

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

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Creative Learning Funding Opportunities

Overview

The Heinz Endowments' **Creative Learning initiative** is a cross-sector strategy to cultivate an equitable creative arts and cultural learning network, improve access to transformative learning experiences for young people, and support meaningful professional opportunities for teaching artists in Pittsburgh's out-of-school-time (OST)* ecosystem. For the purpose of this initiative, **creative learning** will be defined as high-quality arts education in OST settings, with equitable access for the social, emotional and creative development of children and youth.

The Endowments aims to support the work of existing and new grantees in this space; improve their effectiveness toward meeting their goals; and create a more powerful network of programs, organizations and teaching artists. Creative Learning grantees will go beyond arts exposure to inspire deeper, generative, transformational and participatory learning for young people with an emphasis on racial equity in the learning ecosystem.

The Endowments' core strategies for this work are:

- Support intermediary organizations that advance the development of an equitable creative learning network for providers, teaching artists, and young people.
- Support provider organizations that work directly with young people.
- Support teaching artist field-building and professional development.
- Support young artists.
- Center equity in terms of race, resources and reach.

Creative Learning grants are awarded for **program** or **general operating** support. Creative Learning grantees will be aligned through a shared set of values. Grant decisions and program evaluation will be guided by criteria that support these values and align with best practices in the field of creative youth development. Grant size and type will be determined by The Heinz Endowments' program staff and are subject to the final approval of the President and Board of Directors.

Eligibility and Qualifications

In addition to meeting The Heinz Endowments' standard [eligibility criteria](#), organizations qualified for support will have demonstrated experience in:

- Leading creative arts and cultural education programming for young people up to age 26
- Understanding anti-racist principles and applying these to the organization and its programs
- Supporting teaching artists as essential cultural workers
- Collaborating with individuals and organizations to accomplish more together as a network
- Managing effective fiscal, staffing, and governance practices

For essential context, prospective applicants are strongly advised to read and interpret the University of Pittsburgh's [Creative Learning in Pittsburgh](#) report.

*We use the abbreviation "OST" as shorthand for the field of practice that is alternately referred to as out-of-school-time, expanded learning, informal education, enrichment and after-school. Creative Learning in the Pittsburgh region will support an ecosystem of OST providers and teaching artists focused on [creative youth development](#) – with programming delivered to children and youth in a variety of settings, including community learning centers, cultural spaces, arts facilities, parks, museums, libraries and schools.

Creative Learning Values

As an initiative of The Heinz Endowments, Creative Learning incorporates a set of values that help guide our work in partnership with grantees. These values were developed through dialogue with Pittsburgh's creative learning community; the Center for Youth, Community Learning & Equity (CYCLE) at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education; and the Creative Youth Development national partnership.

Anti-Racism

At the Endowments, we are prioritizing our anti-racism and anti-discrimination efforts. We aim to address the root causes of racism, other biases and their many intersections while helping to develop policies and practices that counter systemic issues.

Creative Learning grants will intentionally prioritize organizations and programs **that identify as part of historically underrepresented communities**, including those led by and serving Black, Indigenous, People Of Color (BIPOC); queer, trans, and gender nonconforming people (LGBTQIA+); early career and elder teaching artists, and people living with disabilities.

[Learn more about why](#) the Endowments believes that **undoing racism** is central to the healthy, holistic development of young people and is an organizing principle underlying the Creative Learning initiative.

Youth-Adult Partnerships

In successful creative learning programs, young people become agents of their own development. With guidance from adults, the young people set and monitor personal goals. By choosing to participate in all levels of program design, administration, and evaluation, they take on leadership roles and develop a sense of ownership, investment, responsibility, independence and initiative. In successful programs, young people have a significant voice in shaping their projects, the program, and when appropriate the organization.

Collective Action

Creative learning programs cannot effect change by providing programming in isolation; therefore, successful programs are holistic, inclusive, and collaborative. They respond to the larger context in which they function by recognizing all the needs of the young people they serve, and by integrating their efforts with other providers to create a coordinated community response to those needs.

In support of this coordination for providers and teaching artists, in early 2020 the Endowments seeded a coalition of organizations to bring new approaches and partnerships that could amplify Creative Learning goals by working collectively as a **Network Anchor**. The [Arts Ed Collaborative \(AEC\)](#), [APOST](#), and the [Legacy Arts Project](#) each bring unique strengths to the Network Anchor partnership including expertise in arts education, out-of-school-time networks, and programming with multi-generational Black and African arts communities. The shared services of the Creative Learning Network Anchor organizations will support collaboration and communication, lead professional learning for educators, and increase equitable access to creative learning for young people through research, policy and implementation.

Transformative Evaluation

A commitment to continual improvement is a core value of the Creative Learning initiative. Creative learning providers, teaching artists, and young people are engaged in this process through an ongoing, participatory evaluation as a part of their grant support. For the evaluation of Creative Learning, The Heinz Endowments is partnering with the Center for Youth, Community Learning & Equity (CYCLE), a learning laboratory at the **University of Pittsburgh's School of Education**. Led by Dr. Tom Akiva, CYCLE aims to improve out-of-school learning experiences by conducting research-practice projects in positive youth development, out-of-school educator professional development, and citywide learning ecosystems. CYCLE works closely with practitioner and philanthropic partners to make research relevant and applicable for practice.

Creative Learning Funding Criteria

Creative Learning grants for programs and organizations will be evaluated using the following criteria. Applicants must develop goals and measures of success that respond to these criteria.

1. **Quality:** Supported programs are artistically rigorous, set high expectations of youth participants, and provide authentic, purposeful learning experiences. Learning standards such as [National Core Arts Standards](#), [PA Arts & Humanities Standards](#), or [Culturally Responsive Education](#) are consistently applied to the activities. The organization has its own working definition of quality that it applies to its work and uses to evaluate its success.
2. **Youth-Adult Partnerships:** Supported programs are youth-driven and honor student voice. Programs focus on positive relationship-building and social-emotional growth for young people. Youth agency in exploring the relationship between self and community lead to [positive youth development](#) outcomes.
3. **Anti-Racism:** Supported programs intentionally prioritize racial equity, justice, and inclusion. Anti-racist, [abolitionist teaching](#) approaches incorporate [critical race theory](#) to help young people build on their individual and collective assets. Reparative efforts by supported organizations make up for systemic inequities in access to high quality creative arts learning.
4. **Teaching Artists:** Supported programs elevate the value of teaching artists as essential workers by providing fair compensation and incentives for professional development. [Advocacy](#) on behalf of teaching artists influences policies that improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for the field.
5. **Collective Action:** Supported programs demonstrate active participation in a collaborative [learning ecosystem](#), including networking, communications, and partnerships. Program approaches and outcomes are holistic, recognizing a range of youth needs and often integrating with other service providers to create a coordinated community response to those needs.

How to Apply

Applications for Creative Learning funding are reviewed twice annually, with occasional exceptions for rapid response needs. In a typical calendar year, **the spring deadline is February 15th** for funding decisions in May; **the fall deadline is August 1st** for funding decisions in October.

In the proposal narrative, applicant organizations should provide a description of their programs and/or operations, the proposed purpose of the grant, details about partnerships, and relationship to the regional creative learning ecosystem. Applicants should also be prepared to contribute to the evaluation process by keeping track of and periodically reporting data relevant to several indicators the Endowments will use to help gauge the progress of the initiative. Examples include setting goals and measures of success for this request in the context of Creative Learning's values of quality, youth-adult partnerships, anti-racism, teaching artists, and collective action.

In addition to the narrative questions, a complete application requires program and/or organizational budget(s), project timeline(s), and organizational details including demographic data for staff and board.

The final proposal must be submitted using the online form [here >>](#). Select "**Creative Learning**" as the strategic goal area. Organizations may request draft application review or consultation with a program officer up to two weeks in advance of the deadline, with some exceptions.

Decisionmaking and Contact

Following a review of proposals received by each deadline, The Heinz Endowments will contact applicants with a decision and news about next steps.

For questions concerning Creative Learning grants, please contact Cindi Stueber, program assistant at 412-338-2693 or cstueber@heinz.org to request an appointment.