PRIMER ON ARTS EDUCATION

The following primer offers a background on best practices for how non-profit theaters can pursue federal funding to support arts education programs in local schools. The primer is divided into several chapters to guide non-profit theaters on their journey to partnering with local school districts to provide arts education programming to students. Below is a summary of the topics covered in each chapter:

- Chapter I focuses on federal programs that provide funding opportunities for arts education programs. Some of these programs may be relevant to your local context, while others may not be a good fit.
- Chapter II highlights some best practices for working with local school districts and leaders in pursuit of federal funding for arts education programs.
- Chapter III provides details on a federal resource - the What Works Clearinghouse - that can help theaters make arguments in favor of arts education programs using evidence-based data.
- Chapter IV provides a list of internal best practices and tips for theaters that are interested in pursuing a federal grant for arts education programs in light of lessons learned from other theaters.
- Chapter V provides examples of programming theaters can offer to support school districts’ arts education goals.
CHAPTER I - Federal Funding Opportunities

This section provides a snapshot of federal programs that offer funding for arts education programs and how they may support arts education activities taking place among non-profit theaters. Historically, the federal government has offered various competitive grant programs to enhance and expand arts education programs to schools and organizations, including some of the programs listed below. This document discusses the current opportunities for non-profit theaters to apply for federal funding to support arts education programs, as well as learn more about how non-profit theaters have engaged with and applied for these programs in the past.

The first section highlights funding that flows through state education agencies (SEAs) or local education agencies (LEAs), also known as school districts. The funding opportunities in this section would require your theater to work directly with your local school district to access the funds. The second section highlights funding opportunities that are available for theaters to apply for directly through the federal government. As discussed further in Chapter V, please note there are significantly more reporting requirements for direct funding from the Department of Education compared to funding your theater might receive through your local school district.

Section 1 - Funding Opportunities via School Districts

Department of Education: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

About the Program

Congress set aside approximately $13.2 billion of the $30.75 billion allotted to the Education Stabilization Fund through the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. Signed into law on March 27, 2020, the Department awarded these grants to SEAs for the purpose of providing LEAs with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation. The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA), passed in December 2020, provided an additional $54.3 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II Fund). The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, passed in March 2021, included an additional $122 billion for the ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund.

Congress created the ESSER Fund to be extremely flexible to allow K-12 schools to use their funding in ways that best support their local communities and student populations. Schools can use ESSER dollars on a variety of activities, including any activity authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA includes a number of arts education programs, including the Assistance for Arts Education program that funds professional development opportunities for arts educators, as well as partnerships between schools and local community arts organizations. Beyond ESEA activities, schools can use their ESSER funds for a number of other pandemic-related recovery efforts that may tie into arts education initiatives, including activities to provide summer learning and afterschool opportunities, implement mental health services, and address learning loss.

Eligibility

SEAs and LEAs are eligible for ESSER funding. States must use 90 percent of their grant funds towards Title I schools, which are schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment.
**Applicability to the Coalition**
Schools have received an unprecedented amount of relief funding over the past two years. Theaters should consider partnering with local schools, particularly Title I schools in your area, to either maintain current programming related to the arts or offer new arts education initiatives to the school.

**Department of Education: 21st Century Learning Centers**

**About the Program**
The Department of Education offers funding for before- and after-school and summer programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) to expand student learning opportunities and academic outcomes. The program serves nearly 2 million students through grants awarded from the federal government to state education agencies (SEAs) via a formula set up in the law. SEAs receive annual funding for the 21st CCLC program and have significant discretion on how they spend the funds. While some SEAs prioritize funding directly to school districts to provide for before- and after-school and summer programming, other SEAs allow non-profit organizations, including supplemental learning providers, to apply for grants. Funding may be used for a variety of activities, including arts and cultural programs.

**Eligibility**
As noted above, the 21st CCLC program funding is awarded to SEAs, but SEAs can award subgrants to non-profit organizations. Although non-profits are technically eligible for this program, it is unlikely that non-profit theaters would be competitive for direct funding through the program given that funds are prioritized for after-school, summer, or supplemental learning providers. As such, if a non-profit is interested in pursuing funding under this program, we recommend the organization (1) work directly with a local school district that receives 21st CCLC funding from its SEA to provide arts education programming as part of the school district’s after-school or summer learning activities or (2) work directly with a supplemental provider that has an arts education component, such as an after-school provider that focuses on the arts.

**Funding History**
In FY 2022, the House Appropriations Committee recommended $1.4 billion for the 21st CCLC program, which is a $100 million increase from the FY 2021 funding level. This also is a $100 million increase from the FY 2022 President’s budget request ($1.3 billion) for the 21st CCLC program. The President’s budget request also notes funding through the program may be used to support a well-rounded education, which includes the arts and cultural programs.

**Applicability to the Coalition**
To most effectively and efficiently access funds from the 21st CCLC program, non-profit theaters should consider partnering with before- and after-school or summer learning programs and/or local school districts to provide arts education to students. The program provides opportunities for hands-on, academically enriching learning experiences for students, especially in low-income and disadvantaged communities, and many members of the coalition may be able to offer those experiences through
activities and services provided to after-school programs and/or schools. The 21st CCLC program has a large pot of funding, but it is very competitive, so working through a local school district is likely the best route for theaters seeking to access this funding.

**Department of Education: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant Program**

**About the Program**
Congress authorized the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grants as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which governs all K-12 education policy at the federal level. The goal of the program is to improve students' academic achievement through three categories: (1) encouraging access to a well-rounded education, (2) supporting safe and healthy students, and (3) facilitating the use of technology for educational purposes. The Department of Education provides SSAE grants to school districts via a formula set up in ESSA. School districts must address all three categories previously listed as they spend their SSAE funding, including providing a well-rounded education to students, which could include arts education. School districts have discretion on how these funds are spent, but generally, they are very flexible and allow the school district to partner with outside organizations to meet the criteria set forth in ESSA.

**Eligibility**
School districts are eligible for SSAE grants, but as noted above, schools may partner with organizations, such as non-profits, colleges and universities, museums, and community organizations, to offer programs and services to students using their SSAE funding.

**Funding History**
In FY 2020 and FY 2021, Congress provided $1.2 billion for SSAE grants. As part of the FY 2021 appropriations process, the House Appropriations Committee included report language encouraging the Department of Education to prioritize SSAE funding to support and create youth pipeline programs in the arts and entertainment industries. The report language notes arts programs create a positive environment and learning community. The committee also included this language in the FY 2022 report and recommended $1.3 billion for SSAE grants for the coming fiscal year. This is $100 million more than what the FY 2022 President's budget requested ($1.2 billion) for SSAE grants, which highlighted how the Department of Education plans to use these grants to ensure equity in access to educational opportunity for all students.

**Applicability to the Coalition**
SSAE funds are an excellent source of funding for school-based arts education programs. Theaters should look for ways to partner with local schools or school districts to provide arts education services to students using SSAE grant funding. This may include having a conversation with your local school district to ask them how they are using their SSAE grant funding, particularly to meet the requirements under the law for providing a well-rounded education to its students.

**Section 2 - Funding Opportunities Directly from the Federal Government**

**Department of Education: Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) Program**

**About the Program**
The Department of Education’s Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) program supports activities and services to promote arts education for students. Theaters can apply for funding under this program
directly from the federal government, which may be used for the following activities: (1) professional development for arts educators, teachers, and principals; (2) development and dissemination of accessible instructional materials and arts-based educational programming, including online resources, in multiple arts disciplines; (3) arts-based and arts-integrated curriculum and educational programming in music, dance, theater, media arts, and visual arts, including folk arts, for preK-12 students and arts educators; and (4) national and community outreach activities that strengthen and expand partnerships among schools, school districts, communities, or centers for the arts.

Prior to 2021, the AAE program supported three separate grant competitions:

- **Arts in Education Development and Dissemination (AAEDD).** The AAEDD program was designed to focus on the development and dissemination of arts-based educational programming, including online resources, in all arts disciplines, such as music, dance, theater, and visual arts, including folk arts.

- **Professional Development for Arts Educators (PDAE).** The PDAE program provided professional development opportunities for thousands of teachers, with an emphasis on providing sustained and intensive professional development and building capacity for continuation and expansion of professional development efforts beyond the federal grant period.

- **Arts in Education National Program (AENP).** The AENP emphasized projects that supported community and national outreach activities that strengthened and expanded partnerships among schools, school districts, communities, or centers for the arts, including national centers for the arts.

The Department reviewed the three programs and found a large overlap in the applicant and grantee pool and in the services provided across the various programs. In an effort to streamline federal funding for arts education projects, the Department now offers the Assistance for Arts in Education program as one competitive grant program. The goal of offering one competition is to allow applicants to focus on a more holistic approach to learning that includes educational programming, professional development of educators, and the creation of new partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships between schools and arts organizations. The program does not require cost sharing or matching.

**Eligibility**

Eligible applicants for the AAE program include national non-profit organizations, school districts (also known as local education agencies or LEAs), higher education institutions, museums or cultural institutions, or partnerships of these organizations. Applications for FY 2021 funding were due in February 2021. It is likely the AAE program will be funded at similar levels for FY 2022, which means applications may be made available in early 2022 if the Department of Education follows the same timeline as last year’s competition.

**Funding History**

The AAE program received $30.5 million in FY 2021. The FY 2022 President’s budget requests the same level of funding the program received in FY 2021, but the House Appropriations Committee included $33 million in its FY 2022 appropriations bill, which is a $2.5 million increase over the FY 2021 enacted level. The Department of Education typically releases the application for funding for this program a couple of weeks after Congress approves the yearly appropriations bills. In the past, the Department has given applicants 30 days to submit a “Notice of Intent to Apply” and 60 days to submit their applications.

**Applicability to the Coalition**
The AAE program is one of the few arts education programs at the federal level that will directly fund non-profit organizations, including non-profit theaters. The changes to the program’s scope over the years, including the Department’s recent consolidation of the various programs under the AAE umbrella, makes this program fairly flexible in its support of a variety of arts education activities at non-profit theaters. These grants have served more than 230 congressional districts in 33 states in the past, but they are meant for more transformational projects with a regional or national scope, so it is possible that this program may not be a good fit for your theater. The Department of Education and the Biden Administration hope to increase these numbers through additional investment in the program.

National Endowment for the Arts Grants

About the Program
The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) supports arts education through its Grants for Arts Projects program, which is the NEA’s principal grant program that encourages public engagement and access to various forms of art through project-based funding. The program allows applicants to select from a variety of project disciplines, including arts education. The arts education discipline funds three types of grants: (1) Direct Learning; (2) Professional Development; and (3) Collective Impact. The goal of the program is to fund arts projects that use the arts for several activities including: (1) unite and heal in response to current events; (2) celebrate creativity and cultural heritage; (3) invite mutual respect for differing beliefs and values; and (4) enrich humanity.

The Grants for Arts Projects provide funding for the following projects:

- **Direct Learning Grants.** Direct learning grant projects support arts instruction for preK-12 students to increase knowledge and skills in the arts. Applicants applying for these grants must express how the project is distinctive and will deepen the arts learning experience by adding new value to the field. Projects also must address three key elements: (1) experiencing works of arts; (2) creating or performing art; and (3) assessing and measuring student’s gained knowledge and skills in the arts. Projects under this program can take place during or outside the regular school day schedule and take place in schools (including charter schools), arts organizations, community centers, and other spaces.

- **Professional Development Grants.** Grants under this category may be used to equip teachers, arts specialists, teaching artists, school/district administrators, other educators, and community leaders with knowledge and skills to engage students in arts learning and improve instruction. Professional development grant projects should include three key elements: (1) experiencing the arts; (2) engaging in in-depth studies; and (3) evaluating the learning and impact of professional development.

- **Collective Impact Grants.** Projects under this category are intended to drastically transform schools and communities by providing access and engagement in the arts for all students through collective, systematic approaches. These grants are higher award amounts for longer-term, large-scale projects that create lasting systems for communities and should have significant potential to be shared and customized in communities across the country. Collective impact projects should embrace the following principles: (1) data and data initiatives; (2) partnerships from different sectors; (3) planning and models; (4) shared measurement system; and (5) programming to support the strategic plan. Projects considered for these grants may be identified as either emerging or sustaining. Emerging projects are in the initial phase of work to establish an arts education plan. Sustaining projects have a plan in place and may be in further phases to increase arts education access.
Eligibility
Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations and state or local governments. Applicants may be arts organizations, local arts agencies, arts service organizations, school districts, and other organizations that can help advance the goals of the NEA. Applicants must also have completed a three-year history of arts programming prior to the application deadline. An organization may only submit one application each year.

Funding
Grants awarded may range from $10,000 to $100,000, but in recent years over half of the agency’s grants have been less than $25,000. Grants may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the project and requires a nonfederal cost share match of at least one to one. The NEA encourages applicants to consider the level of recent awards in order to request a realistic grant amount.

Applicability to the Coalition
Theaters are likely have the most experience applying for NEA grants, which provide many opportunities for funding for various types of arts education projects. These grants provide the most flexibility for arts education projects to expand and establish arts education programs in communities. NEA grants are an alternative to previously mentioned programs that require partnership with local schools or school districts. Yet, a key difference from the other arts education programs mentioned in this primer is that theaters are required to match a certain level of funding in order to receive an NEA grant. These grants also fund projects that range from planning to implementation, which may be beneficial for the coalition given the various types of theaters. Projects funded from NEA grants also may be more competitive since the application is open to all non-profits and state and local governments.
CHAPTER II - Best Practices to Build Relationships with School Officials

This chapter provides an overview of best practices for theaters to build relationships with school officials. As part of your theater’s exploration of funding opportunities for arts education programs, it is important to note that most of the federal funding flows through local school districts. These school districts have a lot of discretion for how they use their funding, which is a function of how federal education law is structured. Most policymakers at all levels of government understand that local leaders are best positioned to make decisions for their local populations, particularly as it relates to education. As such, if your theater is interested in accessing federal funding for arts education programs, the best route for accessing these funds is through your local school district.

We recommend reaching out to your local school district to begin conversations about how their current funding may be used to support arts education. To begin, you should keep in mind the following best practices when approaching your local district.

- K-12 school districts have received historic amounts of funding in the last two years through the three COVID-19 relief packages Congress has passed. Specifically, Congress created the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, which provides funding to local school districts to respond to the pandemic. These funds are extremely flexible to allow school districts to use them as they see fit to address the needs of their local community. These funds can be used towards arts education programs if a school district chooses to do so.
- Yet, despite all of these additional resources, it is important to note that since the beginning of the pandemic, school districts have been under extreme stress due to school closures, outbreaks in classrooms, and learning how to operate schools in a hybrid status. The current circumstances have made it difficult for community leaders and organizations to build relationships with school districts. It is important to be patient with school districts and their leaders and be prepared to operate at a slower rate given the many disruptions.
- As you think about how to talk about your arts education offerings with local school districts, we recommend exploring how you could tie the mission of your programs to the goals of your local school districts. For example, there is a high demand for social and emotional learning (SEL) in K-12 schools, and your arts education program may be able to provide the opportunity for students to gain new skills.
- Before contacting school boards or superintendents, we recommend reaching out to a school district’s Title I Director or the Academic Resources Department. If a school district does not have either of these options, we recommend contacting the individual who oversees the district’s curriculum. In addition, theaters may also want to consider reaching out to a school’s director of special education who often focuses on SEL. It is best to start with district-level staff, not specific schools or buildings within the district.
- It is important to recognize that schools are concerned with using one-time COVID-19 relief funding opportunities for new positions or salary increases for teachers and other education professionals because they realize it is one-time funding that is unlikely to be replaced in the future. Theaters should think of ideas to use this type of funding for opportunities that may only be used once, such as workshops or trainings.
CHAPTER III - What Works Clearinghouse

One way to show that your theater has evidence-based data proving your programming is effective and supports students’ academic goals is to find research studies that speak to the specific methodologies or approaches to learning you will employ as part of your program. The Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has a resource called the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), which is a database of academic studies on education programs, products, practices, and policies and focuses its research on what works in education. Utilizing a resource like WWC will help your theater find evidence-based data to use when presenting your program to school districts to explain the benefits of the program for students.

Below is more information about WWC and how to utilize it as a resource when approaching your local school district. In addition, we also flag a few studies below that outline the benefits of arts education programming, which could be helpful to use in your conversations with school officials.

- Some of the WWC studies have focused on arts education, which could help bolster your arguments for why arts education programming is critical to include in a school district’s curriculum. According to the WWC, culturally responsive instruction empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Research suggests that culturally responsive instruction allows educators to address social barriers that cause disparities in student achievement. By tailoring instruction to be mindful of these barriers, educators can help students overcome obstacles and succeed.

- WWC provides several practices for teachers to enhance a student’s overall learning experience and support students of all cultures. One practice is to connect the classroom with the real world. Students are more likely to engage if they are interested in the material and can relate to it. Theaters can offer several opportunities to support this practice [insert examples here].

- In June 2021, WWC provided several academic publications related to the correlation between students’ academic achievement and participation in afterschool arts programs that also have strong effects on SEL.
  - One report made it clear that arts integration impacts students’ social emotional outcomes in two ways: (1) by providing teachers with simple, easy-to-implement activities that explicitly encourage growth on one or more social-emotional competencies; and (2) by providing teachers with a methodology that encourages student engagement, which in turn encourages social-emotional growth. In order for arts integration to be adopted, teachers must participate in extensive training to adopt and integrate arts education practices into their classrooms. Theaters can offer these types of trainings and workshops to train teachers how to integrate arts practices into everyday learning.
  - A 2017 Future of Children report concluded SEL afterschool programs offer students opportunities for self-expression, exploring their talents, and forming relationships with supportive adults. Theaters can use this report to provide further evidence that afterschool program partnerships can add to the success of students in the classroom.
  - A study conducted by the International Dialogues on Education concluded sustained and consistent arts education improves the vocabulary achievement of students, and arts educational strategies should be promoted for all learners.
CHAPTER IV - Best Practices and Tips for Receiving Federal Funding for Arts Education

Utilizing the wisdom and experience of a number of theaters who have worked closely with their local school districts and received funding for arts education initiatives in the past, this chapter outlines some of the best practices and tips for receiving federal funding, including potential internal changes that may be needed at your theater in order to be successful in securing funding and/or meeting the requirements of such funding.

● As noted above in Chapter I, theaters receiving funding directly from the federal government are likely to run into a number of reporting requirements for that funding, which is not necessarily the case when working directly with school districts. When a school district utilizes its funding, such as ESSER or SSAEG grant money, the reporting burden falls on the school, instead of the theater, since the school is the direct recipient of the funding. When considering the staff time and reporting burden of these various programs, please keep this in mind, as receiving direct funding may be more time intensive than using funds that a school district allocates to your programming.

● If your theater does pursue direct funding from the Department of Education, many theaters that have received these funds in the past have hired or designated a staff member whose sole responsibility is complying with the reporting requirements necessary to maintain funding. Your theater should consider whether you have the staff capacity and bandwidth to pursue such programs before you embark on that endeavor.
CHAPTER V - Types of Programming for Arts Education in Schools and Communities

As you consider how your theater may be able to engage the education sector and promote your work, there are a number of factors to consider as you seek to contextualize your work for this particular sector and build relationships with school officials. This chapter explores some of these concepts and outlines how you may want to message and highlight the successes of your theater and/or arts education program, as well as how your work is connected to the curricular goals of the school. This chapter also includes case studies of theaters who have received federal funding to promote arts education in schools and universities. As part of your conversations with your local school district, we suggest asking district leaders which types of programs will best serve their students, as each school district represents a variety of students and makes decisions differently.

To the extent possible, it is helpful to tie your messaging about your arts education programming to academic standards or social and emotional learning, particularly using evidence-based data to prove the efficacy and effectiveness of your programming to the extent possible. This will help to garner the attention of the school district, especially as they may have to justify any spending on arts education by tying it back to how it supports the district’s academic goals.

There are several ways to tie the messaging about your arts education program to the school district’s goals and curriculum. Here are a few examples:

- Consider utilizing academic studies that explain the benefits of field trips to student’s growth and learning. For example, the below studies have shown that field trips increase a student’s tolerance for different points of view and an increase in hope for the future. Theaters can partner with schools to host field trips or bring a production to the school.
  - New Victory - Spark Change: Investing in performing arts education for all
  - University of Arkansas - What Do Students Get from K-12 Arts Field Trip Interventions?
- Introduce programs focused on literacy and language acquisition.
- Provide programs that focus on trauma-informed care.
  - The Arts Reach through Wallace Foundation has pulled together a number of resources on how utilize trauma-informed approaches to social and emotional learning activities, including its guide titled Navigating Social and Emotional Learning from the Inside Out.
  - The Cleveland Playhouse is currently working on a trauma-informed curriculum and would be willing to train other theaters to provide similar curriculum.

Case Studies:

- **Arts in Education Model Development & Dissemination.** The Alliance Theatre received two U.S. Department of Education Arts Model Development & Dissemination Grants that researched the impact of Arts Integrated residencies on literacy rates and language acquisition among students from high poverty communities, students for whom English is a second language, and students with special needs. For more information, contact Christopher Moses (Christopher.Moses@alliancetheatre.org).
- **21st CCLC Program.** In 2018, Cleveland Play House received the first of three 21st CCLC grants from the Ohio Department of Education to provide OST programming featuring arts enrichment at four Cleveland Metropolitan Schools. This federally funded program is accessed via each state’s department of education and applications are accepted every year. For more information, contact Pamela DiPasquale (pdipasquale@clevelandplayhouse.com).
- **Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) Program (Previously Arts in Education National Program (AENP)).** Cleveland Play House is partnering with Baldwin Wallace University, MetroHealth, Smith...
Center of Las Vegas, Villa Maria College and seven school districts to provide a web of
community-driven, trauma-informed theatre programs designed to mitigate the negative effects
of adverse childhood experiences. For more information, contact Pamela
DiPasquale (pdipasquale@clevelandplayhouse.com).

- Childsplay partnered with a research team from Arizona State University for 15 years to conduct
  experimental and quasi-experimental design studies exploring the impact of drama-based
  professional development on teacher facilitation and student achievement in grades PreK-6. The
  primary focus of the studies has been on language acquisition and literacy development in both
  mainstream and dual language learning environments. Three of the studies were funded by the
  U.S. Department of Education and results have been published in numerous national and
  international journals. During this partnership, both entities have served as fiscal agents and lead
  applicants for grants, deriving support from arts-based and education-based sources. For more
  information, contact Jenny Millinger (jmillinger@childsplayaz.org) and Kathryn Brantley
  (kbrantley@childsplayaz.org).