

# National Endowment for the Arts

## Notice of Funding Opportunity: FY26 Challenge America

### Application Instructions

#### Table of Contents

Click a heading below to navigate directly to that section.

- Challenge America..... 3**
- Introduction ..... 3**
  - Components of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) ..... 3
- Apply ..... 4**
  - Application Calendar..... 4
- Application Part 1: Submit the *Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/ Short Organizational Form (SF-424) to Grants.gov* ..... 5**
  - Step 1: Access the Application Package and Create a Workspace ..... 5
  - Step 2: Complete the Form..... 5
  - Step 3: Submit the form via Grants.gov’s Workspace ..... 8
  - Step 4: Confirm Part 1 Application Submission ..... 8
- Application Part 2: Submit the *Grant Application Form* through the Applicant Portal..... 10**
  - Applicant Portal Submission Window..... 10
  - Step 1: Access the Applicant Portal ..... 10
  - Step 2: Fill out the Grant Application Form ..... 12
    - View Application Data Tab..... 12
    - Organization Info Tab ..... 12
      - Subtab: Organization Details ..... 12
      - Subtab: Organization Budget..... 13
    - Arts Programmatic History Tab..... 14
    - Project Details Tab ..... 15
      - Subtab: Project Activity..... 15
      - Subtab: Other Details..... 18
      - Subtab: Project Partners and Key Individuals..... 18
    - Project Budget Tab..... 20
      - Budget Template..... 20

Project Budget Guidance .....	20
Filling out the budget in the Applicant Portal.....	20
Visible on Both Subtabs .....	21
Budget Subtab: Project Expenses .....	21
Budget Subtab: Project Income .....	25
Items to Upload Tab.....	26
Organization & Project Data Tab .....	31
Step 3: Submit the Grant Application Form.....	35

**Access for individuals with disabilities:**

---



Contact the Office of Accessibility at 202-682-5532 / [accessibility@arts.gov](mailto:accessibility@arts.gov) or the Office of Civil Rights at [civilrights@arts.gov](mailto:civilrights@arts.gov) to request an accommodation or an alternate format of the guidelines at least 2 weeks prior to the application deadline.

# Challenge America

## Introduction

---

### Components of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

---

#### APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS (this document):

Includes:

- Detailed instructions on how to submit both parts of the application. Use the links below to jump straight to those instructions:
  - [Part 1: Submit the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form to Grants.gov](#). This form collects basic information about your organization. You must successfully complete Part 1 to have access to Part 2.
  - [Part 2: Submit the Grant Application Form \(GAF\) through the NEA's Applicant Portal \(AP\)](#). The GAF collects the remainder of your application, including:
    - Answers to narrative questions about your organization and project,
    - Budget information about your organization and project,
    - Information about key individuals and partners, and
    - Work samples.
  - **NOTE:** Grants.gov and the Applicant Portal are *separate* websites, with different submission deadlines associated with each part of the application. Check the submission dates found in the application calendar on the next page and set a calendar reminder for yourself to avoid missing a deadline.
  - You may navigate to specific sections either by clicking on the headings in the table of contents, or by using the bookmarks sidebar.

#### CHALLENGE AMERICA GRANT PROGRAM DETAILS DOCUMENT

Navigate to the “Grant Program Details” section on the [Challenge America webpage](#) for essential information, including a grant program description, unallowable activities and costs, eligibility, review criteria, award amount and cost sharing, and post-award requirements and administration, among others. **We reference the *Grant Program Details* throughout this document, so we recommend having both available while preparing your application.**

## Apply

**Pre-application registration:** Before beginning your application, confirm your required registrations with Login.gov, SAM, and Grants.gov. More information on Registration can be found in the Registration document, which can be found under the “How to Apply” section of the [Challenge America webpage](#). **All three required registrations must be active to submit Part 1 of the application through Grants.gov.**

## Application Calendar

All deadline times are Eastern Time Zone (ET). Be sure to double check the deadline time and convert it to the correct time in **your time zone**.

APPLICATION PART	DATE
<b>Part 1: Grants.gov Submission Deadline</b>	<b>April 24, 2025 11:59 pm ET</b>
<b>Part 2: NEA Applicant Portal Opens to applicants</b>	<b>April 29, 2025 9:00 am ET</b>
<b>Part 2: NEA Applicant Portal Submission Deadline</b>	<b>May 13, 2025 11:59 pm ET</b>

Applicant Portal access will only be available during the dates listed above for Part 2. You will not be able to access the portal until the first day in the window.

## Application Part 1: Submit the *Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/ Short Organizational Form (SF-424)* to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

You will use [Grants.gov Workspace](#) to complete Part 1 in Grants.gov.

### Step 1: Access the Application Package and Create a Workspace

Review the Grants.gov video tutorial on [how to create a Workspace](#).

1. **Access the Part 1 application package** on the [Challenge America](#) page by clicking on the application package link for opportunity number 2025NEA01CA, under “How to Apply.” This will take you **directly** to the pre-populated application package for this opportunity in Grants.gov.
2. **The Grants.gov “View Grant Opportunity” screen will open, click the red “Apply” button.** 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).
  - **If the Apply button is grey or you receive a “bad request” error**, see [instructions on how to troubleshoot](#).
3. **Create a Workspace application:**
  - Fill in the Application Filing Name field with your organization name, then
  - Click the **Create Workspace** button.
4. **Go to the Manage Workspace page**, where you can begin working on the application.

**GRANTS.GOV HELP:** Grants.gov is a government-wide portal, and NEA staff does not have control of, or administrative access to, the site. If you run into technical issues with Grants.gov, please contact them directly at 1-800-518-4726 or via email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov), or consult the information posted on the Grants.gov website at [Support](#) or [Help](#). The Grants.gov Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Submit Part 1 of your application by the date and time below:**

APPLICATION PART	DATE
Part 1: Grants.gov <i>Submission Deadline</i>	April 24, 2025 11:59 pm ET

### Step 2: Complete the Form

Review the Grants.gov video tutorial on [how to complete forms in Workspace](#).

All asterisked (\*) items and yellow fields on this form are required and must be completed before you will be able to submit the form. Do not type in all capital letters when completing the form. Enter information directly into the form. Do not copy and paste into the form.

**EMAILS:** Due to restrictions from the Department of Homeland Security we are not able to send

emails to alias addresses that forward to another email account. Do not enter this type of email address.

**1. Name of Federal Agency:** Pre-populated.

**2. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** Pre-populated.

**3. Date Received:** This will be filled automatically with the date that you submit your application; leave blank.

**4. Funding Opportunity Number:** Pre-populated.

**5. Applicant Information:**

**a. Legal Name:** The name provided here must be the applicant's legal name as it appears in the current IRS 501(c)(3) status letter or in the official document that identifies the organization as a unit of state or local government, or as a federally recognized tribal community or tribe. (Do not use your organization's popular name, if different.)

If you are a parent organization applying on behalf of an eligible independent component, do not list the name of the independent component here. You will provide that information in Part 2.

**b. Address:** Use *Street 1* for your organization's physical street address. This address must be identical to the physical address shown in your organization's SAM (System for Award Management) registration. Only use *Street 2* for your organization's mailing address if it differs from the SAM physical street address.

In the *Zip/Postal Code* box, organizations in the United States should enter the **full 9-digit zip code** that was assigned by the U.S. Postal Service. If you do not know your full zip code, you may look it up on the [USPS website](#).

**c. Web Address:** Provide your organization's website. This information will be used for administrative purposes only, and will not be provided to panelists for review. Note: Website links are allowable as part of the work samples in Part 2. Review the information under [Items to Upload](#) for instructions on how to submit them through the Applicant Portal. Links submitted as work samples will be reviewed by panelists.

**d. Type of Applicant:** Select the item that best characterizes your organization from the menu in the first drop-down box. Additional choices are optional.

**e. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN):** Enter the 9-character number that was assigned by the Internal Revenue Service; do not use a Social Security Number or a 12-character EIN/TIN number.

**f. Organizational UEI:** All organizational applicants for federal funds must have a UEI. Enter your entity's UEI here. You can find your entity's UEI in your entity's System for Award Management (SAM) record. If you cannot locate your entity's UEI, [contact SAM for assistance](#). **The UEI must match the UEI associated with your entity's SAM (System for Award Management) record that was used in your Grants.gov registration. Otherwise, your application will not be validated by Grants.gov and will be rejected.**

**g. Congressional District:** Enter the number of the Congressional District where the applicant organization is physically located. This Congressional District must match with the Congressional District that shown in the Business Information section of your organization's SAM (System for Award Management) record.

Use the following format: 2-character State Abbreviation-3-character District Number. For example, if your organization is located in the 5th Congressional District of California, enter "CA-005." If your state has a single At-Large Representative or your jurisdiction has a single Delegate, enter your 2-character state/jurisdiction abbreviation and "-000." If you need help determining your district, go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and use the "Find Your Representative" tool.

## 6. Project Information:

**a. Project Title:** Enter "N/A." Any other text entered here will not be used in the review of your application.

**b. Project Description:** Enter "N/A." Any other text entered here will not be used in the review of your application.

**c. Proposed Project Start Date/End Date:** Enter the beginning and ending dates for your requested period of performance, i.e., the span of time necessary to plan, execute, and close out your proposed project. The start date should be the first day of the month, and the end date should be the last day of the month. NEA support of a project may start on or after **January 1, 2026**.

**7. Project Director:** Provide contact information, including an email address that will be valid through the announcement date for your category. Optional: Select a Prefix (e.g., Ms., Mr.)

**8. Primary Contact/Grant Administrator:** Provide the requested information for the individual who should be contacted on matters involving this application and the administration of an award. For colleges and universities, this person is often a Sponsored Research, Sponsored Programs, or Contracts and Grants Officer. For the Telephone number field, use the following format: 000-000-0000. Optional: Select a Prefix (e.g., Ms., Mr.)

If this individual is the same as the Project Director, you may check the "Same as Project Director" box and not repeat information that you have already provided in Item 7. If the Primary Contact/Grant Administrator is the same as the Authorizing Official, complete all items under both 8 and 9 even though there will be some repetition.

**9. Authorized Representative:** Enter the requested information for the AOR (Authorized Organization Representative) who is authorized to submit this application to Grants.gov. Optional: Select a Prefix (e.g., Ms., Mr.)

The AOR must have the legal authority to obligate your organization (e. g., be a senior member of the staff such as an Executive Director, Director of Development). See the NEA's [General Terms and Conditions](#) for who can serve as an AOR for colleges and universities. Contractors/consultants, including grant writers, or administrative support staff cannot serve as an AOR.

**NOTE: By clicking the "I Agree" box at the top of Item 9, this individual will be certifying compliance with relevant federal requirements on your organization's behalf.** These requirements can be found in the [Assurance of Compliance](#).

The "Signature of Authorized Representative" and "Date Signed" boxes will be populated by Grants.gov upon submission of the application.

---

### Step 3: Submit the form via Grants.gov's Workspace

---

Be certain you are satisfied with your *Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form (SF-424)* before you click submit. No revisions to your application form are possible through Grants.gov once it is submitted.

The NEA strongly suggests you submit your application *well before the deadline* to provide ample time to resolve any problems you might encounter.

**Review the Grants.gov video tutorial on [submitting an application in Workspace](#).**

When you are ready to submit, navigate to the **Forms** tab on the **Manage Workspace** page:

- Once the form is filled out and the **Form Status** column says "Passed," it will be ready for submission.
  - **Important note:** The status "Forms Passed" does NOT indicate that your application has been submitted, only that your forms have been filled out. You still need to click the Sign and Submit button after receiving the "Forms Passed" status. For more information, review the [Forms Tab](#) help article.
- Click **Complete and Notify AOR**, which will notify the user(s) with the AOR role that the workspace is ready to submit.
- The AOR must click [Sign and Submit](#) to submit the application.

After the AOR submits the application, they will see a confirmation screen explaining that the submission is being processed. **Take a screenshot and retain the Grants.gov Tracking Number that you receive in the application submission confirmation screen.**

---

### Step 4: Confirm Part 1 Application Submission

---

**Verify that the Part 1 application was *validated* by the Grants.gov system. Take a screenshot of the validation confirmation for your records.**

You can track the progress of your application submission through Grants.gov in one of three ways:

1. Check the [progress bar](#) in Workspace. When your application has been successfully received, the bar will be green, and a check mark will appear in each bubble.
2. When logged in to Grants.gov, the AOR can click the *Check Application Status* link under the Applicants drop-down menu and search for the submitted application.



3. When not logged in to Grants.gov, go to [Track My Application](#) and enter your Grants.gov Tracking Numbers. Then click the *Track* button to see the status listings of the valid tracking numbers entered. This function will only work if you have a tracking number.

[Information about checking Grants.gov application status and a complete list of statuses.](#)

Do not wait until the day of the deadline to verify your submission in case you encounter any difficulties. Failure to successfully submit the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form (SF-424) through Grants.gov by the posted deadline will make you ineligible to complete Part 2 of the application process.

Part 2 of your application is submitted through the NEA's Applicant Portal. **Instructions on how to access the portal, including how to find your username and password can be found on the next page.**

## Application Part 2: Submit the *Grant Application Form* through the Applicant Portal

Applicants who successfully submit Part 1 of the application to Grants.gov by the appropriate deadline will be able to access the Applicant Portal to submit Part 2. **The Applicant Portal is a separate website from Grants.gov – a link can be found below.** The Applicant Portal is an NEA administered site. If you run into technical issues, please reach out to [challengeamerica@arts.gov](mailto:challengeamerica@arts.gov) / 202-682-5700.

### Applicant Portal Submission Window

The Applicant Portal will be open for a two-week submission window, during which applicants will have access to complete and submit Part 2 of the application. Applicants will not have access to the portal before the dates below. **However, we urge you to use this document to prepare your Part 2 responses and material well in advance** so you will have them ready to upload once the system opens.

**We recommend applicants set up calendar reminders to avoid missing the submission window.** All times are Eastern.

APPLICANT PORTAL ACCESS	DATE
Part 2: NEA Applicant Portal <i>Opens to applicants</i>	April 29, 2025 9:00 am ET
Part 2: NEA Applicant Portal <i>Submission Deadline</i>	May 13, 2025 11:59 pm ET

### Step 1: Access the Applicant Portal

The AP user name and password are *unique to each application you submit*. Do not use tracking numbers from a previous application to log into the AP.

Log on to the Applicant Portal at: <https://applicantportal.arts.gov>

- **User Name = Grants.gov Tracking Number (Example: "GRANT38906754")**
  - Your Grants.gov tracking number is assigned by Grants.gov at the time you submit Part 1.
  - A confirmation screen will appear in Grants.gov once your submission is complete, your Grants.gov tracking number will be provided at the bottom of the screen.
- **Password = Agency Tracking Number/NEA Application Number (Example: "1425736")**
  - The NEA assigns the number to your application 1-2 business days after you submit Part 1 of your application.
  - The AOR may retrieve the number by following these steps:

- Log on to Grants.gov (*if you are already logged in, you may need to log out and then back in again to see the applications*).
- Under Grant Applications, select *Check Application Status*.
- Look for your Grants.gov Tracking Number and select *Details* under the Actions column.
- You'll be taken to the Submission Details screen to find your Agency Tracking#/NEA Application Number.
- NOTE: Check Application Status is a separate feature from Track My Application at Grants.gov.

#### TECH TIPS FOR THE APPLICANT PORTAL

View the [Grant Application Form Tutorial](#) for a video walk-through of the portal.

**The User Name and Password can only be used by one person at a time in the Applicant Portal. If multiple people use the User Name and Password at the same time to work on an application, data will be lost.**

#### Browser issues:

- The Applicant Portal is best viewed in the following browsers: Chrome 58+, Firefox 54+, or Microsoft Edge 44+. Cookies and JavaScript may need to be enabled for you to successfully view the site. You might also need to disable AdBlocker and/or similar software.
- Many problems can be solved by switching to a different browser. **However, you should only open the Applicant Portal in one browser at a time to enter information.**

#### Character count issues:

- Unseen HTML coding from your word processing software may result in the character count in the Applicant Portal being higher than you expect. This is often related to special characters such as ampersands, quotation marks, apostrophes, and angle brackets.
- To strip the HTML, we recommend copying and pasting text into Notepad (PC users) or TextEdit (Mac users) before copying it into the Applicant Portal.
- Limit character counts by using a solution other than special characters (e.g., instead of using quotation marks for titles of works, put them in italics), using only one space at the end of sentences, and limiting the use of tabs.

**Click "Save" and log off if you plan to leave the Applicant Portal with work in progress.** Your session will deactivate after 30 minutes, which may result in losing content.

**Before submitting, double check each section to confirm that it's complete,** and that no information was lost when cutting and pasting.

Use the "Print" function in the upper right corner to create a printable version of your application. We strongly recommend that you save a final copy for your records by choosing "Save as PDF" from your print dialog box.

---

## Step 2: Fill out the Grant Application Form

---

Application content is collected through a series of tabs and sub-tabs in which applicants will enter text:

- View Application Data Tab
- Organization Info Tab
  - Subtab: Organization Details
  - Subtab: Organization Budget
- Arts Programmatic History Tab
- Project Details Tab
  - Subtab: Project Activity
  - Subtab: Other Details
  - Subtab: Project Partners & Key Individuals
- Project Budget Tab
  - Subtab: Project Expenses
  - Subtab: Project Income
- Items to Upload Tab
- Organization & Project Data Tab

Required items are denoted with an asterisk (\*) throughout this document. **Do not include hyperlinks. They will not be reviewed, unless provided as part of your work sample upload.**

---

### View Application Data Tab

---

This section cannot be edited. If you find any incorrect information on this page, [contact](#) an NEA staff member for assistance.

---

### Organization Info Tab

---

#### Subtab: Organization Details

##### LEGAL/IRS NAME\*

Enter your organization's Legal/IRS name. It must match the Organization Name you entered in the *Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form*.

##### POPULAR NAME (if different)

##### FOR THIS APPLICATION, ARE YOU SERVING AS THE PARENT OF AN INDEPENDENT COMPONENT \*

Radio buttons: Yes/No

Information about official Independent Component status can be found in *Eligibility: Application Limits (Challenge America Grant Program Details, pg. 16)*.

**If you select Yes:** Enter the name of the component.

**MISSION AND BACKGROUND/HISTORY OF YOUR ORGANIZATION \***

*Text Box: 1,000-character limit, including spaces*

Describe your organization’s mission, history, and operations. This may include, but need not be limited to, a description of the following elements:

- Historical or cultural background of your organization and/or its communities served, including demographic information; and
- Information about your organization’s staff or governance.

**Staff Tip: Mission and Background/History of Your Organization**

Reviewers may not be familiar with your community or your organization. This information provides helpful context for understanding your work and project. NEA reviewers are recruited from diverse geographic areas across the country. Your response here will help to familiarize reviewers with your organization and situate your project within the framework of your organization and community, as well as help reviewers consider aspects of your project’s artistic excellence and artistic merit, such as its relevance and appropriateness to your constituency.

**Subtab: Organization Budget**

The Organization Budget is a webform, you will fill out each field in the Applicant Portal. The form will appear as follows:

	Most Recently Completed Fiscal Year	Previous Fiscal Year	Two Fiscal Years Prior
<b>Fiscal Year End Date (MM/DD/YYYY)</b>	<i>Calendar Selection*</i>	<i>Calendar Selection*</i>	<i>Calendar Selection*</i>
<b>Total Income</b>	\$	\$	\$
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$	\$	\$
<b>Operating Surplus/Deficit (single year)</b>	<i>Autofills from above</i>	<i>Autofills from above</i>	<i>Autofills from above</i>

**Parent Organizations:** If you are a parent organization, applying for an independent component provide only the budget information for the independent component for which you are applying.

**Organizational Units:** For projects undertaken by a smaller organizational unit of a larger organization (such as an academic department, a literary organization housed at a college or university, or an office, facility, or department of local government), submit only the information for the smaller unit and clearly identify that the budget is for the smaller unit in the Fiscal Health section.

**The Organization Budget is intended to show your organization's fiscal activity as it relates to annual operations.** Do not include activity related to a capital campaign (such as raising money

for a new facility, an endowment fund, or a cash reserve fund). We may request additional information to clarify an organization's financial position. The figures you submit are subject to verification by the NEA.

**FISCAL YEAR END DATE\*:** Indicate the end date for each of your organization's three most recent fiscal years using the calendar drop down.

**TOTAL INCOME\*:** Enter your organization's income for each fiscal year. Unaudited figures are acceptable. Income sources may include earned revenues such as those that are received through the sale of goods, services performed, or from investments, as well as contributed funds, such as gifts, grants, loans, and in-kind contributions.

**TOTAL EXPENSES\*:** Enter your organization's total operating expenses for each fiscal year. Unaudited figures are acceptable. Expenses may include salaries and fees, production/exhibition expenses, services, and administrative costs, among others.

**OPERATING SURPLUS/DEFICIT:** These fields will automatically populate.

#### FISCAL HEALTH\*

*Text box: 1,000-character limit, including spaces*

Discuss the fiscal health of your organization. You may use this space to discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected your organization's budget. In addition, you must explain:

1. Any changes of 15% or more in either your income or expenses from one year to the next, and
2. Plans for reducing any deficit (include factors that contributed to the deficit and its amount).

For independent components, you may use the space to discuss the fiscal health of the component and to explain the relationship that it has with the larger entity (e.g., "museum guards and utilities paid for by university").

#### Staff Tip: Fiscal Health

Use this space to talk about specifics about your organization's finances to show reviewers that your organization has the capacity to carry out the project. Are changes in the budget the result of pandemic-related recovery dollars or multi-year grants? Did your organization reduce programming one year to make ends meet? Providing context over multiple fiscal years helps reviewers to better interpret the information.

---

## Arts Programmatic History Tab

Submit **one** representative example of arts programmatic history per year for three recent years/seasons prior to the application deadline. This list should demonstrate eligibility. Programming examples may have occurred before the organization received non-profit, tax-exempt status, and are not required to have taken place during consecutive years. **However,**

**your dated entries must show that your organization meets the three-year arts programmatic history requirement for eligibility.**

For the purposes of determining eligibility, the organization must demonstrate that it started programming in or before April 2022.

#### **YEAR\***

*3 fields, 4-character limit each*

#### **REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES\***

*3 Text Boxes: 500-character limit, including spaces*

Providing information in bulleted or list form is acceptable. **Do not submit this information as a separate work sample.** For each representative example, where appropriate, include:

- Date (Month/Year)
- Title/Work/Program
- Key Artists/Personnel
- # of Classes, Performances, Exhibitions, Residencies, etc.
- # of Participants or Audience.

#### **Staff Tip: Arts Programmatic History**

Your responses to the Arts Programmatic History section will be used in two ways: for eligibility and for competitiveness. First, your responses must demonstrate eligibility to apply for NEA funding by showing a three-year history of arts programming prior to the application deadline. Second, your representative examples can help demonstrate your organization's ability to carry out the project, which is a part of the artistic merit review criteria. Select prior activity that is most relevant to your proposal, such as previous work in the same art form, collaborations with the same partners, and/or efforts toward similar goals.

---

## **Project Details Tab**

### **Subtab: Project Activity**

#### **NEA DISCIPLINE FOR PROPOSED PROJECT\***

##### ***Dropdown selection***

**Select the discipline for your proposed project:** This refers to the artistic discipline associated with your *project*, not necessarily your organization as a whole.

- Artist Communities
- Arts Education
- Dance
- Design
- Film & Media Arts
- Folk & Traditional Arts
- Literary Arts
- Local Arts Agencies
- Museums
- Music
- Musical Theater
- Opera
- Presenting & Multidisciplinary Works
- Theater
- Visual Arts

**PROJECT SYNOPSIS\***

*Text Box: 200-character limit, including spaces*

Provide a brief synopsis for your proposed arts project. Use the following formatting: Start the sentence with “To support” then summarize the specific project-based activities you want the NEA to support.

**UNDERSERVED GROUPS/COMMUNITIES\***

Identify the specific underserved groups/communities your project is intended to reach. Review the Program Description (*Challenge America Grant Program Details* pg. 6) for more information. Choose all that apply:

- Geography
- Ethnicity
- Economic Status
- Disability

**INTENDED UNDERSERVED AUDIENCE/PARTICIPANTS/COMMUNITY \***

*Text Box: 1,500-character limit, including spaces*

The Challenge America program's focus is to support projects that extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations. The term “audience” is used below to describe the group intended to be served by your project: attendees, participants, communities, constituencies, etc. Clearly explain:

- Who will benefit from the project and how will they be intentionally engaged? Describe the demographics of your community at-large and the intended audience.
- If applicable, explain how your intended audience’s opportunities to experience the arts have been limited, related to the underserved population categories of geography, ethnicity, economic status, and/or disability.
- You may also wish to describe how your project does not exclude those outside your project’s intended underserved audience.

As a reminder, in the federal-funding context, a focus on a particular group or demographic may be permissible, but exclusion is not. This extends to hiring practices, artist selection processes, and audience engagement. Your application should make it clear that project activities are not exclusionary. Please review the [Assurance of Compliance](#), as well as [NEA Civil Rights guidance](#) on our website, including this archived webinar: [Things to Know Before You Apply: Federal Civil Rights and Your Grants Application](#).

**Staff Tip: Intended Underserved Audience/Participants/Community**

This section will help reviewers understand the specific audience that your project is intended to reach, and the potential impact on that audience by your project. Your project must engage at least **one** of the intended audience categories listed (Geography, Ethnicity, Economic Status, and Disability). In some cases, a project might incorporate multiple categories. Projects focused on serving veterans or age-specific groups (e.g., youth, seniors) **must also** include one of the four underserved categories listed above to qualify as eligible for funding. Whenever possible, include relevant details and quantifiable demographic statistics that describe your intended audience.



**PROPOSED PROJECT START DATE/END DATE**

*Calendar selections:* PROJECT START DATE: (MM-DD-YYYY)\*  
PROJECT END DATE: (MM-DD-YYYY)\*

Enter the beginning and ending dates for your requested period of performance (period of support), i.e., the span of time necessary to plan, execute, and close out your proposed project. The start date *must* be the first day of the month, and the end date *must* be the last day of the month (*for example, 6/1/26 – 12/31/26*). Your application will not validate if the start or end dates are incorrect.

Our support of a project may start on or after **January 1, 2026**. While a period of performance of up to two years is allowed, we anticipate that most Challenge America projects -- including planning and closeout time -- will be shorter. Your project budget should include only the activities and costs incurred during the period of performance indicated here.

The dates you enter here will be used in the review of your application.

**Staff Tip: Proposed Project Start Date/End Date**

The Project Start Date that you provide is also used to determine application eligibility. Be sure to double-check that your Project Start Date is **no earlier than January 1, 2026**. This also helps reviewers align your project activities with the proposed timeline.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION\***

*Text Box: 3,500-character limit, including spaces*

We fund arts projects, and make grants only for specific, definable activities. Describe the proposed arts project you would like us to support. Use plain language and be as specific as possible. Answer the questions below as you describe your project:

- a. What activities will take place during the grant period? Provide relevant logistics and details.
- b. What artists, productions, venues, or pieces of artwork will be central to the project?
- c. How does this project relate to your organization, your community, and the intended audience/participants?
- d. If applicable, include project details specifically intended to strengthen engagement with the intended audience/participants, such as educational activities, marketing, or outreach.

**Do not describe unrelated organizational programming.** The information that you provide will be evaluated against the Review Criteria (*Challenge America Grant Program Details* pg. 23) by readers, so make sure your response addresses the Review Criteria.

**Staff Tip: Project Description**

This section is the core of your narrative. Thoroughly describe the project activities you are asking us to fund. Be sure to answer the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of your project in this section. You do not need to provide a line-by-line description of what is in your budget, but readers must be able to quickly understand your project.

### Subtab: Other Details

#### SCHEDULE OF KEY PROJECT DATES\*

*Text Box: 1,000-character limit, including spaces*

Provide a timeline for your project and describe the significant dates for the project. If you include activities that occur before January 1, 2026, or outside your period of performance, indicate them by adding an asterisk (\*) and make sure that those activities and costs are *not* included in the Project Budget form.

#### PROJECT GOALS AND MONITORING\*

*Text Box: 1,000-character limit, including spaces*

Describe your goals for the project, and how you will monitor progress towards those goals. Examples of monitoring activities include surveys of program participants, measuring attendance, and third-party program evaluations, among others.

*Note:* If your project involves directly collecting sensitive data from program participants, such as personally identifiable information or data from vulnerable populations, review [Resources on Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement](#).

#### Staff Tip: Project Goals and Monitoring

Explain any plans for tracking your accomplishments, challenges, and the project's potential impact. Your evaluation plan helps reviewers determine the project's artistic merit. For example, if your goals include increasing engagement, how will you record the number of participants (tickets, social media engagement, etc.)? How will you assess community response to the project (press coverage, artist/audience feedback, etc.)? How have previous experiences or data informed the current project?

### Subtab: Project Partners and Key Individuals

Funders are not excluded from being partners, but they must also provide staffing or other professional support, or actively participate in another way. Organizational partners **are not** required but can be one way to show how your project will reach your intended audiences.

#### INFORMATION ABOUT KEY ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS & INDIVIDUALS

Outline *at least one and up to 5* organizations and/or individuals.

#### FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL or PARTNER ORGANIZATION ENTER:

- **INDIVIDUAL or PARTNER ORGANIZATION NAME\***: *Text box, 100-character limit*
- **PROPOSED or COMMITTED\***: *Drop-down, select either "Proposed" or "Committed"*
- **INDIVIDUAL/PARTNER ORGANIZATION TYPE\***: *Drop-down*
  - For Individuals (such as staff, artists, teaching artists, collaborators, consultants, mentors) select "Individual."
  - For Partner Organizations, choose the *one* category that best describes the organization from the following options:

- College/University, [Alaska Native](#) and [Native Hawaiian](#) Serving Institutions (AANH)
  - College/University, [Hispanic Serving Institutions](#) (HSI)
  - College/University, [Historically Black College or University](#) (HBCU)
  - College/University, [Tribal College or University](#) (TCU)
  - Other College/University
  - Government - State
  - Government - Regional
  - Government - County
  - Government - Municipal
  - Government - Tribal
  - Organization - Arts Non-profit
  - Organization - Arts For-Profit
  - Organization - Other Non-profit
  - Organization - Other For-Profit
  - Correctional Institution
  - Foundation
  - Healthcare Facility (e.g., hospital, clinic, or nursing home)
  - K-12 School/School District
  - Mass Transit
  - Military Base
  - Public Library
  - Religious Organization
  - TV or Radio Station or other Media Organization
  - Other; please specify:
- **DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANIZATION or BIO OF INDIVIDUAL**  
*Text box: 750-character limit, including spaces*
    - Include the role of the individual/organization in the project.
    - Reminder: Do not include hyperlinks. They will not be reviewed.

#### Staff Tip: Key Partners and Individuals

If you have not yet selected an artist, that is OK. You may provide bios for artists you are considering for the project, or artists that you have worked with previously on a similar project. Artist bios provide useful information for reviewers as they consider the project's artistic excellence. If the artist(s) is not yet confirmed, make their prospective status clear for reviewers in your description. Explain the role of your key individuals and organizational partners in helping you to reach and engage the intended audience/participants. This additional information can show the project's potential to reach underserved groups/communities, or ability to increase the availability of arts or cultural resources to those groups.

---

## Project Budget Tab

---

### Budget Template

Use the [Challenge America budget template](#) to prepare your project budget in advance. The template includes a tab with example amounts in each section, which are for demonstration purposes only, and should not be interpreted as cost allocation guidance from the NEA. **DO NOT UPLOAD THE TEMPLATE TO THE APPLICANT PORTAL. You must complete the project budget webform within the Applicant Portal in order for your application to be accepted for review.**

### Project Budget Guidance

Applicants are required to provide a minimum 1:1 non-federal cost share/match. For example, for an award amount of \$10,000, you must show a minimum of \$10,000 in cost share/matching funds, and your total project expenses must be at least \$20,000. **Applications that do not include a project budget meeting the *minimum* requirement of at least a \$10,000 NEA funding request, a \$10,000 cost share/match, and \$20,000 in total project expenses will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed.**

The costs included in your project budget must be allocable to your proposed activities. Only include costs related to activities taking place during the Period of Performance (period of support) you entered in the Project Details tab. Any costs incurred before or after those dates will be removed. All items in your budget, whether supported by NEA funds or your cost share/matching funds, must be reasonable, necessary to accomplish project objectives, and allowable in terms of the NEA's [General Terms and Conditions](#).

**NOTE:** Organizations cannot receive more than one NEA award for the same expenses/activities. This budget cannot include project costs that are supported by any other federal funds or their cost share/match, including costs that may be included in applications submitted, or grants received, by partner organizations or presenters.

### Filling out the budget in the Applicant Portal

The project budget is a webform, with each item description and amount in its own field. The form will auto-calculate each section, as well as the overall totals. The number of lines available in each section is static – you cannot add additional lines. You will be asked to provide an estimated project budget that consists of:

- **Project Expenses:** A breakdown of all project expenses that will be supported with **both** the NEA Requested Amount *and* your cost share/matching funds.
- **Project Income:** The combined total of the funding amount you are requesting from the NEA and how you plan to meet the minimum 1:1 cost share/match requirement. Cost share/matching funds do not need to be secured at the time of application.

## Visible on Both Subtabs

**TOP OF PAGE: AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM THE NEA\*:** Enter \$10,000.

### BOTTOM OF PAGE: PROJECT EXPENSES/INCOME SUMMARY TABLE

At the bottom of the project budget form, the totals from each subtab you complete will automatically populate in a summary table. *Remember: your final total project income must equal your total project costs/expenses.* Refer to this summary table to confirm these sections are equal before submitting your application.

### BOTTOM OF PAGE: ADDITIONAL PROJECT BUDGET NOTES (OPTIONAL)

*Text box: 750-character limit, including spaces.*

Provide information to clarify any line item included in the project budget, or to provide further details on the scope of your project budget.

## Budget Subtab: Project Expenses

Project expenses must include costs covered by **both NEA funds and the Cost Share/Match**. Review “Unallowable Activities/Costs” (*Challenge America Grant Program Details*, pg. 11) for a list of costs that cannot be included in your project budget.

At the bottom of the Project Expenses subtab, the **TOTAL PROJECT COSTS/EXPENSES** field will auto-calculate with the combined sum of **Total Direct Costs**, and, if applicable, **Indirect Costs**.

## DIRECT COSTS

These are costs directly identified for the project and incurred during the period of performance. The TOTAL DIRECT COSTS field at the bottom of the page will auto-calculate the total of all combined Direct Cost items listed in Salaries and Wages, Travel, and Other expenses.

### DIRECT COSTS: Salaries and Wages

Covers compensation for personnel, both administrative and artistic, who are paid on a salary basis. List key staff positions for the project. Combine similar job functions if necessary. Funds for contractual personnel and compensation for artists who are paid on a fee/stipend basis should be included below in DIRECT COSTS: Other, and not here.

- Enter the title and/or type of personnel, the number of personnel, the annual or average salary range, the percentage of time allocable to the project annually, and the dollar amount of the salary allocated to the project budget.
  - These fields will *not* auto calculate horizontally across each line. The dollar amounts in the last column will auto calculate vertically to tally the Total Salaries and Wages.
- **Salaries and Wages dollar amounts must be prorated for the length of the Period of Performance entered in the Project Details tab.**
  - **For example, on a project with a 6-month period of performance**, a person with a \$50,000 annual salary working on the project for 100% of their time, you would enter a total dollar amount of \$25,000.

- **For a project with a period of performance that exceeds 1 year**, multiply the salary figures accordingly. For example, on a project with a 24-month period of performance, a person with a \$50,000 annual salary working on a project for 100% of their time, the total dollar amount allocated to the project would be \$100,000.
- Salaries and wages for performers and related or supporting personnel must be estimated at rates no less than the prevailing minimum compensation as required by the Department of Labor Regulations. (See [Legal Requirements](#) for details.)

NOTE: Only fundraising/development salaries/wages/fringe benefits associated with managing the project or fundraising for the minimum required cost share/match for the project are allowable. All other development and/or general fundraising costs for the organization or for other projects are not allowable.

### **FRINGE BENEFITS**

---

Costs other than wages or salary that are attributable to an employee, as in the form of pension, insurance, vacation, and sick leave, etc. They may be included here only if they are not included as indirect costs.

### **DIRECT COSTS: Travel**

---

Travel costs must be estimated according to the applicant's own written travel policies, provided that the travel cost is reasonable and does not exceed the cost of air coach accommodations.

- Include lodging and subsistence costs (e.g., hotels, meals) as part of the "Amount" listed for each trip, as applicable, unless these costs are already included as part of an artist fee.
- List all trips -- both domestic and international -- individually.
- All international travel must be specified by country of origin or destination and relate to activity outlined in your narrative. International travel also must conform with government regulations, including those of the [U.S. Treasury Department Office of Foreign Asset Control](#). If you are including international travel in this budget, all such travel must be booked on a U.S. air-carrier when this service is available. See the GTCs for detailed information.

### **DIRECT COSTS: Other**

---

If needed, group similar items together on a single line, with only one total cost.

Project-related costs may include:

- Artist fees (if paid as a fee/stipend and not salary basis), consultant fees, and contractual services
  - Artist fees may include, but are not limited to, compensation for: the creation of new work, the presentation of new or existing work, educational activities, community engagement, and travel/stipends/subsistence (if not already included under Direct Costs: Travel).
    - List the fees paid to each artist/artistic group separately where possible.

- List consultant and artist fees or contracts for professional services on consecutive lines; do not scatter them throughout the list
- Specify the number of persons, the service being provided, and the applicable fee, rate, or amount of each.
- If you engage in contracts of more than \$15,000, identify the item or service and its relation to the project.
- For procurement requirements related to contracts and consultants, see [2 CFR 200](#).
- Production/technical costs
- Promotion, marketing, and outreach
- Acquisition fees, rights
- Evaluation and assessment fees
- Telephone, photocopying, and postage
- Supplies and materials. Be as specific as possible about the type of supplies / materials and their purpose. (e.g., “Art supplies,” “Office supplies,” “Event materials”)
- Publication, distribution, and translation
- Transportation/shipping of items other than personnel (instruments, art, etc.)
- Access accommodations (e.g., audio description, sign-language interpretation, closed or open captioning, large-print brochures/labeling, publications in alternate formats).
  - Videos, films, television broadcast projects, and virtual streamed events must be closed or open captioned, and radio and podcast programs must be transcribed. Applicants should check with vendors for captioning and transcription, sign language interpretation, and audio description, for cost estimates.
- Rental/purchase of equipment
  - Clearly identify equipment rental versus equipment purchase.
  - If you will purchase any equipment with a unit/item cost of \$10,000 or more and that has an estimated useful life of more than one year, identify that item here. Provide a justification for the purchase either in the Additional Project Budget Notes section, or in your Project Description.
  - Digital computers, mobile devices, or other new technologies are considered supplies if less than \$10,000 per item regardless of the length of useful life.
- Portion of Space/Facilities costs such as mortgage principal, rent, and utilities, as allocable to the project.
- Other *clearly identified* project-specific costs.

## INDIRECT COSTS

NEA applicants have the option to include Indirect Costs in their project budgets. **You are not required to include Indirect Costs in this budget.**



Indirect Costs are overhead, administrative, or general operating expenses that are not readily identifiable with, or are difficult to assign to, a specific project. Examples of Indirect Costs include the expenses associated with operating and maintaining facilities and equipment, rent, utilities, supplies, and administrative salaries.

To include these types of costs in a project budget, choose **ONE** of the following options (for help in determining which option to choose, see the [Indirect Cost Guide for NEA Grantees](#)).

**A. If your organization *does not* have a federally negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (or ICRA):**

- **Option 1:** Include reasonable “Overhead and Administrative Costs” as a line item under the “Direct Costs: Other” section and leave the Indirect Costs section blank.
  - Use this option if your organization can easily document the discrete, specific expenses (i.e., payroll taxes, a percentage of facility electricity use, the percentage of staff time for the administrative support of a project). Do not double count costs already included separately in your budget.
  - The amount indicated in this line must be reasonable and consistent with best practices in financial management. Do not simply use a percentage of your project budget. **You must be able to document the actual costs included in the line item.**
- **Option 2:** Enter a de minimis indirect cost rate of up to 15% of your modified total direct costs in the Indirect Costs section. Modified Total Direct Costs include salaries and wages, fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, and travel. Modified Total Direct Costs *excludes* equipment, capital expenditures, rental costs, scholarships, and fellowships, among others. Information on calculating Modified Total Direct Costs can be found at Appendices III and IV to 2 CFR 200.

**B. If your organization currently *has* a federally negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement:**

- **Option 1:** Calculate your Indirect Costs using your federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement. Enter the percentage of the ICRA as decimals.
  - It is rare for NEA applicants to have an ICRA. This option is most often relevant to colleges and universities.
  - Important: You may not use a Research Indirect Cost Rate Agreement for applications to Challenge America.
  - If you are recommended for an award, you must provide us with a copy of your federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.
- **Option 2:** You may choose not to use your Indirect Cost Rate Agreement. You may elect to Option 1 listed above in section A.

**C. If your organization *has an expired* federally negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement:**

- Do not use an expired ICRA. You may choose one of the options listed above in section A.



## Budget Subtab: Project Income

**TOTAL COST SHARE/MATCH FOR THIS PROJECT\*:** The NEA cannot support more than 50% of a project's costs, each applicant must contribute at least half the total project costs from nonfederal sources. For a request of \$10,000, the total project costs must be at least \$20,000 and you must provide at least \$10,000 toward the project from nonfederal sources as the cost share/match.

Cost share/matching funds may be all cash or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions as detailed below. **If your cost share/match includes IN-KIND contributions, you must also include them as direct costs to balance your budget.** Asterisk (\*) those funds that are committed or secured.

### APPLICANT CASH

Applicant Cash cost share/match refers to the cash contributions, grants, and revenues that will pay for your share of the costs for this project. Identify sources.

- Allowable sources of Cash funds include your own organization's cash resources such as grants from private foundations, corporate donations, individual donations, and ticket sales, among others.
- Federal funds cannot be used as cost share/match for NEA awards.
  - You *may* include grants from your state arts agency, regional arts organization, or local arts agency as part of your cost share/match, if those grants do not include subawarded federal funds or funds used as cost share/match for a federal award. You can check with the funder to confirm the source of the funding.
  - **Do not** include any other NEA or other federal awards -- including awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities, U.S. Department of Education, the National Park Service, etc.in your cost share/match.
- IF YOU HAVE A FEDERALLY-NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE: You *may* use unrecovered indirect costs as part of the cash cost share/match. Unrecovered indirect costs generally are used only by large organizations such as colleges and universities. Your organization must have a current federally-negotiated indirect cost rate agreement to use unrecovered indirect costs as cost share/match.

### THIRD-PARTY IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

In-kind contributions are third-party donations of goods, facilities, or services used to meet the cost share/matching requirement for an NEA award (2 CFR 200.1). The use and value of such third-party contributions must be [properly documented](#).

- All third-party contributions must be necessary and reasonable for the project, and for allowable costs.
- **Do not** include goods, facilities, or services contributed by your own organization as these are considered part of your own organization's cash cost share/match.
- To qualify as cost share/matching resources, expenses associated with in-kind donations must be clearly identified as direct costs in the project budget to ensure allowability.

## Items to Upload Tab

### WORK SAMPLES

The work samples should demonstrate the artistic excellence of your project. Wherever possible, this should be a sample of work by the primary artist(s) for the project and representative of recent work.

At least one work sample is **required and no more than 3 may be submitted** for all Challenge America applications. The work samples you submit should be in the format and within the space limitations described below.

Only upload materials that we request. Items such as promotional materials, letters of support (including letters from members of Congress) or other documents that are not direct work samples of the artists should not be used in this section. Readers are looking for 1-3 distinct work samples.

**Staff Tips:** See the work sample staff tips on page 29.

### WORK SAMPLE LIMITS:

Submit no more than three files total. Each link counts as a work sample. Do not submit more than 3 links; additional samples will not be considered. **Reviewers will spend no more than 10 minutes reviewing work samples.**

Type	Video	Audio	Images	Documents	Websites
<b>File Size Limit</b>	250 MB	5 MB	5 MB	5 MB/10 pages each	5 MB
<b>Format/File Types Accepted</b>	avi, mov, mp4, mpeg, and wmv; or PDF with links	mp3, wma, wav, aac, and mpa	jpeg, gif, bmp, png, and tif; or PDF with images	PDF	PDF with links

**Note:** The combined storage space for all work samples in the Applicant Portal is 250 MB. If you submit a video file of 250 MB, all available space will be used.

We recommend:

- For performing arts projects, submit audio or video samples.
- For media projects, submit audio or video samples.
- For design/museum/visual arts projects, submit digital images.
- For literary projects, submit documents.
- For multidisciplinary projects, submit samples in at least two art forms.
- For arts education projects, submit documentation such as lesson plans, curricula, or other planning documents.

---

## Technical Notes for Uploading Files

---

**There can be a slight delay between the upload of your work samples and seeing them in the Applicant Portal.** This is particularly true for videos. For videos, the usual upload time runs five to ten minutes. However, close to the deadline, this time may extend to as much as an hour. Do not wait until the night of the deadline to begin uploading work samples. Videos are placed in a queue to be converted for upload, and the more people uploading, the longer the queue. **Do not immediately assume that your upload failed; wait and try accessing the material again.**

### FILE NAMES

File names must not:

- Exceed 100 characters.
- Begin with a space, period, hyphen, or underline.
- Contain these characters: #%&{\}<>\*/\$!""':+=|"@

If your file names include any of the above, the file may fail to upload.

### FILE DESCRIPTIONS

Enter the information below, as applicable:

**TITLE BOX:** Title each item with a unique name.

- State the title of the work or organization represented by the work sample.

### DESCRIPTION BOX

*500 Character Limit, including spaces*

For each work sample:

- Company/Artist.
- Title of work/image/activity (if different from first bullet).
- Date work created/performed or date of activity.
- Brief description including how the work sample relates to proposed project.
- For images of visual artworks, the medium and dimensions of the work.
- For audio and video samples, length of the sample.
- If applicable, include cueing instructions.

## GUIDANCE FOR VIDEO SAMPLES

---

You may submit a clickable link to a video sample or upload a video sample directly.

*If you submit a link:*

- Submit a PDF with a clickable link to the website.
- If you are including more than one website, list them all on a single PDF document.
- For each site, list the URLs for pages to be shown.
- Include any necessary information on required plug-ins, passwords, or navigation paths.

- Do not submit links to sites that require work samples to be downloaded (e.g., Dropbox or Google Drive), or sites that require a user account.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to make sure links are active at the time of application and for at least 6 months following the date of funding recommendation or rejection. For applicants to the April 2025 deadline, links should remain active through May 2026.

*If you upload directly:*

File size restrictions may prohibit you from using this option.

To upload each file:

- Upload the file directly into the Applicant Portal.
- You may provide titles and short descriptions to provide context for panelists using the text box provided during the upload process.
- If applicable, include any cue information to indicate the start of each selection.

### **GUIDANCE FOR DIGITAL IMAGES**

---

You may combine all your images into a single PDF file or upload each image in a separate jpeg file. Image size should be consistent; medium to high resolution is recommended (e.g., 300 dpi). Do not submit PowerPoint or Word documents.

### **GUIDANCE FOR DOCUMENTS**

**(Literary Samples, Publications, Periodicals, Catalogues, Architectural Schematics, Marketing Materials)**

---

**Leave a margin of at least one inch at the top, bottom, and sides of all pages. Use only 8.5 x 11-inch size pages. Do not reduce type below 12-point font size.** Within each PDF, number pages sequentially; place numbers on the bottom right-hand corner of each page. Do not submit Word, PowerPoint, or Excel documents.

### **GUIDANCE FOR WEBSITES**

---

**Do not submit your organization's general website unless the link highlights key components of the project in the application. Only submit a website that is an essential part of the project.**

If you are including a website as a work sample, list it on a single PDF. List URL for page to be shown; include any necessary information on required plug-ins, passwords, or navigation paths. Do not submit links to sites that require work samples to be downloaded (e.g., Dropbox or Google Drive), or sites that require a user account.

NOTE: If you provide links to works samples -- audio samples, digital images, video samples, or documents -- the same limits on work samples uploaded directly apply to those provided via links.

### Staff Tips: Work Samples

Work samples are an essential part of application review, especially as they relate to the artistic excellence review criteria. For the Challenge America program, the definition of artistic excellence includes two components: “quality” and “relevance.”

We’ve listed some common work sample questions below (as well as suggested remedies!). This list is not comprehensive, but offers a brief sampling, based on typical feedback from reviewers.

#### **I want to submit more than 3 work samples.**

**Suggestion:** Reviewers will only consider the first 3 work samples you provide, so do not include a document with 20 links hoping that the reviewer will evaluate them all. Select your strongest 3 work samples.

#### **The work sample is a promotional video, and you can’t get a sense of the artists involved.**

**Suggestion:** Instead, select a video that identifies the artists and provides a sample of their work.

#### **The work sample is hard to hear or see.**

**Suggestion:** Select work samples of the highest technical quality available to you. In some cases, one excellent quality work sample might offer a better representation of your proposed project than several lower quality samples.

#### **Still photos were submitted for performing artists.**

**Suggestion:** Select work samples in a format relevant to the artistic discipline of your project. For example, still photos work well for visual artists; for performing arts-based projects, panelists will expect to see audio and/or video samples of proposed artists whenever possible.

#### **Reviewers are not able to access links that you provided as work samples.**

**Suggestion:** Be sure you provide links and any necessary passwords that are maintained and accessible online for at least 6 months following the date of funding recommendation or rejection. For applicants to the April 2025 deadline, links should remain active through May 2026. We will not reach out to you for corrected or updated links.

#### **Work samples don’t include the work of any of the project’s proposed artists.**

**Suggestion:** We understand that a variety of reasons could prevent you from submitting work samples for specific artists. Since work samples are so important for competitiveness, we suggest:

- If you haven’t yet selected an artist for your project, consider including work samples for “proposed” or “short list” artists. Or include artists that your organization has worked with in the past as an example of the caliber of excellence that you intend for your

**Staff Tips: Work Samples**

project. Clearly state the relevance of the selected work sample (i.e., example of past organizational work, current proposed artist, etc.)

- If you are proposing a brand-new project, consider including samples from proposed artists that are representative of their body of past work. These can be included as separate files, or as URL links that take reviewers directly to samples on an artist website. Include artist credits in the descriptions, as appropriate.

**Work samples are of student work only.**

**Suggestion:** You can include work samples that demonstrate student learning, but keep in mind that demonstrating the work and experience of the artists/teaching artists can make a strong case for Artistic Excellence. A combination of student and teaching artist work can be helpful for reviewers.

## Organization & Project Data Tab

The NEA collects basic descriptive information about all applicants and their projects. The information that follows will help the NEA to comply with government reporting requirements and will be used to develop statistical information about the organizations and projects it funds to report to Congress and the public. **Your responses will not be shared with reviewers or used as a factor in the review of your application.**

### APPLICANT ORGANIZATION DISCIPLINE\*

Select the primary discipline that is most relevant to your organization. This refers to the primary artistic emphasis of your organization. **Choose one** from the following:

- Artist Community
- Arts Education Organization
- Dance
- Design
- Film & Media Arts
- Folk & Traditional
- Literary Arts
- Local Arts Agency
- Museums
- Music
- Musical Theater
- Opera
- Presenting & Multidisciplinary Work Organization
- Theater
- Visual Arts
- None of the Above

**ADDITIONAL APPLICANT ORGANIZATION DISCIPLINE (OPTIONAL):** Select two additional disciplines for your organization, if relevant.

### APPLICANT ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION\*

Select a description that most accurately describes your organization.

**Choose one** from the following:

- Artists' Community, Arts Institute, or Camp
- Arts Center
- Arts Council / Agency
- Arts Service Organization
- College / University
- Community Service Organization
- Design Organization
- Fair / Festival
- Foundation
- Gallery / Exhibition Space
- Government
- Historical Society / Commission
- Humanities Council / Agency
- Independent Press
- Library
- Literary Magazine
- Media-Film
- Media-Internet
- Media-Radio
- Media-Television
- Museum-Art
- Museum-Other
- Performance Facility
- Performing Group
- Presenter / Cultural Series Organization
- Religious Organization
- School District
- School of the Arts
- Social Service Organization
- Tribal Community
- Union / Professional Association
- None of the Above

**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION (OPTIONAL):** Select two additional descriptions for your organization, if relevant.

**PREPAREDNESS PLANS\***

Does your organization have a disaster preparedness plan (i.e., plans to handle disasters and emergencies such as floods, hurricanes, pandemics, and man-made disasters)? Note that your organization does not need to have a preparedness plan to be eligible for Challenge America funding. **Choose one** from the following:

- Yes
- No

**PROJECT ACTIVITY TYPE\***

Select the option that best describes the type of project you are proposing:

- **Apprenticeship/Mentorship**
- **Arts & Health** Includes projects that support the delivery of creative arts therapies in healthcare and non-healthcare settings. Also includes projects that place arts activities in healthcare settings, and/or that seek to improve service delivery by healthcare professionals.
- **Arts Instruction** Includes lessons, classes and other means to teach knowledge of and/or skills in the arts
- **Artwork Creation** Includes media arts, design projects, and commissions
- **Audience Services** (e.g., ticket subsidies)
- **Broadcasting** via TV, cable, radio, the Web, or other digital networks
- **Building Public Awareness** Activities designed to increase public understanding of the arts or to build public support for the arts
- **Building International Understanding** Includes activities that either bring international art and/or artists to the U.S. or bring American art and/or artists to other nations
- **Concert/Performance/Reading** Includes production development
- **Curriculum Development/Implementation** Includes design, implementation, distribution of instructional materials, methods, evaluation criteria, goals, objectives, etc.
- **Distribution of Art** (e.g., films, books, prints; do not include broadcasting)
- **Equipment Purchase/Lease/Rental**
- **Exhibition** Includes visual arts, media arts, design, and exhibition development
- **Fair/Festival**
- **Identification/Documentation** (e.g., for archival or educational purposes)
- **Marketing**
- **Presenting/Touring**
- **Professional Development/Training** Activities enhancing career advancement
- **Professional Support: Administrative** Includes consultant fees
- **Professional Support: Artistic** (e.g., artists' fees, payments for artistic services)
- **Publication** (e.g., books, journals, newsletters, manuals)
- **Recording/Filming/Taping** (e.g., to extend the audience for a performance through film/tape audio/video; do not include archival projects)
- **Repair/Restoration/Conservation**
- **Research/Planning** Includes program evaluation, strategic planning, and establishing partnerships



- **Residency - School** Artist activities in an educational setting
- **Residency - Other** Artist activities in a non-school setting
- **Seminar/Conference**
- **Student Assessment** Includes measurement of student progress toward learning objectives. Not to be used for program evaluation.
- **Subgranting** – Local Arts Agencies only
- **Technical Assistance** with technical/administrative functions
- **Web Site/Internet Development** Includes the creation or expansion of Web sites, mobile and tablet applications, the development of digital art collections, interactive services delivered via the Internet, etc.
- **Writing About Art/Criticism**
- **None of the above**

**ADDITIONAL PROJECT ACTIVITY TYPE (OPTIONAL):** Choose up to two additional types from the above list.

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP/STAFFING QUESTION (OPTIONAL)**

*Text box: 750-characters, including spaces*

We are interested in learning more about applicants' organizational structures. How does your organization's governance and staff reflect the composition of the community (or communities) served by your organization?

**NOTE: This question is optional.** Your response will not be seen by reviewers evaluating your application. It is for research purposes only. Your response will not be used in panel deliberations or in making funding decisions related to awards.

#### **PROPOSED BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT (OPTIONAL)**

Select all groups of people that your project intends to serve directly.

**NOTE: This question is optional.** Your response will not be seen by reviewers evaluating your application. It is for research purposes only. Your response will not be used in panel deliberations or in making funding decisions related to awards.

#### **RACE/ETHNICITY:** (Optional, choose all that apply)

U.S. federal government agencies must adhere to standards issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in October 1997, which specify that race and Hispanic origin (also known as ethnicity) are two separate and distinct concepts.

- No specific racial/ethnic group
- American Indian or Alaskan Native - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- Asian - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

- Black or African American - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- Hispanic or Latino - People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race.
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- White - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

**AGE RANGES:** (Optional, choose all that apply)

- No specific age group
- Children/Youth (0-17 years)
- Young Adults (18-24 years)
- Adults (25-64 years)
- Older Adults (65+ years)

---

### Step 3: Submit the Grant Application Form

---

**We strongly urge you to complete and submit the Grant Application Form and upload materials outside of the hours of heaviest usage, which are generally 8:00 pm to 11:59 pm, Eastern Time, on the day of the deadline.** Staff will not be available to help you after 5:30 pm, Eastern Time.

Submit your materials before the deadline to give yourself ample time to resolve any problems you might encounter. You take a significant risk by waiting until the day of the deadline to submit. When in doubt, contact us at [challengeamerica@arts.gov](mailto:challengeamerica@arts.gov) / 202-682-5700.

#### Step 1: Validate

- To submit your application, you must provide a response to every item denoted with a red asterisk (\*).
- Click the “Validate” link found at the top right corner of the page.
  - Click either “Validate All” to validate all the tabs or select each link to validate separately.
  - When the Validate button is clicked, the application will search for errors.
  - If there are no errors, the “Validate” link will change to green and each tab will have a check mark by it.
  - To clear validation messages, press the Esc key.
- This feature does **not** check to be sure that your application is complete. Carefully review the application instructions to be sure you have submitted each required item.

#### Step 2: Click Save and Submit

- The “Submit” button is only visible when you are on the Organization & Project Data tab.
- **You must click “Save” and then “Submit.” If you do not click the “Submit” button, your application will not be received.**
- After submitting your application, you may log back into the Applicant Portal and make changes to your submission up until the system closes at 11:59 pm, Eastern Time, on the day of the deadline. Click “Save” and “Submit” again when you are finished with any edits.

#### Step 3: Confirm Submission

- Ensure that your application was received by logging in to the Applicant Portal. On the first screen it will say “Submitted” if your application has been received. If your application has not yet been received, it will say “In Progress.” Maintain documentation of your successful submission by taking a screenshot.
- **Use the “Print” function in the upper right corner to create a printable version of your application. We strongly recommend that you save a final copy for your records by choosing “Save as PDF” from your print dialogue box.**

ALN 45.024

OMB No. 3135-0112 Expires 10/31/25