CHALLENGE AMERICA

GUIDELINES

CFDA No. 45.024
OMB No. 3135-0112 Expires TBD

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CHALLENGE AMERICA

Challenge America offers support primarily to small organizations for projects in all artistic disciplines that extend the reach of the arts to groups/communities with rich and dynamic artistic and cultural contributions to share that are underserved. Challenge America features an abbreviated application, a robust structure of technical assistance, and grants for a set amount of $10,000. Grants require a cost share/match of $10,000 consisting of cash and/or in-kind contributions. Total project costs must be at least $20,000 or greater.

This category may be a good entry point for organizations that are new to applying for federal funding. See Applicant Eligibility for more information.

We welcome the opportunity to connect with you. Contact us at challengeamerica@arts.gov or 202-682-5700, and see Staff Assistance for more information.

Part 1 - Submit to Grants.gov	April 27, 2023 at 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time
Prepare application material so that it's ready to upload when the Applicant Portal opens	
Part 2 - Submit to Applicant Portal	May 2 – May 16, 2023 at 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time
Earliest Announcement of Grant Award or Rejection	October 2023
Earliest Beginning Date for Proposed Project	January 1, 2024

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Program Description

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is proud to support the nation's arts sector with grant opportunities so that together we can help everyone live more artful lives. The arts contribute to our individual well-being, the well-being of our communities, and to our local economies. The arts are also crucial to helping us make sense of our circumstances from different perspectives as we emerge from the pandemic and plan for the future.

Challenge America

Challenge America offers support primarily to small organizations for projects in all artistic disciplines that extend the reach of the arts to groups/communities with rich and dynamic artistic and cultural contributions to share that are underserved. The program is rooted in principles that include, but are not limited to, our recognition that:

- Some groups/communities and some geographic areas with rich cultural identities have limited grant funding opportunities, and/or have been historically underserved by national arts funding;
- Some small organizations may face barriers to accessing grant funding; and
- Some applicants to the NEA may benefit from enhanced technical assistance resources.

Challenge America seeks to address these potential barriers for organizations seeking funding. The program features an abbreviated application, a standardized $10,000 grant amount, and a robust structure of technical assistance to facilitate entry to NEA funding opportunities. This category may be a good entry point for organizations that are new to applying for federal funding.

First-time applicants to the NEA, as well as previous NEA applicants who have **not** been recommended for funding in any of the three most recent Fiscal Years (FYs 2021, 2022, or 2023) in any of the following grant programs, **are eligible** to apply:

- Grants for Arts Projects,
- Research Grants in the Arts, or
- Our Town.

Previous NEA applicants recommended for funding in Grants for Arts Projects, Research Grants in the Arts, or Our Town FY 2021, FY 2022, or FY 2023 are **not eligible** to apply.

Previous Challenge America, American Rescue Plan (ARP), and CARES Act applicants and grantees **are eligible** to apply, as long as they were not recommended for FY 2021, FY 2022, or FY 2023 funding in Grants for Arts Projects, Research Grants in the Arts, or Our Town.

See [Applicant Eligibility](#) for more information.

Projects

Challenge America supports arts projects in all artistic disciplines, including Artist Communities, Arts Education, Dance, Design, Folk & Traditional Arts, Literary Arts, Local Arts Agencies, Media Arts, Museums, Music, Musical Theater, Opera, Presenting & Multidisciplinary Arts, Theater, and Visual Arts.

Projects must extend the reach of the arts to groups/communities with rich and dynamic cultural identities that are underserved. Possible projects include, but are not limited to: arts programming, including commissioning or presentation of artists or artwork; marketing and promotional activities; and organizational planning. Projects may consist of one or more specific events or activities, and should not cover all of your programming for a season **We do not support seasonal or general operating support.**

Carefully read the application [Review Criteria](#) and address those criteria in the application.

What do we mean by underserved groups/communities?

The term "underserved," as defined by our legislation and agency policy, refers to those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited relative to: **geography, ethnicity**, **economics**, or **disability**. At least one of these characteristics must be evident in the proposed project. Age alone (e.g., youth, seniors) does not qualify a group as underserved.

As applicable, engagement with the following constituencies is encouraged (in accordance with White House Executive Orders), including but not limited to:

- [Historically Black Colleges and Universities,](#)
- [Tribal Colleges and Universities,](#)
- American Indian and Alaska Native tribes,
- [Predominantly Black Institutions,](#)
- [Hispanic Serving Institutions,](#)
- Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and
- Organizations that support the independence and lifelong inclusion of people with disabilities.

Projects may focus on reaching a particular group or demographic; however, they may not be exclusionary under [Federal civil rights laws and policies](#) prohibiting discrimination. This extends to hiring practices, artist selection processes, and audience engagement. For additional information, refer to this archived webinar: [Things to Know Before You Apply: Federal Civil Rights and Your Grants Application.](#)

To view examples of the types of projects we have previously funded, visit our [Recent Grants Search tool](#).

Staff Assistance

We understand that applying for federal funding can be a significant undertaking. Our staff strives to ensure that every applicant receives the support they need to understand every step of the application process and ultimately submit the most competitive application possible. We are available to answer questions you might have about Challenge America. Reach out to us if you have questions about whether your organization and proposed project are a good match for the Challenge America program, or about any other aspect of the application process.

Contact: challengeamerica@arts.gov or 202-682-5700.

Be sure to check out the "Applicant Resources" section in the left sidebar. We conduct regular online Office Hours to answer questions. Dates and times are located in this section. For more information, see "How to Apply" in the left sidebar, as well as the application questions that you will be asked.

Accessibility

Federal regulations require that all NEA-funded projects be accessible to people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities may be audiences, visitors, artists, performers, teaching artists, students, staff, and volunteers. Funded activities should be held in a physically accessible venue and program access and effective communication should be provided for participants and audience members with disabilities. If your project is recommended for funding, you will be asked to provide detailed information LINK TO ACCESSIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE describing how you will make your project physically and programmatically accessible to people with disabilities. See Award Administration for more information.

National Historic Preservation Act and/or the National Environmental Policy Act Review

Recommended projects may be subject to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and/or the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance review.

Some of the common project types that garner a review are:
- A project involving or occurring near or at a historic place, such as a property that is 50 years old or older, or a place listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- The commissioning and installation of temporary or permanent outdoor installations, including sculptures, statuary, banners, mixed media, painting or murals, as well as small structures such as benches, bus shelters, and produce stands.
- An outdoor arts festival.
- Permanent wayfinding signs and other similar artistic directional installations.
- Maintenance or rehabilitation of landscapes and gardens.
- In-kind replacement or repairs at a facility that is older than 50 years of age.
- Design services and planning for projects that may affect historic properties.

See more information about NHPA/NEPA review under Award Administration.

Application Calendar

Part 1 - Submit to Grants.gov	April 27, 2023 at 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time
Prepare application material so that it's ready to upload when the Applicant Portal opens	
Part 2 - Submit to Applicant Portal	May 2 – May 16, 2023 at 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time
Earliest Announcement of Grant Award or Rejection	October 2023
Earliest Beginning Date for Proposed Project	January 1, 2024

An organization may submit only one application to either Grants for Arts Projects or Challenge America per calendar year (see "Application Limits" for the one exception to this rule). If your organization submitted an application to the February 2023 Grants for Arts Projects deadline, you may not apply to the Challenge America program in April 2023 as well. See Applicant Eligibility for more information.

Before applying, your organization must create and maintain up-to-date registrations with both the System for Award Management (SAM) at SAM.gov and Grants.gov. Registering and maintaining accounts with SAM and Grants.gov is always FREE. See How to Apply for more information.

Registration in SAM.gov and Grants.gov can take several weeks. Give yourself plenty of time to get registered. (We suggest approximately four weeks to complete these registrations.) Similarly, submit your application to Grants.gov well in advance of the deadline in case you encounter any difficulties.

Late, ineligible, and incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Exceptions to the deadline will be considered only for registration or renewal issues or technical malfunctions that are the result of failures on the part of SAM, Grants.gov, or NEA systems, as determined by the NEA. To be considered for this exception, you must provide documentation of a SAM, Grants.gov, or NEA systems failure that prevented your submission by the deadline.

In the event of a major emergency (e.g., a hurricane or SAM, Grants.gov, or NEA systems technological failure), the NEA Chair may adjust application deadlines for affected applicants. If a deadline is extended for any reason, an announcement will be posted on our website.

Do not seek information on the status of your application before the announcement date that is listed above.

Questions?

Email: challengeamerica@arts.gov

Call: 202-682-5700

Access for individuals with disabilities:

Contact the Office of Accessibility at 202-682-5532 / accessibility@arts.gov or the Office of Civil Rights at civilrights@arts.gov to request an accommodation or an alternate format of the guidelines.

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December 2022

Award Information

Grant Amounts, Cost Share, and Matching Funds

All grants are for $10,000.

Our grants cannot exceed 50% of the total cost of the project. All grants require a nonfederal cost share/match of at least 1 to 1. For example, if an organization receives a $10,000 grant, the total eligible project costs must be at least $20,000 and the organization must provide at least $10,000 toward the project from nonfederal sources.

Cost share/matching funds may be all cash, all in-kind (third-party) contributions, or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. Cash match refers to cash contributions (including items, services, or organizational cash that are provided by the applicant), grants, and revenues that are expected or received for the project. In-kind match refers to donated space, supplies, volunteer services, etc. that are donated by individuals or organizations (third-party) other than the applicant. Cost share/matching funds cannot include funds from any NEA or other federal awards.

Contact us at challengeamerica@arts.gov or 202-682-5700 if you have questions about what constitutes a cost share/match.

Period of Performance

Our support of a project can start no earlier than January 1, 2024, which is the "Earliest Start Date for Proposed Project" listed on the [Application Calendar](#).

Grants awarded under these guidelines generally may cover a period of performance of up to two years. **The two-year period is intended to allow an applicant sufficient time to plan, execute, and close out its project, not to repeat a one-year project for a second year**.

Any planning costs that are included as part of the project must be incurred during the established period of performance. No pre-award costs are allowable in the Project Budget. Project costs that are incurred before the "Earliest Start Date for Proposed Project" will be removed from the Project Budget.

A grantee may not receive more than one NEA grant for the same project during the same period of performance.

Unallowable Activities/Costs

The activities and costs listed below are **not** allowable, and should not be included as part of your project or budget. This includes activities/costs covered by cost share/matching sources.

Unallowable Activities

- General operating or seasonal support.
- Direct grants to individuals.
- Direct grants to individual elementary or secondary schools -- charter, private, or public -- directly. Schools may participate as partners in projects for which another eligible organization applies. Local education agencies, school districts, and state and regional education agencies are eligible. If a single school also is a local education agency, as is the case with some charter schools, the school may apply with documentation that supports its status as a local education agency.
- Projects that replace arts instruction provided by an arts specialist.
- Generally, courses/coursework in degree-granting institutions
- Literary publishing that does not focus on contemporary literature and/or writers.
- Generally, publication of books, exhibition of works, or other projects by the applicant organization's board members, faculty, or trustees.
- Generally, exhibitions of, and other projects that primarily involve, single, individually-owned, private collections.
- Projects for which the selection of artists or art works is based upon criteria other than artistic excellence and artistic merit. Examples include festivals, exhibitions, or publications for which no jury/editorial/curatorial judgment has been applied.
- Social activities such as receptions, parties, galas, community dinners, picnics, and potlucks.
- Awards to individuals or organizations to honor or recognize achievement.
- Commercial (for-profit) enterprises or activities, including concessions, food, T-shirts, artwork, or other items for resale. This includes online or virtual sales/shops.
- Lobbying, including activities intended to influence the outcome of elections or influence government officials regarding pending legislation, either directly or through specific lobbying appeals to the public.
- Voter registration drives and related activities.
- Construction, purchase, or renovation of facilities. (Design fees, preparing space for an exhibit, installation or de-installation of art, and community planning are eligible. However, no NEA or cost share/matching funds may be directed to the costs of physical construction or renovation or toward the purchase costs of facilities or land.)
- Subgranting or regranting.

Certain Unallowable Costs

- Cash reserves and endowments.
- Costs for the creation of new organizations.
- Costs to bring a project into compliance with federal grant requirements. This includes environmental or historical assessments or reviews and the hiring of individuals to write assessments or reviews or to otherwise comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and/or the National Historic Preservation Act.
- Expenditures related to compensation to foreign nationals and/or travel to or from foreign countries when those expenditures are not in compliance with regulations issued by the U.S. Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control. For further information, see https://www.treasury.gov/about/organizational-structure/offices/pages/office-of-foreign-assets-control.aspx or contact our Office of Grants Management at grants@arts.gov.
- Project costs supported by any other federal funding. This includes federal funding received either directly from a federal agency (e.g., National Endowment for the Humanities, Housing and Urban Development, National Science Foundation, or an entity that receives federal appropriations such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting or Amtrak); or indirectly from a pass-through organization such as a state arts agency, regional arts organization, or a grant made to another entity.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Gifts and prizes, including cash prizes as well as other items (e.g., electronic devices, gift certificates) with monetary value.
- Stipends/fees to individuals who are incarcerated.
- Contributions and donations to other entities.
- General miscellaneous or contingency costs.
- Fines and penalties, bad debt costs, deficit reduction.
- Marketing expenses that are not directly related to the project.
- Audit costs that are not directly related to a single audit (formerly known as an A-133 audit).
- Rental costs for home office workspace owned by individuals or entities affiliated with the applicant organization.
- The purchase of vehicles.
- Visa costs paid to the U.S. government.
- Costs incurred before the beginning or after the completion of the official period of performance.

All applicants should carefully review the Assurance of Compliance and Appendix A of our General Terms and Conditions (GTC) which detail other requirements that govern awards.

Eligibility

If an organization applies to the Challenge America category, it may not also apply to the Grants for Arts Projects category during the same calendar year. If your organization submitted an application to the February 2023 Grants for Arts Projects deadline or will submit an application to the July 2023 Grants for Arts Projects deadline, you may not also apply to the May 2023 Challenge America deadline.

The following **are eligible** to apply:

- Nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), U.S. organizations;
- Units of state or local government; or
- Federally recognized tribal communities or tribes.

Applicants fitting the above eligibility requirements may be arts organizations, local arts agencies, arts service organizations, local education agencies (school districts), or other organizations that can help advance the goals of the NEA.

To be eligible, **the applicant organization must**:

- Be a first-time applicant to the NEA or
- Be a previous NEA applicant that was **not** recommended for funding in any of the three most recent Fiscal Years (FYs 2021, 2022, or 2023) in any of the following grant programs:
  - Grants for Arts Projects (application deadlines in February and July 2020, 2021, and 2022);
  - Research Grants in the Arts (application deadlines in October 2020, October 2021, and April 2022); or
  - Our Town (application deadlines in August 2020, 2021, and 2022).

Previous NEA applicants recommended for funding in Grants for Arts projects, Research Grants in the Arts, or Our Town in FY 2021, FY 2022, or FY 2023, are **not eligible** to apply (as indicated by an NEA Offer Letter dated November 10, 2020 or later).

Previous Challenge America, American Rescue Plan (ARP), and CARES Act applicants and grantees **are eligible** to apply, as long as they were not recommended for FY 2021, FY 2022, or FY 2023 funding in Grants for Arts Projects , Research Grants in the Arts, or Our Town.

[Eligibility Graphic]

NOTE: Applicants can check their organization's grant history using the Recent Grants Search tool. See instructions for using the tool. Organizations that applied to the FY 2023 Grants for Arts Projects July 7, 2022 or FY 2023 Our Town August 4, 2022 deadlines will receive

notification of recommendation or rejection in early April 2023. Afterward, these recommendations will be posted to Recent Grants.

Contact us at challengeamerica@arts.gov or 202-682-5700 if you have questions.

To be eligible, **the applicant organization also must:**
- Meet the NEA's "Legal Requirements" including nonprofit, tax-exempt status at the time of application.
- Be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM, www.sam.gov)have a Unique Entity Identifier, , and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete--and should a grant be made, throughout the life of the award.
- Have completed a three-year history of arts programming prior to the application deadline.
  - For the purpose of defining eligibility, "three-year history" refers to when an organization began its programming and not when it incorporated or received nonprofit, tax-exempt status.
  - Programming is not required to have taken place during consecutive years. You will be asked to provide examples of previous programming in the application.
  - Organizations that previously operated as a program of another institution may include arts programming it carried out while part of that institution for its three-year history.

The following **are not eligible** to apply:
- Individuals;
- Applications through a fiscal sponsor/agent (organizations must apply directly on their own behalf, see more information on fiscal sponsors/agents); or
- Designated state and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) and their regional arts organizations (RAOs).

SAAs and RAOs may serve as partners in projects. However, they may not receive NEA funds (except as provided through their designated grant programs), and SAA/RAO costs may not be included as part of the required cost share/match. SAAs and RAOs are eligible to apply through the Partnership Agreements guidelines.

An organization whose primary purpose is to channel resources (financial, human, or other) to an affiliated organization may only apply if the affiliated organization does not submit its own application. This prohibition applies even if each organization has its own 501(c)(3) status. For example, the "Friends of ABC Museum" may not apply if the ABC Museum applies.

Late, ineligible, and incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Application Limits

An organization may submit only one application at Challenge America's May 4, 2023, deadline. If an organization applies to the Challenge America category, it may not also apply to the Grants for Arts Projects category during the same calendar year.

Parent (and Related) Organizations

Exceptions to the one-application rule are made only for parent organizations that have separately identifiable and independent components (e.g., a university campus that has a presenting organization and a radio station); this includes city or county governments.

See detailed information about Parent (and Related) Organizations, including definitions and other requirements.

Fiscal Sponsorship

We do not fund unincorporated or for-profit entities or individuals that engage nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)3 U.S. organizations; units of state or local government; or federally recognized tribal communities or tribes to apply for grants on their behalf. An ineligible organization (i.e., one without its own nonprofit status) may not use a fiscal sponsor/agent for the purpose of submitting an application.

What is a fiscal sponsor/agent?
A fiscal sponsor/agent is an entity that oversees the fiscal activities of another organization, company, or group of independent artists or projects. These activities may include bookkeeping, filing of W2s or 1099s, daily banking, or grant preparation.
The key to avoiding the appearance of fiscal sponsorship is the involvement of your organization. This might include:

- Producing or co-producing.

- Partnering on creative direction or development.

- Organizing workshops, public showings, or distribution of work.

- Providing social networking strategies or web implementation.

You can provide evidence of your organization's involvement in your application, on your website, through announcements and evaluations of public events, and with archival documentation.

We may review your website and other materials in addition to your application to determine the appropriate nature of the project.

If your organization does not have its own nonprofit status, you may still participate in a project submitted by another organization that meets our eligibility criteria.

While an organization that serves as a fiscal sponsor/agent may not apply for projects on behalf of the entities or individuals that it may sponsor as part of its mission and programs, it may apply for its own programs and productions. In this case, the organization must clearly demonstrate that it is applying only for its own programmatic activities.

More Information about Parent (and Related) Organizations

A parent organization that comprises separately identifiable and independent components (e.g., a university campus that has a presenting organization and a radio station) may submit an application for each such component. In addition, a parent organization also may submit one application on its own behalf for a **project that is different from any project submitted in an application by its independent component(s)**.

An eligible independent component must be a unit that is both programmatically and administratively distinct from the parent organization. The independent status is demonstrated by the component's:

- Unique mission, separate and distinct from the parent entity;

- Separate, dedicated staff, with duties specific to the mission of the component;

- Independent board, mostly consisting of members not associated with the parent entity and generally functioning with substantial oversight and management of the component;

- Separate budget, maintained by the component; and

- Three-year history of arts programming undertaken by the component.

To qualify as an eligible independent component, it should be equivalent to a stand-alone institution.

A parent organization should consult with our staff to verify the eligibility of its component before preparing an application. If an application is submitted by a parent organization on behalf of a component that is determined by the NEA not to be independent and separate from the parent organization, then that application may be allowed as the parent's single application.

The following **do not qualify** as eligible independent components:

- Academic departments of colleges and universities.

- Programs, initiatives, and projects of organizations.

- Collaboratives or consortiums of multiple organizations.

For example:

- An art museum on a university campus serves the general public and does not grant degrees. The museum board, not the university trustees, manages the museum's budget, staff, and programming. In this example, the art museum essentially is a stand-alone organization and qualifies as an independent component.

- A symphony association sponsors a youth orchestra in addition to its professional orchestra. Some symphony musicians serve as faculty for the youth orchestra; there is some overlap of membership between the symphony trustees and the youth orchestra's advisory board; and the executive director for the symphony association serves as CEO

for both the professional and youth orchestras. In this case, while the youth orchestra may be an important program of the symphony association, it is not equivalent to a separate institution and therefore does not qualify as an independent component.

The application for the independent component must be for a project of the component. For example, if a university campus submits an application for its art museum as an independent component, the project must be for the art museum. The art museum cannot be used as a passthrough entity for projects from other areas of the university.

The parent organization must meet the eligibility requirements for all applicants. A related organization that performs grant administration duties for a parent organization (e.g., a college foundation that administers grants awarded to a college and its components) may submit applications for components and the parent organization in lieu of such applications being submitted by the parent. The related organization must meet the eligibility requirements for all applicants.

How to Apply

APPLICATION QUESTIONS & INSTRUCTIONS: LINK TO INSTRUCTIONS PDF (SAME LINK WILL APPEAR AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE)

Submitting an application is a multi-step process:
- **Register** with Login.gov, SAM and Grants.gov or renew/verify these registrations.
- **Part 1:** Submit to Grants.gov the "Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organization Form." This is a brief form that will collect very basic information about your organization. A direct link to the Grants.gov Opportunity Package is included further down this on this page.
- **Part 2:** Complete the "Grant Application Form (GAF)" and upload items through the NEA's Applicant Portal. This web form is where you will enter the majority of your application material (e.g., project description, timelines, budget information).

Login.gov, SAM, Grants.gov (Part 1), and the NEA's Applicant Portal (Part 2) are all separate online systems.

Instructions for Part 1 and Part 2, including application deadlines and a list of all the application questions, can be found at the bottom of the page.

[How to Apply graphic]

All Applicants: Registration and Renewal

Applying for a federal grant for the first time? See here.

Register with Login.gov, SAM and Grants.gov or renew/verify these registrations

Before applying, your organization must create and maintain up-to-date registrations with Login.gov, the System for Award Management (SAM) at SAM.gov and Grants.gov. Registering and maintaining these accounts is always FREE.

These registrations can take several weeks to finalize, so begin this process early! Registrations with Login.gov, SAM and Grants.gov must be active for you to submit your application. Finalize your registrations well before the application deadline. This should allow you time to resolve any issues that may arise.

We recommend that you register in the following order:
1. Login.gov
2. SAM
3. Grants.gov

Both SAM and Grants.gov will require you to use your Login.gov username and password to log in to their sites.

Login.gov Registration

Go to Create an account to set up your Login.gov account. This account will allow you to access many government websites, including both SAM and Grants.gov.

SAM Registration

Go to SAM Entity Registration to get started on a new registration, or to renew/check the status of an existing registration.

Your SAM registration must be current at the time a grant is made, and throughout the life of the award. SAM registrations, once activated, can take a day or more to be visible in Grants.gov. Verify your SAM registration well ahead of the application deadline.

When registering/renewing your SAM account, you must select "Yes" when completing the "Representations & Certifications" section. All awardees are required to have these representations & certifications in order to receive an award.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

To apply for federal funds, organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier, also known as a "UEI." The UEI is a 12-character alpha numeric value that will be assigned by SAM for free during the registration process. Organizations can find their UEI in their SAM record.

If you have difficulty locating the UEI, contact SAM at 1-866-606-8220 or see the help section of SAM's website.

Grants.gov Registration

New Applicants:

- If your organization is not yet registered with Grants.gov, go to Organization Registration, after setting up your Login.gov account, and registering with SAM.
- During the Grants.gov registration process, you will be asked to set up a separate username and password for Grants.gov.
- After creating your Grants.gov account, you may link your Grants.gov and Login.gov accounts.
- After linking accounts, you will use your Login.gov credentials each time you sign in to Grants.gov.

Returning Applicants:

- If your organization already has registered with Grants.gov, renew your registration with SAM and verify that your registration with Grants.gov is current.

- If you have not already linked your Grants.gov and Login.gov accounts, you will be prompted to link your accounts when you click the "login" button on Grants.gov.

You must complete the Grants.gov registration process to access the Part 1 application package (see below). You will need the Login.gov Username and Password that you obtain during the registration process to submit your application, and you won't be able to submit your application unless your SAM registration is active and up-to-date.

Login.gov, SAM, and Grants.gov Help

The NEA does not have access to your Login.gov, SAM, or Grants.gov accounts. If you have any questions about or need assistance with these sites, including questions regarding electronic accessibility, contact them directly:

- **Login.gov Help**: Consult the information posted in their Help Center, or use their online form to submit a question.

- **SAM Federal Service Desk**: Call 1-866-606-8220 or see the information posted on the SAM website at SAM Help.

- **Grants.gov Contact Center**: Call 1-800-518-4726, email support@grants.gov, or consult the information posted on the Grants.gov website at Support. The Grants.gov Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Part 1: Go to the Grant Opportunity Package

Access the Grant Opportunity Package for Part 1 with the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organization Form on Grants.gov by clicking on the link below:

<div style="border:1px solid">

CLICK HERE
Funding Opportunity Number: 2023NEA01CA

</div>

1. Clicking the link above will take you **directly** to the pre-populated application package in Grants.gov.

2. The Grants.gov "View Grant Opportunity" screen will open, click the red "Apply" button.

3. You will be prompted to log in. In order to create the Workspace application, you must be logged into Grants.gov with a participant role of either **Workspace Manager** or **Authorized Organization Representative (AOR).** See more information on participant roles.

4. After logging in, to create a Workspace application:
   a. Fill in the Application Filing Name field with your organization name, then
   b. Click the **Create Workspace** button.

5. Afterwards, you will be directed to the Manage Workspace page, where you can begin working on the application.

Learn more about **Grants.gov's Workspace**.

Application Questions and Instructions:

Full instructions on how to complete both Part 1 and Part 2, including the application questions, and a link to the NEA Applicant Portal for Part 2, can be found in this PDF document.

Instructions for completing Part 1 and Part 2 (PDF)

Application Review

Review Criteria

Applications will be reviewed on the basis of the criteria below, with equal weight assigned to artistic excellence and artistic merit. The review criteria reflect the NEA's priorities and are aligned with the agency's strategic plan. While proposals need not address each criterion marked "as applicable," applicants may wish to consider all of the criteria when developing their proposals.

Proposals must be for arts projects with specific, definable activities. The application may be rejected if it does not sufficiently describe the project activities.

For more information about how these criteria relate to the Challenge America program, review the Applicant Resources and/or contact a Challenge America staff member. We are here to help.

ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

The **artistic excellence** of the project includes:
- The quality of the artists and other key individuals, creative process, works of art, organizations, arts education providers, artistic partners, and/or services that the project will involve and their relevance to the audience or communities being served.

ARTISTIC MERIT

The **artistic merit** of the project includes:
- The ability of the project to reach and meaningfully engage with groups/communities with rich and dynamic cultural identities that are underserved—those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited relative to: geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability.
- The value and appropriateness of the project to the organization's mission, artistic field, artists, audience, community, and/or constituency.
- The ability to carry out the project based on such factors as the appropriateness of the budget, clarity of the project activities, the resources involved, and the qualifications of the project's personnel and/or partnerships.
- Clearly defined goals and/or proposed outcomes and an appropriate plan to determine if those goals and/or proposed outcomes are met.

As applicable:
- Potential to strengthen the arts sector through knowledge-sharing and resources.
- Potential to make quality arts or cultural resources more widely available.
- Potential of the project to grow organizational capacity and experience.

What Happens to Your Application

Applications are evaluated according to the "Review Criteria." After processing by our staff, applications are reviewed by a diverse group of arts experts and other individuals with broad knowledge of the specific types of projects in this funding area. Following further staff review, these recommendations are forwarded to the NEA Chair.

The Chair reviews the recommendations for grants in all funding categories and makes the final decision on all grant awards. Applicants are then notified of funding decisions.

After notification of funding decisions, applicants with questions may contact the staff.

Any applicant whose request for funding has not been recommended may ask for an explanation of the basis for denial. In such instances, the NEA must be contacted no later than 30 calendar days after the official notification.

See the "Application Calendar" for information on when we expect to announce grant awards and rejections, and the earliest dates by which projects may begin.

Risk Assessment: All recommended applications undergo a review to evaluate risk posed by the applicant prior to making a federal award. This may include past performance on grants, meeting reporting deadlines, compliance with terms and conditions, audit findings, etc.

Award Administration

Award Notices

The "Earliest Announcement of Grant Award or Rejection" date for your category on the [Application Calendar](#) tells you when we expect to announce grant decisions.

Note that the "announcement" is likely to take the form of a preliminary congratulatory message, a request for project/budget revisions, or a rejection notification. The official grant award notification (i.e., a notice of action authorized by the NEA Office of Grants Management) is the only legal and valid confirmation of award. Receipt of your official award notification can take several months depending on a number of factors such as reviewing changes to the project budget, the number of awards to be processed, whether the agency has its appropriation from Congress, etc.

Final Reporting

Before a grant is awarded, organizations must have submitted acceptable Final Report packages by the due date(s) for all NEA grant(s) previously received.

National Historic Preservation Act and/or the National Environmental Policy Act Review

If you are recommended for a grant, your project may be subject to the [National Historic Preservation Act](#) (NHPA) and/or the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA) and the NEA will conduct a review of your project to ensure that it is in compliance with NHPA/NEPA. Some of the common project types that garner a NHPA review are:

- A project involving or occurring at or near a place that is 50 years old and therefore potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. This includes a property, such as a historic house museum or a historic plaza; or a historic district with multiple historic properties. Historic places may also be structures, such as bridges, or objects, such as sculptures, or a landscape that is historically significant.

- The commissioning and installation of temporary or permanent outdoor installations, including sculptures, statuary, banners, mixed media, painting or murals.

- An outdoor arts festival.

- Permanent wayfinding signs and other similar artistic directional installations.

- Maintenance or rehabilitation of landscapes and gardens.

- In-kind replacement or repairs at a facility that is older than 50 years of age.

- Design services and planning for projects that may affect historic properties.

This review and approval process may take up time to complete and may delay your project's start date and our ability to make a grant award/our ability to release grant funds. If you are

recommended for an award which may have historic preservation or environmental concerns (NHPA/NEPA), you will be notified and asked to provide additional information.

To expedite the review, ensure that you include thorough and complete information for all project activities and locations. The NEA cannot release an award and/or grant funds until the NHPA/NEPA review is complete. If asked for additional information for a review, please indicate the timeline for determining grant activities and locations, if they are not yet finalized. In some cases, such as for permanent art installations at historic properties or advanced design (more advanced than early design development) affecting historic properties, you may be instructed to continue the review with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

See here to learn more about the questions you will need to answer for the review of a project impacted by the National Historic Preservation Act and/or the National Environmental Policy Act.

Accessibility

Federal regulations require that all NEA-funded projects be accessible to people with disabilities, including audiences, visitors, artists, performers, teaching artists, students, staff, and volunteers. Funded activities must be held in a physically accessible venue and program access and effective communication must be provided for participants and audience members with disabilities, including people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing, people who are blind, and people with physical, cognitive, sensory, and/or psychological disabilities.

If your project is recommended for funding, you will be asked to provide detailed information describing how you will make your project physically and programmatically accessible to people with disabilities:

- Buildings and facilities (including projects held in historic facilities) should be physically accessible. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Ground-level/no-step entry, ramped access, and/or elevators to project facilities and outdoor spaces;
  - Integrated and dispersed wheelchair seating in assembly areas;
  - Wheelchair-accessible box office, stage/backstage, meeting, and dressing rooms;
  - Wheelchair-accessible display cases, exhibit areas, and counters;
  - Accessible studio, classroom, and work spaces;
  - Accessible artist residency studios and living spaces, to include dining facilities and restrooms;
  - Wheelchair-accessible restrooms and water fountains; and
  - Directional signage for accessible entrances, restrooms, and other facilities; and
  - Accessible workspaces for employees.

- The programmatic offering should be accessible either as part of the funded activity or upon request, where relevant. This can include, but is not limited to providing:

- o Designation of an accessibility coordinator and publicly-available contact information (on website and promotional materials) for requesting accommodations;
- o Accessible and screen reader-compatible electronic materials, documents, websites, virtual platforms, and inclusion of alternative text for images;
- o Accessible on-line application and grant systems (where relevant);
- o Print materials in alternative formats, such as large-print brochures/labels/programs, braille, and electronic/digital formats;
- o Accommodations for performances, tours, virtual streamed events, conferences, and lectures, such as sign language interpretation, real-time captioning, and audio description;
- o Tactile art, signage, sculpture, and representations of two-dimensional artwork;
- o Closed/open captioning and audio/visual description for video, film, television broadcasts;
- o Transcripts of radio programs and podcasts;
- o Auxiliary aids and devices such as assistive listening devices;
- o Sensory-friendly programming, spaces, and approaches for people with sensory-processing issues and other neurological conditions;
- o Accommodations for live and archived virtual events, including captioning, sign language interpreting, and audio/visual description; and
- o Accommodations to integrate students with disabilities in arts learning programs.

See the Nondiscrimination Statutes in our "Assurance of Compliance" for additional information.

For technical assistance on how to make your project accessible, contact the Accessibility Office at accessibility@arts.gov, 202-682-5532 Voice; or the Civil Rights Office at civilrights@arts.gov, 202-682-5454 Voice; or see our online Accessibility Resources.

Civil Rights

Projects may focus on reaching a particular group or demographic (such as race, color or national origin, including limited English proficiency); however, they may not be exclusionary under Federal civil rights laws and policies prohibiting discrimination. This extends to hiring practices, artist selection processes, and audience engagement. For additional information, refer to this archived webinar: Things to Know Before You Apply: Federal Civil Rights and Your Grants Application.

The Office of Civil Rights at 202-682-5454 or civilrights@arts.gov investigates complaints about compliance with accessibility standards as well as other federal civil rights statutes. For inquiries about limited English proficiency, go to http://www.lep.gov, the FOIA Reading Room, or contact the Office of Civil Rights at 202-682-5454 or civilrights@arts.gov.

Project Reporting and Evaluation

We ask all applicants to define what they would like to achieve, how they will evaluate the degree to which it is achieved, and, upon completion of the project, what they have learned from their experiences. Such feedback need not entail large-scale or expensive evaluation efforts. You should do what is feasible and appropriate for your organization and project. When a grant is completed, you must submit a final report and answer questions detailing your accomplishments, who benefited, and the resulting impact of your project as well as list the involvement of key partners, funders, and artists. Arts Education grantees who apply for a Direct Learning Grant will be required to describe the assessment methods used to assess learning.

NEA staff will assign one of the agency's objectives to your project: Creation, Engagement, Learning (all Arts Education grantees will be assigned the Learning objective), or Our Town. Before applying, review the reporting requirements for the agency's objectives: Standard -- for Creation, Engagement, Learning; Arts Education, for all Arts Education grantees; or Our Town. Reporting requirements for Our Town are different from -- and more extensive than -- the reporting requirements for the other objectives. If you have any questions about the agency's objectives or the associated reporting requirements that may be required if you receive a grant, contact the staff before applying.

Beyond the reporting requirements for all grantees, selected grantees will be asked to assist in the collection of additional information that can help the NEA determine the degree to which agency objectives were achieved. You may be required to provide evidence of project accomplishments including, but not limited to, work samples, community action plans, cultural asset studies, programs, reviews, relevant news clippings, and playbills. Remember that you are required to maintain project documentation for three years following submission of your final reports.

Crediting Requirement

Grantees must clearly acknowledge support from the NEA in their programs and related promotional material including publications and websites. Additional acknowledgment requirements may be provided later.

Implementation of Title 2 CFR Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

This guidance from the federal government's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) establishes clarity and consistency of the pre- and post-award requirements applicable to federal grantees. Under the authority listed above, the NEA adopts the OMB Guidance in 2 CFR part 200 under §3255.1 Adoption of 2 CFR Part 200. This part gives regulatory effect to the OMB guidance and supplements the guidance as needed for the NEA.

General Terms & Conditions

Federal and agency requirements that relate to grants awarded by the NEA are highlighted in our General Terms & Conditions (GTC). The GTC incorporates the adoption of 2 CFR Part 200 by reference. The document also explicitly identifies where the NEA has selected options offered in the regulation, such as budget waivers and requirements for use of program income. It also includes agency requirements for cost share/matching funds, reporting requirements, amendment processes, and termination actions. **Grantees must review, understand, and comply with these requirements.** Failure to do so may result in having a grant terminated and/or returning funds to the National Endowment for the Arts, among other things.

Changes in Projects

Applicants must notify the NEA immediately of any significant changes in their project that occur after they have submitted their application. If the project or the organization's capacity changes significantly before an award is made, the NEA may revise or withdraw the funding recommendation.

Grantees are expected to carry out a project that is consistent with the proposal that was approved for funding by the NEA. If changes in the project are required, the grantee must submit a request with justification for the change(s) through a proper REACH account for the award for review by the Office of Grants Management. **Approval is not guaranteed**. Detailed information is included the NEA's General Terms & Conditions for Grants to Organizations.

Legal Requirements

NOTE: This list highlights some of the significant legal requirements that may apply to an applicant or grantee, however, it is not exhaustive. More information regarding these and other legal requirements may be found at Appendix A of our General Terms & Conditions which sets forth the National Policy and Other Legal Requirements, Statutes, and Regulations that Govern Your Award. There may be other applicable legal requirements that are not listed here.

1. By law, the National Endowment for the Arts may support only those organizations that:

   - **Are tax-exempt**. Organizations qualifying for this status must meet the following criteria:

     1. No part of net earnings may benefit a private stockholder or individual.

     2. Donations to the organization must be allowable as a charitable contribution under Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.

     For further information, go to the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) website.

- Organizations who have had their IRS status revoked are not eligible for National Endowment for the Arts support. It is your responsibility to ensure that your status is current at the time of the application and throughout the life of your award.

- **Compensate all professional performers and related or supporting professional personnel on National Endowment for the Arts-supported projects at no less than the prevailing minimum compensation**. (This requirement is in accordance with regulations that have been issued by the Secretary of Labor in 29 CFR Part 505. This part does not provide information on specific compensation levels.)

- **Ensure that no part of any National Endowment for the Arts-supported project will be performed or engaged in under working conditions which are unsanitary or hazardous or dangerous to the health and safety of the employees involved**.

2. **Some legal requirements apply to every applicant, for example:**

- **Compliance with the federal requirements** that are outlined in the Assurance of Compliance below.

- **Debarment and Suspension procedures**. The applicant must comply with requirements set forth in Subpart C of 2 CFR 180, as adopted by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2 CFR Part 3254. Failure to comply may result in the debarment or suspension of the grantee and the National Endowment for the Arts suspending, terminating and/or recovering funds.

- **Federal Debt Status** (OMB Circular A-129). Processing of applications will be suspended when applicants are delinquent on federal tax or non-tax debts, including judgment liens against property for a debt to the federal government. An organization's debt status is displayed in the System for Award Management (SAM). New awards will not be made if an applicant is still in debt status as of September 1.

- **Labor Standards** (29 CFR Part 505). If a grant is awarded, the grantee must comply with the standards set out in Labor Standards on Projects or Productions Assisted by Grants from the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.

- **The Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988** (41 U.S.C. 8101 et seq. and 2 CFR Part 3256). The grantee is required to publish a statement regarding its drug-free workplace program as well as comply with other requirements.

3. **Some legal requirements apply depending upon what the grant is funding, for example:**
- If your project activities have the potential to impact any structure that is eligible for or on the National Register of Historic Places, adjacent to a structure that is eligible for or on the National Register of Historic Places, or located in an historic district, you will be asked to provide additional information about your project or take additional action so that the agency can review and comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). NHPA also applies to any planning activities that may affect historic properties

or districts. The additional agency review must be completed prior to any agency funds being released.

- If your project activities have the potential to impact the environment or environmentally sensitive resources, you will be required to provide information in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The additional agency review must be completed prior to any agency funds being released.

- If your contract is over $2,000 and involves the construction, alteration, or repair of public buildings or public works, it must contain a clause setting forth the minimum wages to be paid to laborers and mechanics employed under the contract in accordance with The Davis-Bacon and Related Acts (DBRA).

4. **Some legal requirements apply depending upon who the Applicant is, for example:**
   - The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.) applies to any organization that controls or possesses Native American cultural items, such as human remains or associated funerary objects and receives Federal funding, even for a purpose unrelated to the Act (25 USC 3001 et seq.).

Assurance of Compliance

By signing and submitting its application form on Grants.gov, the Applicant certifies that it is in compliance with the statutes outlined below and all related National Endowment for the Arts regulations and will maintain records and submit the reports that are necessary to determine compliance.

We may conduct a review of your organization to ensure that it is in compliance with these statutes. If the NEA determines that a grantee has failed to comply with these statutes, it may suspend or terminate the award, and/or recover funds. This assurance is subject to judicial enforcement.

The Applicant certifies that it does not discriminate:
- On the grounds of race, color, or national origin, in accordance with **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.), implemented by the National Endowment for the Arts at 45 CFR 1110.

- Solely on the grounds of disability, in accordance with **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** (29 U.S.C. 794), implemented by the National Endowment for the Arts at 45 CFR 1151, and the **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** ("ADA"), as amended, (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).

- On the basis of age, in accordance with the **Age Discrimination Act of 1975** (42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.) implemented by the National Endowment for the Arts at 45 CFR 1156.

- On the basis of sex, in any education program or activity, in accordance with **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972** (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.).

Applicant will inform the public that persons who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, sex, or age may file a complaint with the Director of Civil Rights at the National Endowment for the Arts.

Applicant will forward all complaints for investigation and any finding issued by a Federal or state court or by a Federal or state administrative agency to:

Director, Office of Civil Rights
National Endowment for the Arts
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506
Applicant shall maintain records of its compliance and submission for three (3) years. The Applicant will compile, maintain and permit access to records as required by applicable regulations, guidelines or other directives.

The Applicant must also certify that it will obtain assurances of compliance from all subrecipients and will require all subrecipients of National Endowment for the Arts funds to comply with these requirements.

The United States has the right to seek judicial or administrative enforcement of this assurance.

For further information and copies of the nondiscrimination regulations identified above, contact the Office of Civil Rights at 202-682-5454 or civilrights@arts.gov. For inquiries about limited English proficiency, go to http://www.lep.gov, the FOIA Reading Room, or contact the Office of Civil Rights at civilrights@arts.gov or 202-682-5454.

Standards for Service

The National Endowment for the Arts has set the following standards for serving applicants. We pledge to:
- Treat you with courtesy and efficiency.
- Respond to inquiries and correspondence promptly.
- Provide clear and accurate information about our policies and procedures.
- Provide timely information about funding opportunities and make guidelines available promptly.
- Promptly acknowledge the receipt of your application.
- Ensure that all eligible applications are reviewed thoughtfully and fairly.

We welcome your comments on how we are meeting these standards. Email: webmgr@arts.gov, attention: Standards for Service.

For questions about these guidelines or your application, see "Agency Contacts." In addition, applicants may receive an invitation to participate in a voluntary survey to provide feedback on the grant application guidelines on our website and any experiences consulting with our staff.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated at an average of 11 hours per response. This includes the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. We welcome any suggestions that you might have on improving the guidelines and making them as easy to use as possible. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: webmgr@arts.gov, attention: Reporting Burden. Note: Applicants are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number.

FAQs

[FAQs for Applicants & Awardees in Response to COVID-19 »](#)

How can I find out when new guidelines are released?

NEA guidelines are updated every year. Sign up for the notification service provided by Grants.gov, the federal government's online application system. [Sign up here](#). [Sign up to receive our discipline-specific newsletters](#).

What do you mean by "small-sized" organizations?

The NEA does not specifically define "small-sized," as the term can mean different things in different places around the country, depending on the geographic location of an organization and the artistic discipline. For example, different organizations with the same operating budget size may be considered large or small -- depending on where the organization is located.

Challenge America reviewers should be able to understand your organization within its own unique environment. Including area demographics can help your application illustrate that environment. If you are unsure whether your organization is a good fit, don't hesitate to reach out to a staff member to discuss.

How can I make sure that my project that addresses gender or racial equity is compliant with national civil rights laws Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibit discrimination (such as on the grounds of race, color, or national origin)?

Projects may focus on reaching a particular group or demographic; however, they may not be exclusionary under [Federal civil rights laws and policies](#) prohibiting discrimination. This extends to hiring practices, artist selection processes, and audience engagement. For additional information, refer to this archived webinar: [Things to Know Before You Apply: Federal Civil Rights and Your Grants Application.](#)

Also see the [Assurance of Compliance](#).

Does my project have to be new? Does it have to be big?

No. Projects do not have to be new. Excellent existing projects can be just as competitive as new activities. Projects do not need to be big either; we welcome small projects that can make a difference in their community or field.

Does my project have to be outside the scope of my regular programming?

No, a project can be a part of an applicant's regular season or activity. For example, a performance by a guest artist that is part of a concert hall's regular season could constitute an

acceptable project. Other projects might be a workshop production of a work in progress or a charrette sponsored by a community design center. What is important is the specificity of the activities involved. Also, there can be no overlap with projects for which you already are receiving other NEA or federal funds.

What if my organization ends up not being able to carry out the project activities in our application?

If you are recommended for a grant, you will have an opportunity to request changes (e.g., a time extension, a modification to project activities) at that stage of the process. If you receive a grant, you will have the opportunity to request project changes later in the process, as outlined in the [How to Manage Your Award Handbook](#).

We will work with you to try to accommodate changes to your project, but approval is not guaranteed. If you need to request a change, please contact your NEA specialist to discuss what is possible. Cancellation costs are not allowable.

Can I apply for more NEA funding for a project supported by an earlier grant?

Yes. If you have previously received a grant to support an earlier phase of a project (for example, for research for a documentary, or early development work on a new play or choreographed work) you may re-apply to the NEA for additional funding to support a later phase (for example, the post-production/editing/distribution phase of the documentary, or the final development/premiere of the new play or dance). However, each application must clearly describe the specific phase of work to be supported, and there can be NO overlapping project costs between the awards.

Will you contact me if my application is missing anything?

No. Because of the volume of applications, we have a strict approach to incomplete applications. For your application to be considered complete, every item that is required MUST be included in your application package, which must be submitted no later than the application deadline date under which you are applying. **Staff will not contact applicants to request missing material**. Don't let that happen. Use the "How to Apply" section to make sure that you have included every item. Have the completeness and accuracy of your application package double-checked by a responsible staff member who understands the importance of this task.

Allow at least six weeks to prepare your application, the work samples, and other supplementary information. We can't stress this enough: Do not wait until the day of the deadline to submit! We suggest setting an internal application deadline for your organization that is 24-48 hours before the actual application deadline.

If my application is determined to be incomplete, may I add the missing item(s) and resubmit the application?

No. The staff has to check thousands of applications. By the time that an application is identified as incomplete, it will likely be several weeks after the application deadline. An organization cannot add missing items and resubmit the application after the application deadline. We encourage you to double-check your application package against the "What makes a complete application" section to make sure that nothing is missing.
We are unable to accept any new or updated information after the application deadline.

How soon after the "Earliest Start Date for Proposed Project" for my deadline does my project have to begin?

The NEA's support can start any time on or after that date.

Can my project start before this date?

No. Proposed project activities for which you're requesting support cannot take place before this date. Ask the NEA to fund only the portion of your project that will take place after the "Earliest Start Date for Proposed Project." If you include project costs that are incurred before this date in your Project Budget, they will be removed.

How long can my project last? May I apply for another project during this period?

We generally allow a period of performance of up to two years. Challenge America grants generally are smaller in scope and shorter in duration than other projects. It is anticipated that most projects -- including planning and close-out time -- will be substantially shorter.

If you get close to the end of your grant period and think you need more time, you may request an extension from our Office of Grants Management, but approval is not guaranteed.

As long as it meets all other eligibility requirements, an organization may apply for another project (with totally different project costs) the following year even if a NEA-supported project is still underway. Note that if you receive an extension on a previous year's project, it may affect your grant period for your new proposed project.

If my application is rejected, can I find out why?

After notification, applicants who have questions may contact the staff responsible for handling their application. Any applicant whose request for funding has not been recommended may ask for an explanation of the basis for rejection. In such instances, the NEA must be contacted no later than 30 days after the official notification.

Can federally recognized tribes apply?

Yes. In keeping with federal policies of [Tribal Self Governance](#) and [Self-Determination](#), we may provide support for a project with a primary audience restricted to enrolled members of a federally recognized tribe. Applicants (federally recognized tribal governments, nonprofits situated on federally recognized tribal lands, or other nonprofits whose mission primarily serves federally recognized tribal enrollees) should consult with us to verify their eligibility before preparing an application.

Can non-federally recognized tribes apply?

Yes, as long as the applicant is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), U.S. organization. Projects for non-federally recognized tribes and indigenous groups may be supported, but project participation can't be restricted to only tribal members.

Can Native Hawaiian groups apply?
Yes, as long as the applicant is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), U.S. organization. Projects for Native Hawaiians may be supported, but project participation can't be restricted to only Native Hawaiians.

The "Unallowable Activities/Costs" section says that subgranting is not allowed. What is subgranting?

Subgranting is defined as regranting funds to an individual or organization for activities that are conducted independently of your organization and for the benefit of the subgrantee's own program objectives. A subgrantee is not directly employed by or affiliated with your organization.

Examples of subgranting include:
- Awards and prizes.
- Payment to an individual or organization to obtain training or technical assistance for their own benefit with little or no involvement from your organization. (Allowable activities would include services that are offered or coordinated by your organization such as making your facilities available, conducting workshops or conferences, or providing hands-on assistance. These activities also should be monitored and evaluated by your organization.)
- Production funds awarded to an individual or organization through a competitive review process with little or no subsequent involvement from your organization.
- Emergency relief funding for housing or food.

Can our organization use funds we received from the Small Business Administration (SBA) or other federal agencies as cost share/match for an NEA grant?

No. Federal funds are not allowed to be used as cost share/match for federal grants (2 CFR §200.306). In addition, the NEA's enabling legislation does not allow any federal funds to be

used as cost share/match for its grants. This includes the Paycheck Protection Program and Shuttered Venues Operators Grants (SVOG) from the SBA, as well as other federal funding, including funding from:

- Corporation for National and Community Service (e.g., AmeriCorps)
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- National Park Service
- National Science Foundation
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Education (e.g., 21st Century Community Learning Centers)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Or an entity that receives federal appropriations such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting or Amtrak

Note that organizations are eligible to apply for NEA funding even if they have applied for and received funding from the SBA, provided the organization isn't double-claiming any individual's salary. Recipients will be required to keep documentation to show which employees are being paid from each funding source so that the government isn't paying more than 100 percent of a salary. Applicants with additional questions about SBA programs should contact the SBA directly as we are unable to provide guidance on programs other than our own.

My organization received American Rescue Plan (ARP) or CARES funding. Can we also apply to Challenge America?

Yes. However, you need to be sure that there are no overlapping costs. For example, be sure that salaries, fees, or facilities costs do not overlap, i.e., occur at the same time.

Can my organization apply for the same types of costs that were available for funding in ARP or CARES?

Yes. You can apply for salaries, stipends/fees, facilities costs, and marketing costs as long as they are allocable/directly related to carrying out the proposed project.

There is a key difference between ARP or CARES and Challenge America. Challenge America applications must be for projects only. A project may consist of one or more specific events or activities, and it may be a part of an applicant's regular season or activities. We do not fund seasonal or general operating support in Challenge America.

Should the application address how my organization will respond if our project activities end up being affected by COVID-19?

This is not a requirement, but you can provide a very brief description of any contingency plans in the Project Description narrative. The Project Description is where you should address all of the Review Criteria, and it may be useful for the panel's assessment of your organization's ability to carry out the project (see the criteria under artistic merit).

How should my organization formulate its project if we're not sure if an in-person gathering will be possible due to COVID-19? Will it be possible to make project changes if needed later in the process?

You should do your best to complete information within the application to the best of your knowledge.

If you are recommended for a grant, you will have an opportunity to request changes (e.g., a time extension, a modification to project activities) at that stage of the process. If you receive a grant, you will have the opportunity to request project changes later in the process, as outlined in the [How to Manage Your Award Handbook](#).

We will work with you to try to accommodate changes to your project, but approval is not guaranteed. If you need to request a change while your application is still under consideration, please contact your NEA specialist to discuss what is possible.

My organization usually applies for in-person performances. Can we apply for virtual performances, or the costs associated with planning for virtual performances?

Yes.

Our project will involve virtual and online programming. Are we allowed to charge a fee for admission to access these online events?

Yes.

Our project may need updated technology to support quality virtual programming. To what extent can these costs be included in the project budget, and do we need to differentiate between supplies or equipment costs?

You can apply for costs related to updated technology as long as they fit into the proposed project.

Costs could include:
- Equipment, purchase or rental
- Hardware
- Software, e.g., timed ticketing software
- Increased bandwidth
- Streaming subscriptions
- Specialized audio-visual equipment for performers

The distinction between supplies and equipment is determined by cost and useful life. A justification for the cost is required in some cases.

If you intend to purchase equipment that costs $5,000 or more per item with an estimated useful life of more than one year, clearly identify the equipment and you will need to provide a justification for this expenditure either in the Project Budget form or in your narrative.

Digital devices or other technologies are considered supplies if they are less than $5,000 per item, regardless of the length of useful life; no additional justification is required.

Can my project budget include the cost of open or closed captions or sign language interpretation for virtual events?

Yes.

Our exhibition space and/or performance venue will need to make physical changes to meet social distancing requirements, such as the removal of seats or installation of plexiglass to protect staff. To what extent can these costs be included in the project budget?

You can apply for costs related to physical changes as long as they are allocable/directly related to the proposed project. However, we do not fund the costs of physical construction or renovation, or the purchase costs of facilities or land.

Can project budgets include expenses related to increased sanitation measures due to COVID-19, such as additional personnel, cleaning services, PPE, and other supplies

Yes. You can apply for costs related to increased sanitation as long as they fit into the proposed project.

Contacts

We understand that applying for federal funding can be a significant undertaking. Our staff strives to ensure that every applicant receives the support they need to understand every step of the application process and ultimately submit the most competitive application possible.

We are available to answer questions you might have about Challenge America. Reach out to us if you have questions about whether your organization and proposed project are a good match for the Challenge America program, or about any other aspect of the application process. Contact: challengeamerica@arts.gov or 202-682-5700