

ArtsHERE FAQs

The following document addresses questions about the ArtsHERE pilot program. Please note, some of this information may be subject to change as we continue to engage with organizations and respond to the unique contexts of work across the field.

Eligibility

Q: What is a Regional Arts Organization (USRAO)?

Together, the USRAOs across the United States work to activate and operate national arts initiatives, encourage and support collaboration across regions, states, and communities, and maximize the coordination of public and private resources invested in arts programs. Each USRAO is listed below:

- [Arts Midwest](#)
Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin
- [Mid-America Arts Alliance](#)
Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas
- [Mid Atlantic Arts](#)
Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, The District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia and West Virginia
- [New England Foundation for the Arts](#)
Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont
- [South Arts](#)
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee
- [Western States Arts Federation](#)
Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming

Q: My organization is not an arts or cultural organization. Can we still apply?

Yes. Organizations that do not primarily view themselves as “arts and culture” organizations but use arts-based practices to advance positive community outcomes, are welcome to apply. For non-arts organizations (e.g., social service, human services, etc.) describe any arts-based practices and/or arts programs or services that you provide. For example, a health services organization could describe its expressive therapies/arts therapy programs for geographically isolated individuals. You will have an opportunity in the application to describe how your programming is arts related. Significant arts programming is required, and programming is not required to have taken place during consecutive years.

Q: I consider my organization “small-sized” or maybe “medium-sized”. Is ArtsHERE only for large-sized organizations?

No. We encourage applications from a variety of eligible organizations. The guidelines do not specifically define “small-sized” or “medium-sized” as these terms can mean different things in different places around the country (e.g., geographic location of an organization, artistic discipline, etc.).

For example, different organizations with the same operating budget size may be considered small, medium, or large depending on where the organization is located. ArtsHERE application panelists should be able to understand your organization within its own unique environment. In the Organization Information area of the application, you’ll be able to describe the mission, history, and background of your organization, as well as provide information about your organization’s budget. This information will help the reviewers better understand your organization.

Q: Our organization has never applied to or received a grant from South Arts, a U.S. Regional Arts Organization, or the National Endowment for the Arts. Can we apply for ArtsHERE funding?

Yes! We welcome applications from organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. jurisdictions.

Q: Can our organization receive funding from the NEA or USRAOs and still apply for ArtsHERE funding?

Yes, as long as there is no overlap in costs or activities between the grant projects. An organization may have more than one active USRAO grant at a time, but you must be careful not to charge the same costs for the same activities to multiple grants that have overlapping grant periods. If you have an active grant, a pending application, or plan to apply at any of our other funding opportunities this year, be sure to exclude from your application any costs or activities that will be covered in those other grants/applications.

Q: The guidelines say that organizations must have a three-year history of arts programming before the application deadline. Our organization’s programming was disrupted by the pandemic. How do we account for this in the application?

Examples of your organization’s arts programming do not have to be from consecutive years or seasons. We know that most organization’s programming activities were disrupted by the pandemic. As a result, it’s acceptable to list programming from a recent year other than 2023 or 2022. Virtual programming, planning, and COVID-19 recovery activities are all considered to be arts programming.

Q: If our organization has a financial deficit, does it mean that we should not apply?

Organizations with a financial deficit may apply. However, we will conduct due diligence to evaluate each grantee’s risk of noncompliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the grant and consider imposing specific conditions, if appropriate. We also encourage you to [contact your USRAO](#) to discuss your specific situation to see if ArtsHERE is a fit for your organization at this time.

Q: Is \$65,000 the minimum funding request? What if we have a capacity-building project that doesn’t need that amount of money?

Yes, \$65,000 is the minimum funding request. Grants will range from \$65,000 to \$130,000 each. We encourage you to think through the full/true cost of your organization’s needs and to [contact your USRAO](#) for further guidance.

Q: Can you provide guidance regarding how much funding an organization should request in comparison to the organization's total budget? Is there a minimum budget requirement for organizations?

There are no eligibility restrictions based upon the size of an organization's budget. We encourage organizations to request the amount of funding that makes the most sense for their capacity building needs and to ensure internal controls are in place to properly account for and manage your grant funds. ArtsHERE funds may also be used to support professional development as it relates to your organization's financial management and development to increase your capacity.

Q: Is there a limit on administrative/personnel costs for the capacity building project budget?

Administrative/Personnel costs are allowable only as it relates to capacity building project activities and there are no limits regarding its use for this purpose. However, general miscellaneous or contingency costs are not eligible expenses. Please keep in mind charges to Federal awards for salaries and wages must be based on records that accurately reflect the work performed. The records must comply with your organization's internal controls and established accounting policies. We may require personnel activity reports or equivalent documentation if necessary to ensure alignment with allowable grant expenses.

Q: Will you accept an application from two or more eligible organizations working in partnership?

No - while we understand the collaborative nature of this work, funding will be granted to organizations on an individual basis. However, you may discuss any partnerships relevant to your organization's capacity building strategy and/or as it relates to consulting, contracts, or other project-related expenses.

Q: We are waiting for confirmation of our status as a 501(c)(3) organization. When do we need to have our letter of determination?

An organization must have their 501(c)(3) confirmation prior to being invited to submit a full application for Part II of the process. To ensure eligibility, we recommend no later than January 19, 2024.

Q: Must our facility be fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to be eligible?

Grantees are required to ensure accessibility to funded capacity building projects for people with disabilities. Beyond meeting the minimum Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, describe actions to ensure reasonable programmatic and communications accessibility. Activities can include and are not limited to planning/advisory committees including people with disabilities, large print programs/labels, American Sign Language interpretation, audio description, and specific marketing strategies. Grant funds may be used to ensure access accommodations.

Capacity Building

ArtsHERE encourages organizations to define what capacity building means for their organization; however, we also understand there can be much nuance between capacity building and general operations. As we work to address the unique contexts and needs of organizations across the nation, we may add to and refine this current list of questions and answers. Please check back for any updates and [contact your USRAO](#) for deeper discussion regarding your particular capacity building project.

Q: How do we define capacity building? Is ArtsHERE meant to directly fund arts programs for underserved groups or meant to boost the capacity of organizations to offer such programs?

The intent of ArtsHERE is to strengthen the capacity of organizations that are already engaging with underserved groups/communities to boost arts participation. In this context, capacity building moves beyond a siloed/singular focus on programs, such as increasing program attendance in the short-term. Rather, capacity building seeks to create the conditions by which the organization is better positioned to sustain meaningful artistic engagement with underserved communities over time.

Some funds may be used directly towards arts programming or operations; however, only as it relates to increasing an organization’s capacity to reach underserved communities with the arts. For example, funds may be used for strategic planning or logic model implementation, which may include implementing programmatic or operational activities.

Q: What are some examples of capacity building projects that are eligible for funding?

Each organization should define how they want to build their capacity and determine what is most effective for their mission and the community they serve. There is no one size fits all approach. However, applicants should propose a specific project that will strengthen and sustain the organization’s capacity for robust community engagement in the arts, as well as support strategies to increase arts participation for underserved groups/communities.

Specific examples of capacity building arts projects may include but are not limited to:

- staff development or leadership training to ensure thoughtful leadership succession (such as cultural competency training for staff and/or those who develop and implement programming) or
- stakeholder and community engagement activities (such as implementing a communications strategy that improves volunteer recruitment of bilingual individuals to increase and sustain engagement with program participants of Limited English Proficiency [LEP]).

Other examples are listed in the [program description](#). For more specific inquiries, please [contact your USRAO](#) for further guidance.

Q: Can funds be used to support salaries or help our organization become more accessible?

Yes, examples of allowable costs and activities may include salary, consulting, and contracting fees for related capacity building project activities, as well as expenses to improve an organization’s accessibility to underserved communities. Allowable ADA expenses may include access accommodations (e.g., audio description, sign-language interpretation, closed or open captioning, large-print brochures/labeling, publications in alternate formats) to make programming accessible to people with disabilities. While costs for construction, purchase, or renovation of facilities are not allowable, some costs may be used for the rental of accessible ramps, venues, and porta potties, for example. A full list of allowable costs can be found in the [guidelines](#).

Underserved Communities

Q: What do we mean by historically underserved groups/communities?

For the purpose of these guidelines, the term “underserved” refers to those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited relative to: geography, race/ethnicity, economics, or disability. At least

one of these characteristics must be evident in the proposed capacity building project. Age alone (e.g., youth, seniors) does not qualify a group as historically underserved.

Q: Do you have a threshold definition for what counts as an underserved geographical location?

No, there is no threshold definition. Each organization will define what geographically underserved means for them based upon their community's specific context and available data around engagement in the arts.

Q: Must underserved community members be involved in the making of art, or can they be solely consumers/audiences?

Underserved community members do not have to be involved in the making of art - they can be solely consumers or audience members. We encourage you to review the program guidelines and evaluation rubric to ensure your application meets the requirements and shows a deep commitment to reaching underserved communities.

Q: If our organization serves individuals that fit the NEA's definition of underserved, but we also serve individuals that do not fit within this definition (e.g., seniors, etc.), is this grant still a good fit?

Yes. We understand the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of identity combine, overlap, or intersect. For the purpose of these funding guidelines, "underserved group/community" must also refer to those whose opportunities to experience the arts have been limited by factors such as geography, race/ethnicity, economics, and/or disability. At least one of these characteristics must be evident in the proposed capacity building project. Age alone (e.g., youth, seniors) does not qualify a group as underserved.

Application Process

Q: What if our organization engages communities across multiple regions? Which USRAO should we apply through?

Please submit your application through one region based on the following:

- Where your 501(c)(3) organization files your 990 tax documents, or
- Where you primarily conduct your work if your organization is a federally or state recognized tribe organized as a 501(c)(3).

Please [contact your USRAO](#) for further guidance.

Q: Will Regional Arts Organization (USRAO) staff be engaged in the grant review process?

Once screeners review and score statements of interest (Part 1), each USRAO will invite up to 50 applicants that screeners have identified best fit the ArtsHERE criteria to move on to Part 2 of the process. During the panel review of the full application (Part II), each USRAO will lead and facilitate the panel discussion and help finalize which organizations will be selected for funding.

Q: Will our application require a two-year budget? Are program expenses reimbursed or are grant funds available during the year of operation?

We understand some capacity building projects may end prior to June 2026. Therefore, the budget would depend upon the length and timing of your project; however, we anticipate most will take place across two budget cycles. Your capacity building project can take as long as is needed within the allotted

time frame of October 2024-June 2026. Note that cohort participation is required for the first 12 months of the program.

Funds are not paid out on a reimbursable basis. Funding disbursements are arranged as follows: 50% of the funds will be given up front upon completion of the grant agreement document, 35% provided at the midway progress report, and 15% upon completion of the final report. This arrangement may be subject to change, if warranted, based upon an organization's risk assessment. Special considerations may also be made for some capacity building projects that warrant additional funds up front.

Q: Could you please share the full amount of funding allocated towards the ArtsHERE program so that we can take that into account when planning the amount of our request?

Managed by South Arts, ArtsHERE will award a total of \$12,350,000 to approximately 95 nonprofit organizations with nonmatching grants of \$65,000 to \$130,000. We encourage organizations to request the amount of funding that makes the most sense for their capacity building needs. Funded proposals will be awarded at the full amount of the request.

Q: Will the rubric be made available prior to application? What are some elements of a strong proposal?

Yes, the full scoring rubric is available on the [website](#). Artistic excellence and artistic merit are the primary criteria which will be considered by screeners and panelists during the review of statements of interest (Part 1), and in applications (Part 2).

For the purposes of ArtsHERE, artistic excellence, and artistic merit can be understood as the organization's use of the arts in any discipline as a core component of consistently engaging its community or serving and/or reaching individuals whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by race/ethnicity, economics, geography, or disability. Artistic excellent and artistic merit are evidenced through these primary review criteria:

- Organizational Capacity and Capacity-Building Project
- Alignment with ArtsHERE Commitment to Equity
- Engagement with Historically Underserved Communities

Evaluation

Q: What will constitute success for the ArtsHERE pilot program to the NEA and USRAOs? Will success lead to ArtsHERE becoming a core NEA grant program? Do we have any indication that this funding will be available next year?

Success for the ArtsHERE pilot program rests on the demonstrated increase in the capacity of organizations to boost arts participation in underserved communities and for funders to better understand the capacity building activities supported and how grantees approached this work. The evaluation will result in a summary of lessons learned and may inform the future of the ArtsHERE program.

ArtsHERE is a two-year program that will run from October 2024-June 2026; therefore, the pilot year will still be in operation next year. Results will be shared with the broader community and considerations of the future of ArtsHERE will also be shared once determined.

Q: Can we get more details about the type of data that will be collected in reports/surveys and how frequently?

A progress report must be submitted at the end of the first program year (fall 2025) followed by a Final Descriptive Report within 30 days of the end of the grant period of performance. Through the progress report and final report, grantees are required to provide evidence of capacity building project accomplishments including, but not limited to, work samples, community action plans, cultural asset studies, programs, reviews, relevant news clippings, and playbills. Remember that grantees are required to maintain all project documentation, including financial records for 48 months following submission of final reports.

As part of the evaluation, all grantees are expected to participate in baseline data gathering and contribute regular feedback on their participation in ArtsHERE, including technical assistance provided through the initiative.

Information the NEA is particularly interested in understanding include the following:

- Organizational characteristics of applicants and grantees
- Description of communities engaged by grantees
- Grantee programs
- Grantee organizational capacities
- Grantee connections
- Grantee learning
- Grantee funding
- ArtsHERE lessons learned

Q: How was the ArtsHERE program created? Were organizations consulted about what is needed to sustain and expand their work?

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awards thousands of grants each year to provide diverse opportunities for arts participation. However, historically underserved communities with rich and dynamic cultural identities continue to report lower arts participation rates than other groups. To address these disparities and better understand these dynamics, the NEA created ArtsHERE. The program was informed by a field scan/research of practices as well as feedback from each of the Regional Arts Organizations. The program fulfills the NEAs strategic plan and was informed by the NEAs 2019 [“U.S. Patterns of Arts Participation” report](#).

Panelists

Q: How are panelists chosen and who are they?

Each RAO proposed a list of conflict-free panelists to South Arts, and subsequently, to the NEA for approval. Advisory panels are composed of experts in the field, including a layperson, who reflect a wide geographic, ethnic, and minority representation as well as diverse aesthetic and cultural points of view.

Technical Assistance

Q: Are monthly meetings held in person for the technical assistance portion of ArtsHERE?

All cohort convenings will be virtual with the exception of one national convening, which will be held in person. Cohort participants will be given travel stipends to attend the in-person convening. More information on the technical assistance is found in the [program description](#).

Other Resources:

If ArtsHERE is not a fit for your organization, you may visit resources such as your USRAO, State Arts Agency, or the NEA website for other funding opportunities.