

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

Arts and Culture Programming

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Introduction

The William Penn Foundation (WPF) has a long history of investing in efforts to create a vibrant, dynamic, and accessible arts and culture sector that positively impacts the residents of the Philadelphia region. The Foundation’s Arts and Culture program was created to expand access to diverse, inclusive, and high-quality arts and culture experiences. A full description of the Arts and Culture program, its goals, and all its objectives can be found on the Foundation’s website. This specific Request for Proposals (RFP) was created to help organizations to advance the following objective:

Provide access to arts and culture experiences that are intentionally designed to engage a community or audience.

Arts and culture programs, projects, and experiences can provide a wealth of benefits for individuals and communities. By participating in experiences and programming that are designed for them – whether performances, exhibitions, or hands-on opportunities to make art – we believe that people across the region will experience joy, beauty, and deeper appreciation for different cultures. To ensure more Philadelphians connect to arts and culture, we are supporting dynamic projects that seek to create culturally relevant and accessible ways for people across the region to engage with arts, culture, and their communities.

The Foundation recognizes there are many ways that organizations and communities can contribute to advancing this objective. A project may focus on any or multiple artistic disciplines and include a range of activities as long as those activities provide access to high-quality arts and culture experiences that center equity, inclusion, and the needs, interests, and experiences of its intended beneficiaries. Proposals may have a small geographic focus or may seek to provide programming on a citywide scale.

Regardless of the approach, all applicants should describe a compelling explanation for how their proposed work will advance the objective above. This RFP seeks project proposals that will advance this objective and make tangible improvements in the quality of life for residents of Philadelphia. The specific criteria that will be used to assess all proposals can be found on pages 8-9 of this document.

Please note: Two RFPs focused on Arts and Culture Programming are scheduled over the next 12 months. This RFP is for activities beginning February 2025 and focuses on projects or organizations that have an *established* history of creating inclusive and equitable opportunities through long-standing community relationships. The RFP that will be available in March 2025 will be for activities beginning August 2025 and will be focused on projects that *seek to increase* audience diversity more broadly/or build connections with new communities.

Why is the Foundation using a Request for Proposals to advance this objective?

The Foundation has chosen to advance this objective using a Request for Proposals for several reasons. First, we believe that stakeholders across the region have a great deal of expertise and experience that can be supported to make progress on an objective that we heard was important to communities in our region. We want to hear about the impactful projects that are underway or could get underway and need funding. Second, we want to be as transparent as possible about the opportunity for non-profit organizations in the region to secure funding for work to advance this objective. Third, we heard from applicants and grantees in the past that our grant application process was overly burdensome, had unpredictable timelines, and did not provide sufficient information about the funding availability or the criteria used in selecting grantees. Fourth, we heard that applicants wanted an opportunity to show Foundation staff their work, not just tell them about it. The RFP process, including site visits as described below, is part of our effort to address all this important feedback and to align with the Foundation's grantmaking values (as detailed on our website).

This RFP seeks project proposals that advance this objective and support arts and culture experiences that are meaningful to the region's diverse communities.

Background

Engaging with the arts—whether creating or consuming art or practicing cultural traditions—builds a sense of connection among participants or within community; reinforces cultural identities; and improves community livability and resilience.¹ But we acknowledge that these benefits are unevenly distributed to individuals and communities, especially those that have historically been under-resourced (i.e. communities of color, immigrants, people living in poverty, and members of disability communities). In response, we are particularly interested in supporting opportunities to participate in and benefit from the arts – programming that considers the priorities of these communities in their design, development, and presentation. And we believe that the artists and organizations with deep and enduring connections to these communities are best equipped to do this work. These efforts are crucial in sustaining the cultural vitality and identity of the region and should be appropriately resourced.

Community Activities

Community residents who were most involved in cultural activities were about 50% more likely to be involved in other community activities.²



¹ Rugg, G. & Novak-Leonard, J. (2021). *The Outcomes of Arts Engagement for Individuals and Communities*. NORC at the University of Chicago

² Stern M. & Seifert, S. (2001). *Culture Builds Communities Evaluation Summary Report*. Philadelphia: Penn School of Social Policy & Practice, University of Pennsylvania

Opportunity Overview

WPF aims to support projects and programs that connect more Philadelphians to high-quality arts and culture experiences, reflect the cultural diversity of the region, and contribute to its vibrancy. We are most interested in prioritizing performances, exhibitions, and other arts and culture projects in which participants see themselves and their communities and experience joy, affirmation, and a sense of belonging.

We are requesting proposals for 1-3-year projects that will increase opportunities for people across the region to engage with a range of high-quality arts and culture experiences. This funding opportunity is for activities beginning in or after February 2025 and will focus on inclusive and equitable opportunities shaped by deep and enduring community relationships. Project teams will be deeply rooted in the community they seek to serve and have a history of inclusive and community-centered practices. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of applicants.

Applicants that propose projects in partnership with other applicants will be considered on their individual merits. The Foundation recognizes that making significant progress on the objective is difficult and values partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise for the mutual benefit of the applicants and their communities.

Furthermore, the Foundation recognizes that there are many different tactics or approaches that could be used to advance the objective stated above. All proposals that meet the review criteria and additional considerations described below are encouraged.

WPF has a total of \$3 million available to advance this objective at this time. WPF values diverse approaches from various organizations and communities to address the objective. We aim to attract and fund a range of projects. There is no minimum or maximum amount of funding that projects may request but the most competitive proposals will likely be those with total grant requests under \$600,000 (for 3 years). The grant amount requested should be proportionate with the scope of the project and the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective.

Eligibility

Applicants must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 public charities or operate under a public charity fiduciary. Applicants must adequately compensate artists/creators for their involvement. Eligible applicants include:

- **Artist collectives:** a group of artists who come together to collaborate, share resources, and work towards common creative and/or social goals.
- **Arts and culture organizations:** organizations with a mission that centers on the creation, performance, and/or presentation of artistic and cultural programs and experiences.

- **Community-based organizations:** local, nonprofit groups that work to improve conditions for and directly serve the needs of their communities.
- **Public institutions:** government entities and agencies.

WPF funds the following disciplines: dance, design, folk and traditional arts, literary arts, media arts, museums, music, musical theater, opera, multidisciplinary arts, theater, and visual arts.

The majority of our funding will be awarded to projects in the City of Philadelphia. However, projects in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, and the City of Camden, NJ will also be considered.

Please note:

Projects focused on arts learning and youth should refer to the Arts Education objectives for potential eligibility.

The Foundation will not fund a program/project that is currently supported through a William Penn Foundation grant.

Definition of Terms

Artistic and cultural engagement	<p>The participation, involvement, and interaction of individuals or communities with arts and cultural experiences. It speaks to the relationship between people and artistic or cultural activities and can include being audience members, participants, or collaborators in the creation of art.</p>
Community	<p>A group of people having a particular characteristic in common. This can be based on race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, geography, interest area, or another characteristic but should be defined by the organization.</p>
Community-centered programming	<p>The development and implementation of programs that are specifically designed to meet the unique needs, interests, and goals of a particular community. This type of programming prioritizes engagement, collaboration, and input from community members, ensuring that the programs are culturally relevant, inclusive, and responsive.</p>
Culturally relevant	<p>An approach to curation or program design that considers the beneficiaries of the experience and seeks to generate final performances/programming/experiences that ensure the community’s interest is incorporated. The program design process typically begins with engaging stakeholders as co-creators to learn more about their backgrounds, cultures, and interests. (In some fields it is referred to as culturally responsive).</p>
High-quality	<p>Applies artistic excellence and knowledge to create experiences that are informed by the needs, desires, and perspectives of the intended beneficiaries.</p>
Intended beneficiaries	<p>A well-defined group or community that a project, initiative, or organization aims to engage and positively impact. Identifying the intended beneficiaries helps ensure that the goals and strategies of the program are tailored to address the needs of those it aims to serve.</p>

Review Criteria

Proposals will be judged on the following criteria. **Applicants should address these criteria in their narrative responses to the application questions.**

Artistic or Cultural Practice			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Project lacks involvement of an artist/artistic team.	Project includes an artist/artistic team but not in a central role and not with experience or expertise to implement project.	Project created by an artist/artistic team, with limited and/or developing experience serving as the basis for the project.	Work is essential to the artistic field, community, or region Artist/artistic team is central to conception and design of project and has demonstrated skills and success to realize project to its full vision/design.
			 Strong Required
Knowledge of Project's Intended Participants			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
No apparent familiarity with the intended participants, history of working with them, or plan for learning about them.	Limited understanding of intended participants the project seeks to engage.	Deliberate and growing efforts to learn about and build relationships with intended participants.	Deep knowledge of and relationships with intended participants, strong rationale for project relevance, and welcoming approach.
		 Developing or Strong Required	
Orientation to Racial Equity and Economic Inclusion			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Project has vague or non-existent goals for engaging or building relationships with communities of color, economically vulnerable communities, or other historically marginalized groups.	Project has limited goals focused on inclusion and access but has potential to develop further.	Project has clearly articulated approach to make artistic and cultural work inclusive and accessible.	Project designed with a goal to address structural inequities of access and opportunity.
		 Developing or Strong Required	
Community-Centered Practice			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Project team has minimal experience with inclusive and community-informed practices.	Project is attempting new inclusive and community-informed practices.	Project is building on inclusive and community-informed practices that project team has experience implementing.	Project team has a long-standing history of inclusive and community-informed practices.
 Emergent, Developing, or Strong Required			

Additional expectations:

Intended Beneficiaries	Proposal identifies and describes a well-defined group or community that the project aims to engage and positively impact.
Budget	The requested budget is reasonable for the proposed activities and the stated results and allocates adequate resources for the artists involved in the project.

Learning and Evaluation

Grantees will be expected to complete a brief written report each year describing how they have made progress toward the objective above and what they have learned during the year.

In addition, projects funded as a result of this RFP will be convened in a Learning Community to build networks among those advancing a common objective, to share learning and best practices, and to identify ways in which progress could be enhanced. Grantees will help to determine the frequency, content, and specific goals of the Learning Community.



Webinar

Interested projects are invited to participate in an informational webinar on **Monday, September 23, 2024, at 11 AM EST.**

Register for the webinar at <https://lu.ma/williampenfoundation>.

Budget

Project budgets should cover the time needed for the project described in the request (1-3 years). While not required, applicants are encouraged to build on their existing programs, using WPF funding to supplement or strengthen those efforts.

Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any fees to partner organizations or consultants. This information can be provided in the proposal narrative.

Except in rare circumstances, total funding from WPF should not exceed 25% of an applicant's total operating budget.

All aspects of project development and execution, including planning, design, materials, community engagement, staffing, and implementation, are eligible for funding.

Application Process

Before you apply, please review your responses to the three questions below. If you can confidently answer “yes” to all the questions, this funding opportunity may be relevant to you. If you respond “no” to any of the questions, this opportunity is not a good match for your project, and you should not apply.

	YES	NO
Does your project create an accessible and culturally relevant arts and culture experience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have a history of creating programming in and for the community that will benefit from this project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the project take place in the cities of Philadelphia or Camden, or Bucks, Chester, Delaware, or Montgomery counties?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please also review the criteria on pages 8-9 and make sure that your program aligns with those.

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions just above and meet the stated criteria, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online submission system at <https://wfp.my.site.com/grantee>. Submit your application by **October 25, 2024**. A WPF team will review all proposals and will notify applicants if they have been selected to move forward in the review process. **To review the application questions and to download a working copy of the application to draft responses, please [click here](#).**

Selected applicants will take part in a site visit with WPF staff so that the Foundation can learn more about applicants’ work. Site visits will be approximately two hours in duration. We ask that applicants use this time to introduce key staff working on the proposed project, to show WPF staff where the work will take place, and to elevate the voices of the potential beneficiaries of the proposed project. Based on a combination of the written materials and the learning from the site visit, **a final slate of projects** will be recommended to the WPF Board for consideration of their proposals.

*This request or any subsequent response does not commit William Penn Foundation or the responding organization to any future funding or engagement. If you have any questions, contact **Senior Program Officer Lindsay Tucker So at lso@williampennfoundation.org.***

Timeline

September 18, 2024

Proposal submission period opens

September 24, 2024

Informational Webinar (see page 9)

October 25, 2024

Proposals due by 5:00PM EST

November 6-8, 2024

Select applicants notified that their proposals have been chosen for further consideration and a site visit. Other applicants will be notified that their proposals are not advancing in the process.

November 11–November 27, 2024

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

January 31, 2025

WPF Board review selected proposals

February 2025

Project implementation can begin

