statutes that govern nondiscrimination in Federally assisted programs. For a FAQ on Civil Rights for applicants and to ensure your organization complies, [click here](#).

Appeals: Unsuccessful applicants can appeal in accordance with Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 30.12.036, found here: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=30-12-036>.

Contact us

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