

WilliamPennFoundation

Request for Proposals

Out-of-school Community-based Arts Education Programs

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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 its objectives can be found on the Foundation’s website. This Request for Proposals (RFP) was created to help organizations to advance the following objective:

By 2035, at least 75,000 youth ages 5-18, who would otherwise have little or no access to high-quality hands-on arts learning, will benefit from WPF-funded in-school partnerships and community-based initiatives across the Philadelphia region.

The Foundation recognizes that there are many ways that organizations can contribute to advancing this objective. With that understanding, there are few limitations on the program design and/or applicants' approach to arts education. A program may focus on any or multiple arts disciplines as long as it is designed to advance opportunities for youth across the Philadelphia region to have access to equitable, inclusive and high-quality, hands-on arts learning led by skilled teaching artists and arts educators.

We seek to fund programs that are youth-informed or youth-centered, as developmentally appropriate. Programs are to be offered at little or no cost to the youth/families/caregivers, reaching primarily (75% or more) young people coming from low-income households.

Please note: Two Arts Education RFPs are scheduled over the next twelve months. This RFP is for out-of-school programs offered in community-based settings. An RFP to support in-school partnership programs offered during the school year will be released in December. See the table on page 13 for a description of the differences between these two models.

Regardless of the approach, all applicants should describe a compelling explanation for how their proposed work will 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 7-9 of this document.

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.

This RFP seeks proposals that will support out-of-school arts education opportunities in community-based settings for young people across the Philadelphia region to participate in equitable, inclusive, and high-quality arts education.

Background

Studies have demonstrated that arts education allows young people of all ages to connect to their own creativity, to stretch their imaginations, and express their personalities. It also develops social-emotional and critical thinking skills¹ and helps youth build empathy and connections to others and the world around them.²

Thoughtfully designed and delivered arts education can act as a safe space, allowing young people to share personal stories, process conflict and trauma, and develop interpersonal and cultural awareness. These opportunities can also help older youth gain skills needed in post-secondary education and the workplace.³

Inequities in opportunities

19% of Black parents and 10% of Hispanic parents report their children were taught art or music outside of school, compared to 31% of White parents.

15% of families with incomes of less than \$50k report outside of school music or art compared to 39% of families with incomes of \$100k and over.



¹ Daniel H. Bowen, Jay P. Greene, and Brian Kisida. (January 2014). "Learning to Think Critically: A Visual Art Experiment," *Educational Researcher* 43 (1). pp. 37–44.

² Jay P. Greene, Brian Kisida, and Daniel H. Bowen. (Winter 2021). "The Educational Value of Field Trips," *Education Next* 14 (1)

³ Kylie Peppler, Maggie Dah, and Mizuko Ito. (2023). *The Connected Arts Learning Framework: An expanded view of the purposes and possibilities for arts learning*. The Wallace Foundation.

⁴ Iyengar, Sunil; "A Decade of Arts Engagement: Findings from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2002-2012." (2015). p. 66

Opportunity Overview

The Foundation seeks to support efforts that provide young people with hands-on arts education led by skilled teaching artists. Programs must exclusively serve children between ages 5 and 18. In particular, we are most interested in prioritizing support for projects that are culturally relevant and make it possible for youth to engage as leaders and drivers of their own learning experiences.

We are requesting proposals for **projects up to three years in duration** to connect young people in the Greater Philadelphia region with out-of-school arts education opportunities in their communities. The arts education opportunities should be driven by the young people's creativity and interests and support their personal development and growth. These programs will primarily connect to youth outside of school time and offer opportunities to pursue arts learning at any point during the year, including the summer. After reviewing proposals, WPF will conduct site visits and gather additional information from a limited number of organizations.

Organizations that propose projects in partnership with other applicants will be considered on their individual merits. However, the Foundation recognizes that making significant progress on the objective is difficult and encourages organizations to include partnerships that leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise to reach proposed goals.

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 described below are encouraged.

WPF has **\$3 million available** to advance this objective through this RFP. There is no minimum or maximum amount of funding that organizations may request. The grant amount requested should be commensurate with the contribution that the project will make to the overall objective. However, grant requests under \$450,000 (over 3 years) will be most competitive.

Eligibility

Applicants must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 public charities or operate under a public charity fiduciary (fiscal sponsor). Applicants must have a history of offering at least 2 consecutive years of successful arts education programs in the Philadelphia region. Eligible organizations include:

- **Arts education organizations:** community art schools, community youth arts organizations, creative youth development organizations, and arts and education collaboratives that work to make high-quality arts education accessible for Philadelphia area youth.
- **Arts and culture organizations:** arts and culture organizations with dedicated high-quality arts education programs committed to advancing arts access for Philadelphia area youth.

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, N.J. will also be considered.

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

Definition of Terms

Culturally relevant	Program design reflects awareness, understanding, and response to the beliefs, values, customs, interests, and social structures of young people.
Social-emotional learning (SEL) (also referred to as socio-emotional development)	The process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, and establish and maintain positive relationships, among other skills and capacities related to self-awareness and self-control that can positively impact both life and school outcomes.
Out-of-school programming	Programs that young people can attend when school is not in session and are not tied to in-school partnerships during the school day.

Before you apply, please review the questions below. If you can confidently answer “yes” to 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.

Is your proposal:

YES NO

Exclusively serving youth ages 5- to 18-years old from the eligible cities and counties (see above)?

☐ ☐

For a program that has run successfully for at least two consecutive years?

☐ ☐

Predominantly serving children from low-income households (75% or more of youth reached)?

☐ ☐



Providing arts education during out-of-school hours, over multiple weeks?



☐ ☐

Please also review all of the criteria on the following pages and make sure that your program aligns with those.

Review Criteria

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

Artistic and Cultural Practice			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
The role and/or skills of an artistic-cultural team is absent.	Artistic-cultural team does not play a conceptual or decision-making role in the creative experiences described and/or does not have relevant artistic-cultural skills or experience needed.	Artistic-cultural team has limited-to-developing relationship, or influence in shaping the creative experiences and goals described.	Highly skilled or trained artistic-cultural team is central to developing creative concepts and decision-making, and has demonstrated the relevant skills, knowledge, and practices to be effective and essential to its artistic field and community.
			
Orientation to Equity, Inclusion, and Access			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Articulates some knowledge, but no evidence of practices that address barriers to people engaging with the organization or project, does not create environments where people feel valued and included. Unclear approach to welcoming and usable programs for people of diverse abilities and backgrounds.	Inconsistent use of practices that address barriers to engagement and create environments where people feel valued and included. Testing approaches to welcoming and usable programs for people of diverse abilities and backgrounds.	Demonstrates consistent practices that address barriers to engagement and create environments where people feel valued and included. Increasing use of approaches that make programs welcoming and usable for people of diverse abilities and backgrounds.	Track record of embedded practices that address barriers to engagement, create environments where people feel valued and included, and consistently ensures programs are welcoming and usable for people of diverse abilities and backgrounds.
			
Understanding and Engagement of Intended Beneficiaries			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Intended beneficiaries are not clearly defined; community-centered practice or engagement is absent.	Provides minimal evidence of familiarity with intended beneficiaries or community-centered practices and plans for engaging them are sporadic and/or cursory.	Demonstrates some knowledge of intended beneficiaries and existing community-centered practices and includes deliberate mechanisms to engage and deepen these relationships and practices.	Clearly identifies its intended beneficiaries and demonstrates deep relationships and community-centered practices with these beneficiaries.
			

Design/Results Feasibility			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Unclear approach to the work, lacks project design and implementation details to achieve scope of work and results.	Conceptual approach to project design, implementation and results are vague, difficult to understand, or seem unrealistic.	Developed concept with tangible approach to project design and an implementation plan, with anticipated results that are informed by untested ideas and some past practices.	Detailed approach to the work with strong project design, implementation plan, and measurable results that are informed by past practices and evidence of success.
			
Organizational Capacity			
Absent	Emergent	Developing	Strong
Lacks dedicated staffing with relevant experience/skills, leadership and organizational support, and resources.	Staffing with relevant experience/skills is reliant on unidentified project-based consultants/contractors, and project/organization has limited leadership and organizational support, and resources.	Staff and identified project-based consultants/contractors have relevant experience/skills, committed leadership oversight, organizational support, and sufficient resources.	Staff and long-term consultants/contractors have relevant experience/skills and extensive relationship with the organization, committed leadership oversight, organizational support, and sufficient resources.
			

Additional expectations:

Artistic Discipline Focus	Program should teach dance, design, folk and traditional arts, creative writing/spoken word, media arts, music, opera, theater arts, visual arts, or any combination of these artistic disciplines as its primary focus. Secondary learning goals can be present in the program, but consideration of funding will be based on the strength of the arts education.
Artistic-cultural Team	The artistic-cultural team implementing the program is made up of skilled teaching artists with at least two years of experience teaching.
Partnerships	Programs that include organizational partnerships to identify youth participants and connect youth to resources will be most competitive.
Defined Youth Outcomes	Proposal clearly describes how program model achieves the desired impact (skills and interest in the arts, social-emotional development) for youth.
Recruitment of Youth	Proposal clearly describes existing outreach strategies to engage youth participants.
Reach	Programs designed to serve upwards of 50 youth each year will be most competitive.
Dosage	Dosage and frequency is appropriate for stage of youth development and learning. Recommended ranges are after school 2-5 days/week, 4-10 hours/week; Summer 4-5 days/week, 4-8 hours/day.
Duration	Multi-week sessions, enabling youth to participate over a period appropriate for supporting their learning and development.
Budget	The requested budget should be reasonable for the proposed activities and the stated results and allocate adequate resources for paying teaching artists and artists involved in the project.

Learning and Insights

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, organizations funded through 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. The overhead funding included with any awarded grants is, in part, meant to help subsidize staff participation in the Learning Community.



Webinar

Interested organizations are invited to participate in an optional informational webinar on **Wednesday, September 17, 2025 at 11:00AM ET.**

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

Budget

Project budgets should cover up to three years of funding. Organizations are encouraged to build on their existing programs, using WPF funding to supplement or enhance those efforts. Individual scholarships are not eligible for funding through this RFP. Budgets should be designed to enable the participation of any interested youth.

Project budgets should be all-inclusive, including any fees to partner organizations or consultants.

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

All aspects of project development and execution, including program design, tools and materials, community/partner engagement, staffing, implementation, and evaluation (as needed), are eligible for funding.

Application Process

If you answered “yes” to all of the questions in the eligibility section above and meet the stated criteria, the application process begins by completing a proposal on our online system at <https://wpf.my.site.com/grantee>.

Submit your application by **5:00PM ET on October 23, 2025**. A WPF team will review all proposals and will notify applicants if they have been selected to move forward in the review process. **To download a working copy of the application to draft responses, please [click here](#).**

Applicants are also required to provide information about their arts education program request by completing an [Arts Education Program information form](#) to describe proposed project details for the one or more sites included in the funding request. Please upload the completed form as an attachment in the online grant application portal. Requested information includes:

- Site(s) information including name and location, and if it is an existing partner site or a proposed new site.
- Program start and end dates; what month a program launches and ends.
- Number of sessions, the frequency of sessions, and a typical length of a session in minutes.
- Ages served and proposed number of youths to be served.

Selected organizations 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 organizations 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 organizations** 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 Hillary Murray at hmurray@williampennfoundation.org.

Timeline

September 10, 2025

Proposal submission period opens.

September 17, 2025

Informational Webinar (see page 10)

October 23, 2025

Proposals due by 5:00PM ET

November 7-10, 2025

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 10-December 10, 2025

Site visits conducted by WPF staff with selected applicants.

February 6, 2026

WPF Board reviews selected proposals.

February 9, 2026

Project implementation can begin.

Two Arts Education Program Model RFPs

	<u>Out-of-School Community-based Programs (This RFP)</u>	<u>In-School Partnership Programs</u>
RFP Schedule and Timing	RFP release: Sept. 10 Applications due: Oct. 23 Board decision: late Feb. 2026	RFP release: Dec. 10 Applications due: Jan. 29, 2026 Board decision: late April 2026
Artistic Discipline	Dance, Design, Folk and Traditional Arts, Creative Writing/Spoken Word, Media Arts, Music, Opera, Theater Arts, Visual Arts.	Same
Program Operation	Arts instruction and mentorship take place in community sites during out-of-school, including afterschool, school vacations, and summers. Standalone field trips and ticketed performances are not eligible.	Arts instruction and mentorship take place in schools in partnership with classroom teachers and specialists, including arts integration and enrichment during the school day, and extended day or afterschool. Standalone field trips and ticketed performances are not eligible.
Defined Youth Outcomes	Proposal clearly describes how program model achieves the desired impact (skills and interest in the arts, social-emotional development) for youth.	Same
Recruitment of Youth	Community-based outreach and networks, word of mouth and school/agency referrals.	School-based access
Program timing	Out-of-school	School year, school day and/or extended day or afterschool.
Accessibility	Accessible community-based locations including youth arts centers, arts organizations, community centers and neighborhood schools and may include off-site field trips as part of program. Takes place during convenient times for youth and families.	Accessible neighborhood schools serving students from low-income households (75% or more) and may include off-site field trips as part of program. Program is integrated into the school day, and/or extended day or afterschool.
Ages served	Grades K-12, ages 5- to 18	Same
Reach	Programs designed to serve at least 50 youth each year will be most competitive.	Programs designed to serve at least 100 students each year will be most competitive.
Dosage	Dosage and frequency as appropriate for stage of youth development and learning. Range may include afterschool 2-5 days/week, 4-8 hours/week; summer 4-5 days/week, 4-8 hours/day.	Dosage and frequency as appropriate for stage of youth development and learning, and school requirements. Range may include in-school 1-4 days/week, 1-2 hours/week
Duration	Multi-week sessions, at any point during the year.	Multi-week sessions, within school year.
Start Date	Grant funded work can start March 2026	Grant funded work can start May 2026, programming begins in 2026-2027 school year.
Budget	The requested budget is reasonable for the proposed activities and the stated results and allocates adequate resources for paying teaching artists and artists involved in the project.	Same