



SY 2026 - '27 ARTS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZATIONS

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:
January 12, 2026 at 5AM

Closes:
February 9, 2026 at 12PM



Contact

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



Cultural & Heritage Affairs
Tourism Development

CONTENTS

02. INTRODUCTION

03. PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING

04. ELIGIBILITY

06. PROGRAM SUPPORT

08. THE APPLICATION

10. YOUR NARRATIVE

14. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

16. ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDS

19. TIMELINE

20. QUESTIONS/HELP

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. First, non-profit arts organizations propose programming to be funded on the AiEP Application for Organizations (this application). The programs are then peer reviewed and summaries are then transferred to the AiEP Application for Schools & School Districts which will be launched in March. Hudson County Schools are invited to apply at that time and request programs which match their needs. Organizations are awarded funds to COLLABORATE with those schools' requests which match based on the prioritized needs of the schools, the information included in the school applications, the guidelines of the application, and the amount of funding available.

PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING

Special consideration will be given to proposals of quality, innovation, and merit that address the priority issues below and the [NEA Priorities at https://www.arts.gov/grants/priorities](https://www.arts.gov/grants/priorities):

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

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.



ELIGIBILITY

ALL applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria checklist:

- ✓ Based in Hudson County, NJ or NJ/NY Metropolitan area (must currently have or in process of obtaining a NJ Business Registration Certificate. [CLICK HERE](#) for information about the NJ-BRC and how to obtain one.
- ✓ Serves the residents in Hudson County, NJ
- ✓ Has been in existence for at least one full year as of January 1, 2025.
- ✓ Has been incorporated in the State of New Jersey and is a tax exempt, non-profit organization, as approved and certified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) under section 501(c)(3) unless you are applying under a Fiscal Sponsor
- ✓ Application through a fiscal sponsor/agent ([more information on fiscal sponsors/agents](#)) are eligible to apply and receive ONLY Hudson County government funds. Fiscal sponsors are NOT eligible to receive a portion of any federal funding that passes through from the NEA.
- ✓ All sub recipients must abide by the NEA Specific Terms & Conditions for Local Arts Agency under the federal law with the exception of Fiscal Sponsors. For more information, [visit HERE](#).
- ✓ All sub recipients must have a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) Number in SAM.gov with the exception of Fiscal Sponsors. Visit <https://sam.gov/entity-registration> for more information.
- ✓ Organizations whose primary mission is related to the artistic realm (i.e., visual arts, music, dance, theater, and media arts) or is an organization that sponsors arts in education programs as a community outreach service such as libraries, community organizations, and social service agencies. These “sponsoring organizations” are responsible for the writing and submission of the application and will be accountable to HCOCHA|TD for the management of the funded program.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Ineligible use and expenses.

AiEP Grants **MAY NOT** be used for:

- General operating support.
- Hospitality of food costs.
- Airline travel and hotel expenses.
- Capital improvements, such as renovation or construction.
- Purchase of equipment, including, but not limited to, phones, computers, televisions, theatrical lights, dimmer boards, cameras, etc.
- No afterschool or summer programs.
- Presenting performances, exhibits, and productions outside Hudson County.
- Offsetting institutional/organizational budget deficits.
- Collateral to obtain loans
- Using as fund to lend to other organizations
- Programs whose sole emphasis is to motivate religious, sectarian, social welfare, or health education.
- The acquisition of works of art, antiques, ephemera, etc.
- The restoration of statuary, historic property, etc.
- Parades, fashion shows, religious feasts or plays, food festivals, antique shows, etc.
- Fundraising activities or related fundraising costs.
- Cash prizes, trophies, scholarships, tuition
- For personal gain in any manner.
- Any unallowable activities/costs listed under **FY27 Grants for Arts Projects (GAP) Program Guidelines pp. 9-10** at <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/FY27-GAP-Program-Guidelines-Final.pdf>, since a portion of this grant may be provided by this federal grant.

PROGRAM SUPPORT & REQUIREMENTS

MAX REQUEST PER PROPOSED PROGRAM

\$2,500

There is currently no limit on the number of unique proposed program applications per organization. However, there is no guarantee that all organization programs are requested in the school applications or that you will receive 100% of the dollar amount of your request.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

Programmatic costs.

Which include instructor fees, instructional materials/supplies, equipment rentals, etc. that is not included in “Ineligible Use and Expenses”. Up to 15% of the grant may be used toward administrative costs.

RESTRICTIONS

NO Afterschool or Summer Programs.

REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must have
 - at least one full-time paid staff administrator,
 - a proven fundraising campaign
 - be fiscally responsible,
 - have an active Board of Directors or Trustees involved in the governance of the organization, and
- Programs **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.
- Programs **MUST** include drafted lesson plans with clearly stated learning goals, intended outcomes, and a means for evaluation.
- Programs **MUST** 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) for **EACH PROGRAM BUDGET**.

- For EACH unique program proposed, an organization MUST be prepared to submit a detailed Budget on the “Projected AiEP Expenses Sheet” along with a “Budget Narrative” which details the use of all funds in word form which supports each line item. Program applications with budgets that are incomplete or vague will receive low scores.
- Organizations MUST state the number of distinct groups of learners (up to 30 students) that can be accommodated in each program application, per school/per day.
 - Keep in mind, schools and/or school districts may request one proposed program for either **one** or **multiple** groups of students in one grade level OR one or more groups of mixed grade levels.
 - For example: If the school or school district indicates five (5) groups or classes of 5th graders, then the awarded Budget will be multiplied by that number. If budget request is \$1,500, then the total award for that program will equal $\$1,500 \times 5 = \$7,500$.
 - Another example: School requests 2 groups of mixed grade levels of students in 9-12th grades. If proposed budget is \$1,500, then the total award will $\$1,500 \times 2 =$ total award \$3,000.
- ALL programs MUST 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 student contact hours for EACH proposed program and should also be considered the “End Date” when 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 FINAL Reports.

THE APPLICATION

This section is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every question in the application. Rather, this section is intended prepare you to apply and help you draft your narratives, budget narratives, and budgets worksheets, which are crucial parts of your application.



BEFORE YOU START

You may propose one or more UNIQUE programs.

- Each UNIQUE program **REQUIRES** a **SEPARATE APPLICATION**.
- You must **TITLE EACH APPLICATION** with the **PROGRAM NAME** that is proposed in EACH application. This is **IMPORTANT** since it will be how each application is identified-**NOT BY ORGANIZATION NAME**.
- **AFTER PEER REVIEW**, the Program Name, Program Summary, and grade levels for EACH unique program will be copied **VER BATIM** into the AiEP application for **SCHOOLS**. **Do not list any costs in this section.**
- Be sure to have all required documents listed in the **ORGANIZATIONS Profile** section on below (p.10) ready for upload.

APPLICATION POINTERS

The AiEP grant program is highly competitive. A successful applicant will have articulated the standards enumerated in the Evaluation of Proposals criteria throughout the application, keeping in mind the Priorities for Funding.

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

Please consider your organization's method of documenting its impact on geographical areas and underserved communities. If this is a new effort, please indicate so your plan in the narrative portion of the application.

Simple methods of such documentation are quick questionnaires and/or sign-in sheets that request the zip code of participants/audience members. (Please remember to be sensitive to the privacy of your patrons.)

When composing your narrative, please consider the need your mission or program/project is addressing in Hudson County.

Cite relevant information. Present supporting facts for stated assumptions. Use clear, understandable language (jargon or acronyms discouraged) and be brief, concise, and simple.

Evaluation plays a critical role in the success of a program/organization. Please pay close attention to the efforts your organization has made to evaluate its programs/services.

Evaluation and geographical impact data may be obtained together using an array of techniques, which may include pre- and post- surveys, observations, questionnaires, comment sheets, and statistical information when determining the evaluation and assessment of the impact on students and measuring the success of your arts in education programming.

YOUR NARRATIVES

Be prepared to provide the following documents and information regarding your organization in the section Organization Profile & Preliminary Questions.

If you apply for an additional programs, these responses will auto-populate in the next application(s) therefore you need only to upload and answer this part of the application one-time.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Be prepared to upload the following:

- Charity Verification: You must enter a valid EIN number to proceed.
- New Jersey Certificate of Non-Profit Incorporation. (If you are not based in NJ, you may upload [a NJ Business Registration Certificate \(NJ-BRC\)](#)).
- IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit designation letter.
- IRS Form W-9 (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification)
- Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran Certification of Non-Involvement in Prohibited Activities in Russia or Belarus: provided within the application.
- Organization Mission Statement
- Current list of Board of Directors
- SAM.gov registration screenshot that includes your UEI Number and Organization Name/Address
- Supportive documentation and work samples

NARRATIVE PARAMETERS

You will be asked to provide important foundational information about your organization in the Preliminary Questions, such as:

- An overview of your organization, including targeted audience, history, governance, administration, planning, and artistic distinction (i.e., what sets your group apart from others).
- Experiences working with young people and working with students in a school setting.
- Discuss the qualifications of the full-time and/or part-time paid administrative and artistic personnel, including their longevity.
- Present an overview of the board of directors, including longevity of each member, titles, term of office, frequency of meetings, board retreats, standing committees, and how board members are cultivated and chosen to serve.

- Explain in detail the process used to develop and choose your organization’s programming.
- Indicate how students with disabilities were considered for inclusion historically or previous programs you have undertaken.
- State what measurable tools are employed to evaluate artistic excellence and student participation for each program.
- Illustrate how your organization’s program(s) address Priorities for Funding listed in these guidelines.

PROGRAM DETAILS

You will describe program goals, student outcomes, and student assessment for EACH PROGRAM in this section of the application. Be sure to address educational quality as well as artistic quality and how you will measure success.

If applying for **multiple programs**, be sure to give distinct responses in this section specific to EACH unique proposed program application.

TIMELINE

You **MUST** describe your timeline, session by session or week by week, from start to end in this section briefly. Timelines are subject to change based on the needs of the school; please state how you are able to be flexible without impacting the budget proposed or the quality of programming.

Take into consideration a preliminary planning period prior to the start of your program that you and the teaching artists will need to schedule the programming in advance as well as plan for a “Final” presentation location and schedule in collaboration with the school (not included in the total student contact hours)

You will also describe the culminating activity or “Final” presentation and when you propose several grade levels, you will be prompted to give a brief description of how the program is developmentally appropriate at each level.

ACCESSIBILITY

A universal or inclusive environment for the arts is one that is usable by everyone: people with and without disabilities and people of all ages. It is an environment with buildings, grounds, and communication systems that are usable by all. It is an environment where chosen programs and exhibits reflect a commitment to being part of an inclusive community.

The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), signed into Federal law in 1990, as amended, requires that all public programs and services be made accessible to all people, regardless of their physical or developmental challenges. The AiEP Grant Program and NEA supports this law.

HCOCHA/TD require that all applicants must indicate how students with disabilities and/or learning differences are considered for inclusion, and have an up to date ADA Organizational Plan on file and be ready to provide one if asked.

You will be asked to give general and specific examples of the following for the Organization Profile and for EACH Program:

1. How students with different types of disabilities are considered for inclusion and
2. Your past work with students of specific learning disabilities, if applicable.
3. How you will collaborate with SCHOOLS to align the program goals with the NJSLSVPA and SEL.

PROGRAM BUDGET

The AiEP Program Budget Section is important because it informs the review panel about the costs of your program or the finances of your organization and the rationale for same.

The AiEP Budget Narrative is a summary of your expenses, in paragraph form, for EACH of your proposed arts in education program expenses that an AiEP grant will help fund. It allows you to discuss your expense sheet line items in greater detail, or “put some meat on the bones,” of your budget, so to speak. If you have items designated as “other” or “misc.” in your expense sheet, you should enumerate them in this narrative.

You will indicate the total number of student contact sessions (up to 1 hour) in the Program Details section of EACH Program in your budget. YOUR TOTAL BUDGET will be based on cost for **ONE GROUP OF DISTINCT LEARNERS (up to 30 students)**. Describe ways in which you can be flexible if the needs of a school were to change in the Budget Narrative section.

There must be a minimum of 5 student contact sessions (of at least 5 hours) including the Final Presentation Day.

The AiEP Projected Program Expenses is the spreadsheet and accounting of your organization’s expenses associated with your proposed program. It is important to be as specific and accurate as possible. The final total will be calculated automatically based on the amounts you enter into each line item. The Narrative and Expense Sheet numbers **MUST MATCH**.

ALLOWABLE ADA EXPENSES

Applicants are encouraged to budget appropriate expenses to make programming accessible to ALL students including those with disabilities to comply with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), such as, but not limited to, sign language interpreters, captioning, and large print type programs.

The purchase of equipment is not permitted as an allowable ADA expense; HCOCHA/TD offers free rental of Assistive Listening System.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

After all proposals will be reviewed by independent panel of peer professionals in the arts and education realm for eligibility and guidelines compliance. It is up to the peer review panelists to evaluate the diverse range of arts in education programs against the application requirements detailed in these Guidelines.

They will assess the strengths and weaknesses of each application based on the review criteria in three categories: 1) Merit of Proposal which includes Artistic Merit & Artistic Excellence, 2) Budget, and 3) Overall Presentation.

MERIT OF PROPOSAL

- The credibility of the applicant
- The artistic merit of the program proposed.
- The artistic excellence of past and present programs/projects.
- The applicant serves the needs of its constituency by the funds requested in its proposal.
- The applicant's demonstration of a process for evaluating students learning outcomes based on goals of the proposed programs.
- The applicant presents a barrier free, accessible program.
- The applicant presents details and/or examples of how students with disabilities and/or learning differences will be included and supported in the proposed program.

- The applicants' demonstration of community support

BUDGET

- The applicant's presentation of a true and fully enumerated budget for all expenses.
- The applicant's demonstration of an appropriate use for the requested funds.
- The applicant's address of the Priorities for Funding.

OVERALL PRESENTATION

- The applicant's presentation of clear, relevant answers to all questions throughout the application and submission of all documents requested in the online application.

Late, ineligible, and incomplete applications will not be reviewed

SCHOOLS & SCHOOL DISTRICTS

After Organization Program Applications are peer reviewed and scored, the description provided by the organization in the Program Summary of EACH application will be copied **verbatim** into the School & School District application.

Schools will then apply as either an Individual School (one school) OR School District (two or more schools).

There is NO GUARENTEE that all organization programs will be requested by the school/s in the School & School District applications.

Schools and School Districts that are located in Hudson County and meet the following criteria will be invited to apply for the peer reviewed AiEP Organization Programs on a separate AiEP Application for Schools & School Districts:

- Individual Public Charter School
- Individual Public School
- Individual Catholic School
- Public School District

Individual Public Charter Schools, Public Schools and Catholic Schools applying on behalf of ONE school may choose up to three (3) programs listed in PRIORITY order based on their needs.

Public School Districts may apply on behalf of TWO (2) to FIVE (5) SCHOOLS within their DISTRICT and may choose up to three (3) programs listed in PRIORITY order for EACH of those SCHOOLS based on needs.

School District applicants are responsible for writing and submission of their applications and will be accountable to HCOCHA/TD for management of the funded programs in ALL schools they list. THEY MUST identify their liaison at EACH school for program coordination with each organization and HCOCHA/TD.



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), how and when payments are disbursed.

PRELIMINARY PLANNING AGREEMENT (PPA)

Organizations AND Schools will receive award notification simultaneously indicating program and school names to which each will be COLLABORATING. BOTH Organizations and SCHOOLS will be required to ACCEPT in Survey Monkey. Once accepted the applicant will then receive a Preliminary Planning Agreement (PPA) for each Program/School Collaboration via Survey Monkey. Example [HERE](#). Please read the PPA before you apply as you will be responsible to agree and sign when accepting your award offer.

Organizations AND Schools MUST reach out each other **BEFORE the school year begins in September 2026**.

The ORGANIZATION PPA and SCHOOL PPA are two separate and different documents. Organizations AND Schools must submit their own and EACH are responsible for UPLOADING and SUBMITTING to their respective Survey Monkey applications AFTER preliminary planning is completed that includes ACTUAL start/end dates, grade levels, and number of students. Organizations will NOT be authorized to start programming until BOTH PPAs match and are approved in their applications.

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.**

KEEP IN MIND

Once you are partnered with a public school, you are responsible for providing the school or school district with required documentation /materials requested by each individual school or school district in order to work with students in their buildings.

This may include but is not limited to: NJ State Fingerprinting/ Background Check, Liability Insurance, and Vendor Contracts for your organization and all staff that will be working directly with students in the school setting.

Grant recipients must keep records of the total NUMBER OF STUDENTS who are served by their programs in each grade level.

DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

Grant funds are disbursed in two payments as follows:

PAYMENT ONE

Fifty Percent (50%) of Hudson County Arts in Education (AIE) Funds plus One Hundred Percent (100%) of NEA Funds (if any) before program start date provided HCOCHA/TD is in receipt of ALL of the following:

- Approved PPA from BOTH Organization and School for EACH Program/School Collaboration.
- First numbered Invoice along with SIGNED VOUCHERS (provided by HCOCHA/TD for AIE County Funds and NEA Federal Funds (if any)).

PAYMENT TWO

Fifty Percent (50%) of Hudson County AIE Funds within 30 days AFTER the “Final” presentation or End Date, provided HCOCHA/TD is in receipt of ALL of the following:

- Second numbered Invoice along with SIGNED VOUCHERS (provided by HCOCHA/TD for remaining 50% of AIE County Funds)
- All required AiEP Final Surveys and Final Reports are received by HCOCHA/TD.

FINAL SURVEYS/REPORTS

All Organizations and School grantees will be notified to complete Final Surveys once the Final Presentation dates are confirmed. AiEP Final Surveys must be submitted within **one (1) week of the “Final” Presentation date.**

A Final Report will be requested via email upon completion of the programming which will include, but not limited to:

- 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, and
- A discussion on any of the following topics:
 - Program highlights.
 - Improvements that can be made in the future.
 - Unforeseen circumstances and how they were managed.
 - How the program goals met the criteria of this grant.

GRANT AWARD GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

- An applicant may not appeal against its grant award based on disagreement with the consensus critique of its proposal.
- An applicant may not appeal against its grant award if any part of its proposal contains ineligible expenses or requests that are not allowable under the guidelines.
- An applicant may not appeal for its grant award based on outdated HCOCHA/TD guidelines published in prior years. New or additional information that was omitted from the submitted application may not be used as grounds for grievance.
- An applicant that can demonstrate a pattern of gross misunderstanding on the part of the grant panel, as written in the panel's consensus critique, based on the facts, information, or support materials contained in its submitted application may appeal its grant award.
- An applicant that can factually document that the consensus critique of its proposal contains actual statements of bias against race, age, religion, physical or developmental aptitude, cultural

diversity, or sexual orientation, may appeal.

- An applicant that meets the grievance procedure requirements as enumerated above may submit a written appeal up to thirty (30) days after the date on the HCOCHA/TD letter of recommended grant award and consensus critique. Appeals will not be considered after this time.
 - Appeals made by telephone will not be accepted.
- Appeals that meet the grievance procedure requirements will be reviewed by HCOCHA/TD. Applicants will receive a written response from HCOCHA/TD with appropriate action, if any, no later than thirty (30) days after the appeals due date.

ACCESSIBILITY GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Artists or members of the public who are unable to participate in a funded program or project because of a physical or program content barrier may submit a grievance to HCOCHA/TD in writing.

In such a case, HCOCHA/TD staff will investigate each complaint. The recommendations are then presented to the Hudson County Counsel for legal review.

TIMELINE



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.

