



Essential Arts Education Grants for Schools FY2026 Grant Program Guidelines

Application Deadlines

60 days before the project begins.

Schools across Oklahoma can apply for Essential Arts Education Grants for eligible arts education programs that take place during the school day. Individual schools can apply for two grants of up to \$5,000 per school year with a 10 percent cash match.

Arts education plays an important role in improving academic performance. Studies show that students who have four years of high school arts education score higher on college entrance exams than students with little or no arts education. Arts education often improves performance in math and science, increases school attendance, promotes civic engagement, and decreases anti-social behavior. In addition, arts education supports the development of the whole child, builds skills, and offers students positive methods of creative self-expression.

Students receive the most benefit when they receive an arts education that is:

- Sequential, building skills over time
- Hands-on, allowing students to engage deeply in the creative process
- Led by educators with both artistic expertise and educational experience

Program Goals

- Support hands-on, sequential arts learning with teaching artists that takes place during school hours
- Expand arts access (dance, drama, literary arts, media arts, music, and/or visual arts) to more Oklahoma students
- Create more opportunities for Oklahoma students to meaningfully engage with the arts during the school day

This grant program supports the following focus areas of Oklahoma Arts Council's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan:

- Invest in Quality Arts Education and Lifelong Learning (Goal 2: Advance Arts Education)
- Build and Empower Partnerships to Ensure Equitable Access Statewide (Goal 2: Arts Education)

- Invest in Oklahoma's Arts and Cultural Assets (Goal 1: Cultivate and Support the Arts in Oklahoma)
- Elevate Artistry and Catalyze Creative Community Development (Goal 1: Cultivate and Support the Arts in Oklahoma)
- Promote and Equip Oklahoma Artists and Programs (Goal 1: Cultivate and Support the Arts in Oklahoma)

Overview

Project Activity Dates: July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026 (Grant Period FY2026)

Grant Amount: Each school site is eligible to apply for two grants up to \$5,000 each per school year. Award amounts are determined using the grant program scoring criteria and agency priorities.

Match requirement: 10%. Matching funds may not be other Oklahoma Arts Council funds. Award amounts are determined using the grant program scoring criteria and agency priorities.

Application Deadlines:

60 days before the project begins.

Who Can Apply?

Oklahoma PreK-12 public, charter, and private schools

What Types of Projects Can Be Supported?

Learning-based arts projects, including:

- In-school classes, residencies, and workshops (frequency and duration may vary; focus should be on sequential hands-on learning) where each student receives six or more hours of hands-on arts engagement.
- Online/virtual learning-based arts programs where each student receives six or more hours of hands-on arts engagement.

What Expenses Are Allowable?

Funding from the Arts in Alternative Education Grant can be used to reimburse the following expenses:

- Teaching Artist Fees (payment to the teaching artist hired or contracted to lead instruction)
- Teaching Artist Travel Expenses (may include mileage, lodging, or other costs but cannot include food or drink)
- Contracted Administration or Technical Fees (payment for a contracted project coordinator, grant writer, or other professional services)
- Consumable Supplies (must be directly related to the project, supply expenses cannot exceed 30% of overall project budget)
- Other Expenses (including printed programs, signage, licensing and/or royalty fees, etc.)

Unallowable expenses include tickets, tuition, scholarships, capital expenditures and/or building improvements, permanent art installations, activities for which college credit is given, loss of revenue, debt repayment, subgranting, duties or expenses related to fundraising and/or lobbying, activities or expenses that may advance or inhibit any religious belief, events that are not open to the public, cash prizes or awards, and hospitality expenses (i.e., food, drink, receptions, parties, galas). Please refer to the Oklahoma Arts Council General Grant Terms and Conditions for Cost Principles and a list of General Grant Allowable and Unallowable Costs.

Required Outcomes

Proposals for funding must seek to accomplish the following:

- **Outcome 1: Hands-on and Sequential Arts Experiences**
Projects should offer students meaningful opportunities for hands-on participation in the arts. Projects should also focus on sequential learning experiences in which students build artistic knowledge and skills over time. Students should receive six or more hours of hands-on time directly engaging in the art form (projects that include one-time make-and-take experiences are not eligible). The benefits of arts education are most fully realized when students engage with the arts consistently over time.
- **Outcome 2: Creative Expression**
Projects will offer students opportunities to make creative choices and/or experiment within the parameters of the artistic discipline and/or medium. Students are encouraged to express themselves creatively as they participate in the arts.
- **Outcome 3: Learning from Teaching Artists**
Students receive instruction from teaching artists whose expertise in the art form is well demonstrated. Teaching artists also demonstrate proficiency as educators, bringing skills such as classroom management, arts learning assessment, and student engagement to their arts classrooms.
- **Outcome 4: Overall Student Success and Performance**
Studies show that arts education offers unique benefits to students beyond the classroom. Consistent, high-quality arts education is linked to higher student literacy and student performance in math, science, and other content areas. Arts education also encourages students to practice critical thinking, problem-solving, goal-setting, and strong habits for working individually and as part of a group. Participation in the arts also correlates with increased empathy, healthier emotional regulation, and self-confidence. In order to demonstrate commitment to quality arts education, projects should address grade-appropriate learning standards from Oklahoma Academic Standards in Fine Arts.

How to Apply

Step 1: Your school must be verified in the Oklahoma Arts Council grant portal before applying for this grant opportunity. If your school is new to Oklahoma Arts Council grants, you must create a new account in the Fluxx grant portal and complete the eligibility verification process (which may take up to 15 days to review and process). If you have questions, contact our grants office at grants@arts.ok.gov or 405-521-2040.

Step 2: Once your school is verified, you can start an application from the Apply for Funding page. Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on the application deadline date published on the grant program guidelines. If an application deadline falls on a weekend or state holiday, the application will be due by 5:00 p.m. on the next business day. Late submissions are subject to the noncompliance policies as outlined in the General Grant Terms and Conditions.

Grant Process

1. Request access to the grant portal (for new schools only)
2. Submit an application
3. Application is reviewed by Oklahoma Arts Council
4. Award notification (if the project is selected for funding)
5. Authorizing Official accepts grant contract
6. Project activity occurs
7. Grant Administrator submits final report
8. Grant payment is processed

Scoring Criteria and Agency Priorities

The Oklahoma Arts Council will consider the following when we review applications for grants for schools:

1. Artistic Quality

Artist Selection

- Selected artist(s) demonstrate artistic expertise and educational experience relevant to the proposed project
- Artist(s) and project provides a relevant, engaging, and meaningful arts experience for students
- Project fosters creative expression, originality, and/or innovation.

Arts Learning Goals

- Arts learning goals are discipline-specific, developmentally appropriate, and reflect a strong curriculum plan.
- Project demonstrates adequate student hands-on engagement time to achieve provided arts learning goals.
- Student learning assessment plan measures progress toward provided arts learning goals.
- In-school projects have arts learning goals that address the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Fine Arts.
- Project may provide opportunities for teacher training or professional development led by project artist(s).

Project Planning and Design

- Project is relevant to the school community.
- Project goals are well-defined.
- Timeline, format, and activities are feasible within the scope of the project.

2. Artistic Merit

Public Value

Proposal demonstrates the applicant's ability to execute a project that:

- Aligns with the grant program objectives and goals.
- Meets the needs of their students and school community.
- Creates opportunities for their students to participate in the arts.
- Directly relates to and serves their students.
- Demonstrates a high need for public investment.
- Presents a strong case for public funding.
- Project may provide opportunities for a culminating event such as end-of-residency exhibits, performances, or other public-facing components.

3. The Oklahoma Arts Council will prioritize funding to serve the following:

- Schools located in geographically isolated and rural areas
- Title I schools
- Limited access to art form
- First-time applicants

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What types of artistic disciplines can be supported?

A. The Oklahoma Arts Council uses artistic quality as one of its review criteria for grants. Artistic disciplines include, but are not limited to, music, theatre, dance, literary arts, media arts, and visual arts. If you have questions about the eligibility of your project, please contact our Arts Education Director.

Q. Can these grant funds support a memorial sculpture, mural, or other permanent artwork?

A. Unfortunately, no. Oklahoma Arts Council's grants for schools cannot be used to support capital improvements/expenses including the creation of permanent artwork or the improvement of buildings/properties.

Q. My school is already receiving funding through Oklahoma Arts Council's other school grant program(s). Can I apply for this opportunity?

A. Yes, your school site can apply for numerous different grant opportunities between July through June, including other school grants like the Classroom Supply Grant for Visual and Performing Arts. If your school is selected to receive a grant, your school or district will need to provide a 10% match for the award. None of the match may come from another Oklahoma Arts Council grant awards.

Q. Can my school purchase marimbas, tubas, and other instruments with this grant?

A. No, this grant cannot be used to purchase permanent equipment such as instruments.

Q. How do I find a teaching artist to work with my students?

A. You can find artists on our Oklahoma Teaching Artist Roster, however you are not required to use artists on this roster for your grant.

Q. How can I update my school's Grant Administrator or Authorizing Official?

A. Contact the Grants Office at grants@arts.ok.gov.

Q. How do I find out if my school has access to the Grants Portal to apply for a grant?

A. Contact Jennifer Allen-Barron at jennifer.allen-barron@arts.ok.gov or grants@arts.ok.gov.

Grantee Requirements

If selected for funding, grantee organizations must comply with all requirements as outlined in the Legal Assurances/General Grant Terms, grant contract, and grant program guidelines, including but not limited to the following:

- Signed electronic grant contract by the deadline specified in the award notification email
- Updated contact, mailing, and payment/banking information with the Oklahoma Arts Council and Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) Supplier Portal
 - Oklahoma Arts Council will process grant payments to the school/district bank account or address registered in the Oklahoma Supplier Portal
- Thank you letters to your organization's legislators
- Timely submission of required reports
- Retention of all financial records (including invoices and receipts) related to the grant award for seven years

Who to Contact for Help

For questions about this grant program, contact Jennifer Allen-Barron, Arts Education Director, at jennifer.allen-barron@arts.ok.gov or (405) 249-7987.

For questions about grant portal access, contact Martyna Sandoval, Grants and Programs Associate, at martyna.sandoval@arts.ok.gov or 405-521-2040.

For questions about managing your grant award, contact Thomas Tran, Grants Director, at thomas.tran@arts.ok.gov or 405-521-2041.