# SY 2026 - '27 ARTS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR **SCHOOLS & SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

A HUDSON COUNTY OFFICE OF CULTURAL & HERITAGE AFFAIRS | TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM

For programs to be offered between September 1st, 2026 to June 31st, 2027

## APPLICATION DATES

**Opens:**
**March 16, 2026 at 5:00AM**

**Closes:**
**April 20, 2026 at 12AM**

AiEP GRANT
HUDSON COUNTY OFFICE OF CULTURAL & HERITAGE AFFAIRS · TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

## Contact

| | |
|---|---|
| **Phone** | 201-459-2070 |
| **Website** | www.hudsoncountyculturalaffairs.org |
| **Email** | aiepgrants@hcnj.us |
| **Address** | 583 Newark Avenue, Jersey City, NJ 07306 |

Hudson County®
New Jersey

Cultural & Heritage Affairs
Tourism Development

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

Hudson County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs/ Tourism Development (HCOCHA/TD) offers funding support for approved arts in education programming for the school year beginning September 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. This grant is administered by the HCOCHA/TD, a unit of Hudson County government, by authority of Hudson County Executive Craig Guy and the Hudson County Board of County Commissioners. AiEP is also supported in part by federal grant funds from the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) Grant for Art Projects (GAP) with Hudson County matching 100% of these funds. To find out more about how National Endowment for the Arts grants impact individuals and communities, visit https://www.arts.gov/.

The primary purpose of the AiEP grant is to build a bridge between local non- profit arts organizations and all public schools in the 12 municipalities of Hudson County in an effort to increase students' access to quality arts education programs that may not be offered in their schools. These non-profit arts organizations collaborate with schools to allow students to have access to a variety of artistic disciplines during the school day. Proposed programs enhance and integrate arts in education programming within schools aligning with NJ Student Learning Standards for Visual and Performing Arts (NJSLS-VPA) and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) to embed programming in the schools' and schools districts' curriculum.

The AiEP application process has two stages:
1. Non-profit arts organizations have already applied using for AiEP Grant Application for Organizations in January 2026.
2. Hudson County Schools are invited to apply using the AiEP Grant Application for Schools & School Districts in March 2026.  Descriptions of the organizations programs from the first stage will be listed in this application for schools to request.

School Applications are reviewed and based on the prioritized needs of the Schools, the amount of funding available, and the AiEP application guidelines, Organization programs are then matched to the Schools' requests by the Arts in Education Review Committee.  The organizations receive funding to COLLABORATE with the chosen schools that apply. **These Guidelines are for schools and school districts ONLY, applying during Stage 2.**

---

HCOCHA|TD
◆AiEPGRANT
Arts in Education Program

New Jersey
Hudson County
HCOCHA|TD

# ELIGIBILITY

A school and/or school district must: 1) meet one or more of the Priorities for Funding and 2) be located in Hudson County, NJ.



## SCHOOLS - ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR ONE(1) SCHOOL

- Individual Public School
- Individual Public Charter School
- Individual Specialized School for students with disabilities or students facing other barriers to success (economic, geographic, ethnic, or other specified limiting factors).
- Individual Catholic School

## SCHOOL DISTRICTS - ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR TWO(2) - FIVE(5) SCHOOLS

HCOCHA|TD
◆AiEPGRANT
Arts in Education Program

New Jersey
Hudson County
HCOCHA|TD

# PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING

Special consideration will be given to proposals of quality, innovation, and merit that address the following priority issues:

Programs that center learners: of *varying abilities*; in non-traditional academic programs; of culturally diverse or of "economically disadvantaged" in underserved communities.

Programs that focus on students with disabilities or students facing other barriers to success (economic, geographic, ethnic, or other specified limiting factors).

Schools that do not currently have dedicated arts educators.

Support of the arts in municipalities in northern and western municipalities of Hudson County.

Promote the growth of artists, arts organizations, and educational arts programs serving students grades PreK to 12 in Hudson County.

Expand the influence of Hudson County artists and students to a broader sphere.

Programs that authentically match students and school populations with teaching artists from shared cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Programs that are flexible and can be provided to a variable number of students and within a variable amount of time within the program period.

# PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Each program MUST:

- Take place **in-school, during the school day**, in grades Pre-Kindergarten to Twelve (12). and may include but are not limited to artist residencies, arts integration programs, school/ community engagement programs, school enhancement programs, etc., that will align with the NJSLS-VPA and or SEL and be embedded in the school's curriculum.

- Include drafted lesson plans with clearly stated learning goals, intended outcomes, and a means for evaluation.

- Include a minimum of 5 total student contact sessions (up to 1 hour each) with a teaching artist and occur at least one time per week with one distinct group of learners consisting of an average public school class size (up to 30 students).

- Include a final culminating event called a "Final" presentation which may be an informal or formal performance, showcase, sharing, workshop, unveiling, gallery, etc.
  - The "Final" MUST be included in the timeline and within the number of sessions for each proposed program and should also be considered the "End

Date" scheduled between the organization and the school during the Preliminary Planning Period.

HCOCHA/TD staff will make a required site visit to evaluate fulfillment of the funded project and to gain feedback from students, schoolteachers, and teaching artists via required FINAL AiEP Surveys and/or FINAL Reports.

# APPLICATION POINTERS

> Please read these guidelines carefully, in their entirety.

> As with all other grant programs, AiEP grants are awarded to support and acknowledge a meritorious proposal based on artistic merit and artistic excellence.

> The AiEP grant program is highly competitive. A successful applicant will articulate PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING **throughout their entire application**

> When composing your narratives, please consider how the needs of your school are being addressed. Cite relevant information. Present supporting facts for stated assumptions. Use clear, understandable language (jargon or acronyms discouraged) and be brief, concise, and simple.

> Be sure to describe student population you are targeting for these programs by including details about varying abilities, known disabilities, cultural diversity, race, and/or economic status using the most current data from your school.

> Evaluation plays a critical role in the success of a program. Please include how your school will collaborate with the organization to evaluate meeting curriculum goals as well as how students will be evaluated and graded for their participation.

Evaluation and impact data may be obtained together in an array of techniques i.e., observations, examinations, questionnaires, comment sheets, and statistical information, when determining your evaluation and assessment of the impact on students and measuring the success of your arts education programming.

> School applicants must provide ALL documents/materials requested in the application pertaining to these guidelines.

# THE APPLICATION

This section is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every question in the application. Rather, this section is intended to help you draft your narratives.

You will first be asked if you are applying as an **INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL (one school)** or as a **SCHOOL DISTRICT (multiples schools within your district)**. Then you will answer a series of questions about your school or school district, for example, the types of arts in education programming that your school/district offers currently and the types of arts in education programs that you would like your students to have access to.

We also ask for the total amount of financial resources that your school may be able to contribute to this program, however, this is not required.  Please be aware that the actual funding dollars are awarded to the Organizations that applied in the first AiEP Grant Application for ORGANIZATIONS to COLLABORATE with your school to provide their programming.

## INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL

- If you are applying on behalf of only one school, you will apply as an INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL and follow those instructions.

- An INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL applicant may choose up to **three (3) arts in education programs, listed in priority order.**

The School District applicant is responsible for the writing and submission of the application and will be accountable to HCOCHA/TD for the management of the funded programs in ALL of the schools they list and MUST identify a contact at EACH school as liaison for the programming coordination with HCOCHA/TD

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

- If you are a District Supervisor and would like to apply on behalf of several schools in your district you will choose SCHOOL DISTRICT.
- A SCHOOL DISTRICT applicant may choose two (2) to five (5) schools and for each school then choose up to three (3) arts in education programs for EACH School listed in Priority Order.
- You may choose one program more than one time for more than one school.
- We ask that you are sensitive to the number of schools and programs that you choose as the SCHOOL will be committing time to coordinating the programs with the ORGANIZATIONS that are chosen.

# PROGRAM QUESTIONS

In this section of the application you will be asked to answer a few questions based on the needs of your Individual School or School District.

- The **municipality** that your school or school district is located in within Hudson County.
- The **grade level(s)** in your school or school district that you would feel there is a need to increase arts in education programming access with this grant.
- One or more of the following **arts disciplines**:  Dance, English Language Arts/Theatre, Media Arts, Music, STEAM, Theater, Visual Arts.

Based on those answers, a list of available programs will be auto populated.  If there are NO PROGRAMS listed then, there are no programs that match the selections you made. However, you may go back up to the grade levels and categories questions and change your answers to create additional searches.

If you wish to see a complete list of ALL programs available in your municipality, you may choose ALL grades and ALL arts disciplines.

The list will include the following information for each program:

| Program Name | Intro to Ceramics |
|---|---|
| Description | Brief Description of program provided by the Organization |
| Arts Discipline | Visual Arts |
| Grade Levels | 5, 6, 7 |
| # of Proposed Student Contact Sessions for one (1) GROUP of Distinct Learners | 5 |

## CHOOSING PROGRAMS

After you have reviewed all of the Program Descriptions, you may choose UP TO three (3) Programs in Priority Order.  We ask that you prioritize, because you are not guaranteed to be awarded with the first program you choose.

Note that you may be awarded one or more programs as well based on need and funding.  Additionally, if you are applying on behalf of more than one school, you may choose the same programs for more than one school. We recommend that you copy and paste the Program Names from the list to the chart given after you select the number of programs.

Once that is completed you will then be prompted to enter the grade level(s) and number of GROUPS of distinct learners for each of your prioritized programs.  For GRADE LEVEL you must refer back to your Program Selection in the list to see if the grade level is available in the Program Description.  The number of GROUPS refers to the number of classes in that grade level in your school.

For example, if you are requesting the "Intro to Ceramics" Program in the Sample above and you would like to request 6th and 7th grades in your school, then you would tell us that you have two (2), 6th grade classes, and two (2), 7th grade classes which would equal a total of 4 GROUPS of distinct learners.  You may also want to mix grade levels in your school, for example, If you would like to include 5th and 6th graders in one (1) GROUPS, you would indicate BOTH 6th and 7th Grades and enter "mixed" which would tell us there will be one (1) GROUP of up to 30 students in 6th and 7th grade.

## TIMELINE

We will also ask for an "ideal TIME-LINE" that you would like to plan for the program to take place, however, this is not a guarantee, and you must first consult with the organization after you are awarded with the grant to schedule a timeline that will work for BOTH you and the organization during the grant period.

You must contact the organization as soon as possible to schedule a Preliminary Planning Meeting to discuss all the logistics and a schedule AFTER you accept your award. The Actual Timeline & Sessions will be determined with the organization and school during the Preliminary Planning Meeting PRIOR to the start of the school year in September 2026.

If you are NOT available to speak with the organization(s) and set up the first Preliminary Planning Meeting PRIOR to September 2026, you must notify HCOCHA/TD in writing via email as soon as possible.

If your school is unable to host a program, you must notify HCOCHA/TD prior to the start of the school year in September 2026. You may be placed on a waiting list and in that case may be notified of programs that become available during the school year.

Finally, in this section, we ask that you include a brief description of the NJSLS-VPA and/or SEL that you would like EACH of the programs to focus on.

## ACCESSIBILITY

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into Federal law in 1990, requires that all public programs and services be made accessible to all people, regardless of their physical or developmental challenges. The State/County Partnership Arts Grant Program supports and enforces this law.

You must indicate how students with disabilities are considered for inclusion and the number of those students included in your program requests once you are awarded with an AiEP grant.

## REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

You will be asked to upload:

- Supporting Documentation
- Current Board of Directors

# EVALUATION OF PROGRAM REQUESTS

After all applications have been reviewed by HCOCHA/TD staff for eligibility and guidelines compliance, the Arts in Education Peer Review Panel will be asked to evaluate and score each proposal based upon criteria that includes the following:

- The **merit** of the request.

- The applicant's demonstration of **serving the needs of its students**.

- The applicant's demonstration of **a process for choosing your school's programming needs**.

- The applicant's presentation of **clear, relevant answers** to all questions.

- The applicant's submission of a **complete application** including all documents requested in the online application.

- The applicant presents a **barrier free, accessible** program.

- The applicant presents **how students of all learning capabilities will be included and supported in each requested program**.

Representatives of HCOCHA/TD will visit the school to observe and evaluate the funded programs during the "Final Presentation". Staff will complete a program evaluation report, which will include fulfillment of the funded project, teacher and student response, and an assessment of the quality of the project.

# ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDS & NEXT STEPS

AiEP grant awards are announced by letter through email. Please read the following carefully regarding the Preliminary Planning Agreement (PPA) and Final Surveys.

## PRELIMINARY PLANNING AGREEMENT (PPA)

Your school/school district will receive an award letter indicating the Program Name and Organization Name along with the number of GROUPS you indicated in your application. At the same time Organizations will receive an program award letter indicating your School Name, Location and number of GROUPS indicated on your application.

Once BOTH your school and the matched organization ACCEPT an award, BOTH parties will sign the Preliminary Planning Agreement or "PPA" which outlines your agreement under these guidelines. An example can be found **HERE**. Please read this agreement **BEFORE** you apply as you will be responsible to READ AND SIGN this agreement BEFORE ACCEPTING this award.

AFTER you ACCEPT the award in the application portal, BOTH parties will then receive CONTACT INFORMATION for the COLLABORATING ORGANIZATION in the application portal.

SCHOOL and ORGANIZATION Grantees MUST then reach out directly to the partnered organization ASAP to begin preliminary planning meetings BEFORE the school year begins in September 2026.

AFTER you have met with the organizations to plan all logistics and dates, etc., the SCHOOL applicant is responsible for entering the PROGRAM DETAILS listed below into the application portal BEFORE THE PROGRAM STARTS and NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 31, 2026.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

You will be required to SUBMIT PROGRAM DETAILS within the portal that are agreed upon during the preliminary planning meetings such as -ACTUAL START DATE and END DATE (this is the date that the "Final" Presentation is planned),

- GRADE LEVELS and NUMBER OF GROUPS of LEARNERS,
- NUMBER OF SESSIONS FOR EACH GROUP of LEARNERS,
- the APPROX TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS,
- and the SCHOOL COORDINATORS/TEACHERS INFORMATION (those who will be directly working with teaching artists from the organization).

The ORGANIZATION GRANTEE will also submit the PROGRAM DETAILS in the application portal. BOTH PROGRAM DETAILS WITH BE REVIEWED. If the PROGRAM DETAILS submitted by the SCHOOLS & ORGANIZATIONS do not match, they will be rejected and you will be notified via email. PROGRAMS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO START UNTIL PROGRAM DETAILS ARE SUBMITTED AND APPROVED.

In addition, the Organizations and Schools MUST confirm the "Final" presentation date, time and location to HCOCHA/TD to arrange for the required school visit for evaluation by the HCOCHA/TD staff.

The school or school district is responsible for providing the organizations with required documentation/materials in order to work with students in their buildings prior to scheduling programming during your Preliminary Planning Meetings. This may include but is not limited to: NJ State Fingerprinting/ Background Check, Liability Insurance, and Vendor Contracts for the organization and all staff that will be working directly with students in the school setting.

| | |
|---|---|
| **JAN–FEB** | Organizations Apply in the application portal |
| **FEB–MAR** | Evaluations and Peer Review of Organization Applications |
| **MAR–APR** | School & School Districts Application Open |
| **APR – MAY** | Evaluations & Peer Review of School & School District Applications |
| **MAY–JUN** | Award Announcements for Organizations and Schools |
| **JUN–SEP** | Preliminary Planning Period: Organizations and Schools Collaborate & Plan |
| **OCT 31 '26** | Preliminary Planning Period (PPA) Completed and Signed by Organizations & Schools |

# FINAL SURVEYS/REPORTS

All Organizations and School grantees will be notified via email to complete the Final Surveys and a Final Report once the Final Presentation has been confirmed. AiEP Final Surveys are distributed as google form links for Teachers and Students to submit within one week AFTER "Final" Presentations.  The responses are used to measure the impact of the programing, to collect data to report to the NEA for supplemental funding and to help us improve programming from year to year.

Schools are required to keep records and submit an AiEP Final Report for EACH PROGRAM UPON ITS COMPLETION. This information may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Actual Total Number of students
- Actual Total Number of sessions provided,
- Amount of prep time,
- Digital media videos or photos of examples of works created or presented by students or used by your organization to promote your organization that includes the AiEP program funded by HCOCHA/TD,
- Demographics data of students served,

- A discussion on any of the following topics:
  - List of highlights of the program.
  - List any improvements that can be made in the future.
  - List any unforeseen circumstances and how you managed them.
  - List of goals agreed upon by organization and school to meet the criteria of the AiEP grant.

HCOCHA|TD
►AiEPGRANT
Arts in Education Program

New Jersey
Hudson County
HCOCHA|TD

# QUESTIONS

## APPLICATION HELP

If you have any questions regarding the application, please reach us at:

📞 **201-459-2070**          ✉ **aiepgrants@hcnj.us**

We are available Monday - Friday from 9AM to 5PM

## TECHNICAL ISSUES/HELP

If you are having technical issues with the application platform portal, and our Grants Team is unavailable, we urge you to reach out to SurveyMonkey Apply.

Submit a ticket and their support team will get back to you in a timely manner.

Use the link below to reach Support

🔗 **https://hcnj.smapply.org/helpdesk/**

You can also reach Support through your application in the upper right hand corner. Click the ⓘ symbol and click "Having technical issues with this site?". This will take you to the support ticket form.