ARTS AND YOUTH

2025 Grant Guidelines

Deadline: June 5, 2025

The mission of the California Arts Council, a state agency, is to strengthen arts, culture, and creative expression as the tools to cultivate a better California for all.

Learn more at www.arts.ca.gov

ARTS AND YOUTH

DEADLINE: **June 5, 2025, 11:59 PM**
Grant Request Amount: Up to $25,000
Grant Activity Period: October 1, 2025-September 20, 2026

Apply at: calartscouncil.smartsimple.com

Please refer to the California Arts Council [Grants Manual](#) for all policies, procedures, and resources for applicants and grantees.

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Program Timeline

Application Opens	April 2, 2025
Application Deadline	June 5, 2025
Panel Review	Approx. July - August 2025
Funding Decision	Approx. September 2025
Funding Notification	Approx. September 2025
Grant Activity Start	October 1, 2025
Estimated Arrival of Funds	Approx. January 2026 - March 2026
Grant Activity End	September 30, 2026
Final Report Deadline	October 30, 2026

Eligibility

Organizations eligible to apply include:

1. Nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), California organizations
2. Units of municipal, county or Tribal governments
3. Fiscally sponsored organizations

Non-eligible applicants include:

1. Organizations that are registered and primarily operate as for-profit corporations/entities, even if they have a fiscal sponsor.
   a. This includes LLCs and any for-profit entities (including "charitable arms or branches").
2. Non-art organizations that do not offer ongoing art activities and/or services
3. Individuals
4. State agencies
5. Federal agencies
6. Elementary and secondary schools (public, private, charter)
7. School districts
8. County offices of education
9. Parent-teacher associations (PTAs)
10. Booster clubs

Eligibility Requirements

Applicant organizations and fiscal sponsors must meet the requirements below:

1. Have a principal place of business in California and a California address.
2. Have a minimum two-year history of consistent arts programming and/or services **prior** to the application deadline.
3. Demonstrate proof of nonprofit status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or section 23701d of the California Revenue and Taxation Code.
   a. Eligible applicant organizations without non-profit status, please see *Fiscal Sponsor Requirements* in the [2025 Grants Manual](#).
4. Have "active status" with the California Secretary of State (SOS) showing evidence of "good standing" at the time of application.

Eligible Request Amounts

Applicant organizations can request up to $25,000.

Funding Restrictions

- For applicant organizations with total revenue **below** $250,000, there are no funding restrictions.
- For applicant organizations with total revenue **above** $250,000, the sum of requests during the same year of funding cannot exceed **50%** of the total revenue from the most recently completed fiscal year.
- Applicants cannot apply to this program and the Impact Projects program; they must choose one.

Matching Funds

Matching funds are not required for this grant.

2025-26 Funding Priorities

- Organizations serving historically and systemically underserved communities located in the lower two quartiles of the Healthy Places Index, including rural and inland areas, as well as regions with a history of low investment from the CAC;
- First-time grantees, who have not previously received direct CAC funding (except for organizations whose only previous CAC funding was a Cultural Pathways grant); and
- Small organizations with Total Revenues of $250,000 or below.

Background & Purpose

The **Arts and Youth** program is rooted in the CAC's belief that arts learning and engagement should be available to all young people in California. Providing access to meaningful, culturally responsive arts experiences helps youth develop a greater sense of self, deepen their connection to their communities, and make meaningful connections across histories and cultures. By participating in the arts, youth gain the knowledge, skills, and understanding to actively take part in creative processes, projects, and pursuits throughout their lifetimes as culturally literate, engaged citizens.

The CAC acknowledges that barriers to access are compounded by factors such as socio-economic status, geographic isolation, gender identity, racial identity, cultural identity, digital

divide and disability and is committed to addressing these barriers in order to achieve greater equity. The Arts and Youth program expands meaningful arts participation and learning in diverse settings and contexts for infants, children, and youth ages 0-25 by prioritizing programs that directly bridge barriers to access and participation.

Program Goals

- Increase priority population youth participation in and access to quality arts experiences and learning opportunities.
- Provide creative experiences that promote positive social and emotional development in safe, healthy, and appropriate venues.
- Engage a new generation of arts participants, advocates, and creators by supporting art programs and experiences that invite, involve, or center youth voices, narratives, and perspectives.
- Create access to culturally and linguistically responsive quality arts experiences and learning opportunities using cultural knowledge to support the cultural assets of the local community and students' positive self-identification and respect for diverse cultures.
- Build capacity of educators and educational institutions to integrate arts learning into their teaching practices across the curriculum.
- Cultivate valuable life skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, collaboration, communication, and positive self-expression through the arts.

Project Requirements

- The project must engage youth (ages 0-25) that may not otherwise have access to or participate in arts learning activities.
- The project plan must reflect a collaborative relationship between the applicant organization, artists and/or culture bearers, youth, and the participating community.
- The anticipated project timeline must show how it will be completed on budget within the grant activity period in alignment with the program's purpose and goals.
- The project may occur during or outside of traditional school hours and take place at arts and culture venues, schools, community centers, court/school sites, juvenile halls and camps, county-operated correctional facilities, social services agencies, and other youth-oriented settings.
- The project design must include safe, healthy, and appropriate learning and community engagement environments for youth.
- If proposing therapeutic outcomes, applicants must establish the qualifications of service providers, how strategies are appropriate to the clinical and/or community arts setting, and how support is culturally responsive to participants.

Reporting Requirements

- Reports are filled out and submitted within the grant application portal, using the CAC provided format. The application owner will receive an email when reports are available in the Requires Attention section of the application owner's account.
- Provide a final report summarizing grant-funded activities and accomplishments within 30 days of the end of the grant activity period (or by the stated deadline). Grantees that do not submit reports will be ineligible to apply for future funding opportunities.

Grant Application Questions & Review Criteria

Application questions and required documents pertaining to each review criterion are included below.

Detailed instructions are available at calartscouncil.smartsimple.com.

Application Summary

Provide a brief summary of your proposal indicating how CAC grant funds would be used. This description will be used to introduce your proposal to the review panel. If funded, this description may be used as the Scope of Work in your grant contract and will be binding. It may also be edited by CAC and used to summarize your proposal in public documents. Please review the What We Do Not Fund resource document before completing this section.

Centering Equity and Accessibility

The application must demonstrate your organization's experience, capacity, and commitment to engaging and uplifting historically under-resourced, excluded, and erased artists, audiences, communities, and cultural practices. This dedication should be evident throughout the proposal.

The application must also demonstrate that the programs, services, information, and facilities—including online spaces—will be accessible to individuals with disabilities, such as those who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, or who have physical, visual, developmental, learning, or cognitive disabilities, as well as mental or chronic illnesses.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Describe your organization's equity and accessibility goals.
2. What does your organization do to achieve these goals?
3. How does your organization determine progress in achieving these goals?
4. Describe your organization's approach to ensuring that people with disabilities are able to fully participate in all programs and services.

Program Design & Implementation

The application must indicate clear objectives that address the Arts and Youth program goals and include a realistic timeline and appropriate budget.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Provide a detailed description of your proposed project and how your project will accomplish one or more of the program goals.
2. Is your project free to participants/audiences? If no, describe how your project is accessible and/or affordable to participants/audiences.
3. Provide a list of each key individual (artistic, technical, or administrative) involved in this project. Include name, title, whether to be supported by CAC funds, and role within the proposed activities.
4. Provide a clear timeline of all the main arts programs or services that will take place during the Grant Activity Period.
5. Complete a two-year budget snapshot table. Provide revenue and expense amounts. Address any significant changes in line items from one year to the next and explain anticipated surpluses or deficits.

6. Please provide the total amount of pass-through funds your organization manages. This includes grant funds passed to fiscally sponsored organizations. This total should not be included in your organizational Total Revenue calculation.
7. Please provide the total amount of funds used for regranting in the field. This total should not be included in your organizational Total Revenue calculation for this application.
8. Complete a detailed project budget, including all expenses relevant to the stated project activities, and include rates of pay that appropriately compensate the labor of all individuals working on the project. Provide details for each line item to be funded by this grant. Consult the [What We Do Not Fund](#) resource document and do not include items listed in the document.

Artistic Merit

The application must demonstrate how California artists are involved at every stage of the project design and execution. Artists demonstrate skills, expertise, and experiences that are central to the goals of the project.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Select the artistic discipline(s) your project uses:
2. Provide a written statement from the lead artist(s) describing their vision for the project and their connection to the community to be engaged. Include how the artist(s) leading the project identify as members of the community that will be engaged and have expertise in the forms of arts and cultural expression that are unique to, and/or historically rooted in, that community.
3. Provide at least one (1) but no more than five (5) support materials that best portray your organization and its work. These may include artistic work samples, letters of support, marketing materials, and/or partnership agreements. Samples must have been created within the past three years and should be relevant to this grant opportunity.

Community Engagement and Social Impact

The application must show the project's reach and/or depth of engagement within a defined community. It should include clear methods to evaluate success and document activities. Both project implementation and evaluation should involve meaningful community participation aligned with the project's identified outcomes.

Application Questions and Required Documents

1. Describe the youth population(s) this program serves and the existing barriers to their access to arts engagement and/or arts learning opportunities.
2. Describe how your project will address the healing, stabilizing, uplifting, and transforming of an identified community and their needs.
3. Describe how you will center community members' voices throughout the project, including development, implementation, and measures of success/evaluation (if applicable).

Staff Assistance

Before contacting staff, check [FAQs](#) to see if application questions can be answered. If staff assistance is still required for guidance or clarification, email is the best way to contact Program Specialists. **We recommend that you contact staff well in advance of the deadline to ensure you can be accommodated.** People who identify as Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, or have difficulty speaking may dial 711 to reach the California Relay Service (CRS). Large print is available upon request. Translation services are also available upon request.

Organizations seeking technical assistance should contact:

Emily Taggart
she/her
Arts Program Specialist
California Arts Council
artsyouthgrant@arts.ca.gov