New Jersey State Council on the Arts
Creative Aging Initiative Grant
Fiscal Year 2026 Grant Guidelines

This document is also available in Spanish.

KEY DATES FOR THE FY26 CREATIVE AGING INITIATIVE GRANT

Tuesday, December 12, 2024	Creative Aging Initiative grant guidelines released.
Tuesday, January 7, 2025	Creative Aging Initiative application available in SAGE.
Thursday, February 27, 2025	Creative Aging Initiative applications due in SAGE by 12:00 PM ET (noon).

Please note that late submissions will not be accepted for any reason including technical/human error. Applicants are strongly urged to submit applications well before the deadline.

March – June 2025	Arts Council convenes application review panels and establishes funding recommendations.
July 2025	Arts Council votes on and announces grant awards at Annual Meeting.
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2027	Grant period (two years) for funded projects

ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts (Arts Council), created in 1966, is a division of the New Jersey Department of State and a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Arts Council was established to support, encourage, and foster public interest in the arts; enlarge public and private resources devoted to the arts; promote freedom of expression in the arts; and facilitate the inclusion of art in every public building in New Jersey. For more information about the Arts Council, visit: www.artscouncil.nj.gov.

COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC BENEFIT AND EQUITY

In New Jersey, we know that diversity is one of our greatest strengths. The NJ State Council on the Arts embraces the principles of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of our work. With a focus on learning, data, and accountability, we will continue to assess and challenge inequities, identify gaps in engagement and service, and focus on the details that shape change.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Arts Council is committed to ensuring its programs are accessible to all people. For accessibility services related to filing an application, please contact Accessibility Coordinator Lindsay Dandeo at 609-984-7020 (NJ Relay 711) | lindsay.dandeo@sos.nj.gov.

WHAT IS THE CREATIVE AGING INITIATIVE GRANT?

The Creative Aging Initiative Grant (CAI) provides $10,000 to eligible arts organizations, libraries, veterans homes, senior and community centers, colleges/universities, and units of government to cover costs for arts learning experiences with New Jersey older adults aged 55 and over. Successful

applicants will receive $10,000 of funding for each year of the two-year grant cycle, pending available resources.

A CAI project is defined as an arts-based learning experience that directly engages older adults for multiple sessions. Projects may be sequential and build to a project culmination (residencies) or include a series of individual workshops that focus on skill-building and development in the performing, visual, media, or literary arts. Projects in Year One and Year Two may build upon one another to address one community need or they may be separate offerings to address two or more community needs.

Each session must be led by a teaching artist experienced in arts-based learning for older adults. Creative aging programming must be offered without charge to participants.

GRANT PERIOD
This is a two-year grant program, and successful applicants will receive a commitment of funding for CAI each year of the two-year grant cycle. The CAI grant period runs from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 (Year 1) and July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027 (Year 2).

GRANT MATCH AND FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS
There is no matching requirement. However, if an organization's proposed project costs more than is being requested, the proposal must clearly demonstrate the organization's ability to provide the remaining necessary funds. Grant funds may not be used to match any other State of New Jersey grant. Indirect and other administrative costs not directly related to the proposal may not be charged against the grant.

NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS
An organization may submit only one application for funding in this grant round. Submission of an application does not guarantee eligibility or that all requirements have been met. Applications that have not met the eligibility criteria or that are deemed incomplete will not move forward to the panel review.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY
To be eligible for funds, an applicant must meet or exceed the following requirements. If an organization does not meet these eligibility requirements, its application will not move forward to the panel review.

Applicants must be:
1. incorporated in the state of New Jersey as a nonprofit. Eligible organizations include libraries, veterans homes, senior centers, community centers, colleges/universities, or units of government;
2. tax-exempt by determination of the Internal Revenue Service;
3. an organization in "good standing" with the New Jersey Department of State;
4. current with New Jersey's Charities Registration Bureau and Division of Revenue requirements;

5. registered in the federal System for Award Management and have its CAGE and UEI codes (See the System for Award Management guidance section below for help on how to secure your organization's registration.); and,
6. in compliance with all pertinent state and federal regulations including but not limited to: Fair Labor Standards, the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988; and Section 1913 of 18 U.S.C. and Section 319 of P.L. 101-121. Apart from all other provisions of law, particularly the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which bear upon all Council grantees, those grantees whose Council grant is composed all or in part of funds derived from the National Endowment for the Arts will be required to be in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 at the time of and as a condition of receipt of the grant under penalty of rescission and any others set forth under law.

In addition, the applicant must demonstrate that it:
1. primarily serves New Jersey communities (51% or more of audiences must be from New Jersey);
2. provides a location that is barrier-free and accessible by all participants;
3. has experience working with arts-based learning for adults aged 55 and over for two years or more;
4. is governed by an independent board of directors responsible for the governance and administration of the organization, its programs, and finances;
5. employs at least one half-time administrative staff person (20 hours/week at minimum) responsible for contributing to the administrative oversight of the organization;
6. demonstrates capacity to support a teaching artist and their programming, including paying the teaching artist at no less than $80/hour.

Please note: Organizational budget size and multicounty/statewide impact are not eligibility requirements for this program.

System for Award Management Guidance
All applicants must register in and maintain current registration with the federal System for Award Management (SAM). Once registered, you will need to provide the Arts Council your SAM CAGE Code. Register at www.sam.gov.

For assistance with entering your SAM CAGE code or your UEI into SAGE, please reach out to Robert Worshinski, Director of Operations and Technical Assistance at 609-633-1049 (NJ Relay 711) | robert.worshinski@sos.nj.gov.

INELIGIBILE PROJECTS AND EXPENSES
The purpose of the Creative Aging Initiative grant program is to provide free, arts-based learning for adults aged 55 and older. Projects that charge a fee for participation or those whose sessions include non-performing, visual, media, or literary arts activities are ineligible for funding.

Ineligible activities include, but are not limited to:
1. Art Therapy or rehabilitative programing
2. Comedy
3. Culinary arts, including decoration
4. Floral and environmental arts, including floral arranging and gardening
5. Martial arts, including tai-chi and other wellness-based movement and exercise
6. Yoga, Pilates, meditation, or other wellness-based movement/mindfulness

Grant funds cannot be applied to activities such as attendance at events, performances, gallery openings, lectures/talks, etc. These components may be offered for the participating population as a support activity but must be supplemented with alternative funding.

A glossary is available to assist with providing clarity on many of the terms and phrases used throughout the guidelines and application.

HOW TO APPLY

To access and submit a CAI application, an organization must be registered first in the SAGE system. The System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE) is the state of New Jersey's grant management system. This system requires authorization by the Arts Council for initial access.

If you do not have a username and password, please click the New User link to request access to the site. Please contact Robert Worshinski at robert.worshinski@sos.nj.gov or call 609-633-1049 (NJ Relay 711) for technical assistance in SAGE.

Note: Access and approval of registration is not automatic. It may take up to 48 hours to approve/validate your organization's registration by a system administrator. Therefore, please do not wait to create a new account.

How to access a CAI application:
Log into SAGE and go to the "View Available Opportunities" section. Click "View Opportunities" under the NJSCA section. Search for the NJSCA 2026 application – "Creative Aging." Click on the "Apply Now" button to create a new application.

If you are experiencing difficulties accessing the application or navigating the SAGE system, contact Robert Worshinski at robert.worshinski@sos.nj.gov or 609-633-1049 (NJ Relay 711).

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The following assistance is available to help you compose and submit your application:
1. **Staff Support:** Arts Council staff Samantha Clarke, Program Officer for Arts Education & Lifelong Learning, is available to help with questions specific to your application by telephone at 609-984-7019 (NJ Relay 711) and/or email samantha.clarke@sos.nj.gov.
2. **Zoom Office Hours:** Applicants can participate in scheduled office hours to ask questions pertaining to the application. Participation is free, however registration is required. Please check the Arts Council's website for dates and times.

3. **Recorded Mini Webinars:** Recorded technical assistance webinars will be posted to the Arts Council website in December and January. They will detail various aspects of the application process.

Applicants seeking assistance are advised to contact staff well in advance of the application deadline. Prior to contacting Arts Council staff, applicants should read the guidelines thoroughly.

Please keep in mind that the volume of requests increases dramatically as the application deadline draws closer. Arts Council staff may not be able to return your call or email immediately, and your patience is appreciated.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

The application is comprised of one (1) review page and fourteen (14) forms in SAGE. All questions and support materials are required components. Please follow form instructions and upload all the documents/files as PDFs in the order requested. All application and support materials must be submitted in English.

Organizational Profile Information Review Page: This page provides the essential information about the organization. The contact information listed in this form will be utilized by the Arts Council for all communication purposes. It is paramount that the information is current and accurate. Review all information and update accordingly.

The Grant Contact should be the individual responsible for managing the grant in SAGE and is the organization's primary Arts Council contact. This person must have the ability to speak on behalf of the organization and its grant.

Form 1. Type of Support: The Creative Aging category will be pre-selected for you.

Form 2. Panel Category: Please select the Creative Aging Initiative, regardless of art form(s) presented.

Form 3. Application Detail Summary: This form asks for the purpose of funding which may be used in public materials. The statement is limited to approximately 50 words or 300 characters, and it should contain the basic "who, what, where, and when" information.

> Sample Statement: "The CAI grant will support the Smith County Library in providing residencies for older adults in creative writing, filmmaking, and performance. Year One will engage participants in the basics of scriptwriting and screenplay development. Year Two will provide foundations of filmmaking and acting on camera."

You will also be asked to provide three project description codes that will be reported to the National Endowment for the Arts and National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. We suggest that you select the following:
1. Type of Description: 12 – Arts Instruction

2. Project Descriptors: Older Adults
3. Arts Education: 01-D: 50% or more of this project's activities are arts education directed to adult learners.

Form 4. Grant Narrative: The narrative is limited to 12,500 characters or approximately three pages in length. The narrative should clearly and concisely communicate your project to the application review panel and provide context for the other materials in the application. The narrative must directly respond to each of the questions in the Narrative Topics, keeping in mind the Evaluation Criteria (details below). It is a good idea to craft the narrative in a Word document and then copy and paste it into the SAGE narrative form. Please use the narrative topic headers in the body of your narrative.

Organization:
1. Briefly describe your organization, its mission, major programs, and the community or communities that you serve. Be sure to detail the organization's experience serving older adults.

Proposed Project:
1. Fully describe the proposed arts-learning experiences, including art form(s), number of activities, number of hours per day, audience reached, etc.
2. Discuss how the proposed projects meet a community need for each of the two years of funding.
    a. If the proposed projects are new, clearly detail why the proposed projects are a high priority and what community need is being addressed and served.
    b. If the proposed projects are an expansion or deepening of existing programs, detail the community need and how the programmatic expansion will better serve that community need. Include details of how current efforts are not currently meeting that need.
3. How will the projects be accomplished in each of the two years?
    a. How will audiences be engaged and/or these offerings be promoted to the community?
    b. What resources (staffing, existing/planned partnerships) will be used?
    c. Detail which teaching artist(s) you will be working with, including their experience and background working with older adults.
    d. If your organization is partnering with another organization who will provide teaching artists, please clearly describe the partnership, detailing the roles and responsibilities of each organization.
        a. Include key personnel at each organization (if applicable) and their roles and responsibilities during the project.
        b. Include details of how teaching artists will be selected at that organization.

Learning Goals:
1. What are the proposed learning goals for each of the arts-learning experiences? Learning goals must be specific, measurable, arts-based, and aligned with the proposed audience. Detail how learning goals will be achieved for each of the activities in Year One and Year Two.

<u>Accessibility</u>
1. How will the host organization provide an equitable, accessible, barrier-free experience for all participants?
    a. Please include details about the host organization's site, including its accessibility to the community.
    b. What programmatic accommodations are you able to provide? (i.e.: captioning, assisted listening devices, large print programs, ASL interpretation, etc.)

Form 5. Board Chart: This chart identifies who is on the organization's current board. Current grantees should check for accuracy if the chart is already completed in SAGE.

Form 6. Project Staff Chart: This chart identifies the staff responsible for managing the proposed project. Applicants should prorate staff time and salaries for the project. The total staff costs in this chart should correspond to your Project Budget Chart.

Forms 7 and 8. Organizational Finance Charts: Complete the Organizational Expense (**Finance Chart #1 – Expenses – Organizational Budget**) and Organizational Income charts (**Finance Chart #2 – Income – Organizational Budget**). Applicants will detail expenditures for the time period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 and July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027 regardless of your organization's fiscal year.

Use the Budget Notes section to describe or explain the information listed in the finance charts. The review panel expects accompanying budget notes to provide clear information about the organization's complete financial picture. The information contained within this form provides context to the application review panelists about the organization's financial health and their ability to manage an Arts Council grant.

Forms 9 and 10. Project Budget Charts: Provide a Project Budget chart for both Year One (**Finance Chart #3 – Project Budget Chart – Year 1**) and Year Two of the project (**Finance Chart #4 – Project Budget Chart – Year 2**). Both charts should clearly designate existing staff time, teaching artist compensation, and additional expenses such as supplies, marketing, etc. Any additional funds utilized to supplement the program should be included in these charts.

It is strongly recommended that applicants fully utilize the Budget Notes section to provide clear information about the project budget, including artist stipends, supplies, administrative costs, travel, etc.

Note: Teaching artist fees should be commensurate with experience and total no less than $80/hour. Teaching artists should be compensated for planning time and travel to and from the location.

Form 11. ADA Checklist: All applicants, including current GOS and GPS grantees, must complete the ADA checklist. The checklist applies only to the proposed project and relates to facilities, programmatic accommodations, marketing, employment, Accessibility Awareness Training, and policies. Further resources and an ADA Self-Assessment Survey are available at NJ Cultural Access Network Project.

Form 12. Required Support Materials: Support materials play a significant part in the panel review by reinforcing what is presented in the narrative. They are important documents that provide the panel with a complete picture and basis for evaluation. These materials must be uploaded in the Support Materials form in SAGE. The maximum file size is 13 MB.

Please provide either a webpage to an unprotected site or upload all attachments as a PDF in the order listed.
1. Link to the organization's website
2. Brief biographies or resumes of teaching artist(s) participating in the project OR letter of support from arts organizations providing teaching artist(s)
3. CAI Project Timeline for Year 1
   a. Timeline of activities covering the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026
      i. Planning, including planning meetings, artist selection, marketing, etc.
      ii. Project activities, including number and length of days
      iii. Evaluation and/or assessment
      iv. Documentation
4. CAI Project Timeline for Year 2
   a. Timeline of activities covering the period of July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027
      i. Planning, including planning meetings, artist selection, marketing, etc.
      ii. Project activities, including number and length of days
      iii. Evaluation and/or assessment
      iv. Documentation
5. Documentation of past creative aging or arts-based work with older adults (no more than 3 pieces)

Form 13. Application Certification: The application certification form must be signed by two different authorized officials.

Form 14. Submission Instructions: Once the form has been certified, follow the instructions for submitting the application.

REVIEW PROCESS

All applications received by the deadline will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness by Arts Council staff. Applications that are deemed eligible and complete but have an error in any of the supporting document uploads (i.e.: wrong website link, incorrect document), may have an opportunity to correct this error through a Hold for Corrections period. You will be notified by the Council on or around March 18 if your application needs to be corrected.

Applications that have been deemed complete and eligible will be reviewed by an independent panel of subject area experts and evaluated against the published criteria. The panel will utilize this rubric to score applications. Applicants are encouraged to use the rubric for self-assessment prior to submission.

Successful applicants will be notified at the Council's Annual Meeting (July 2025). Applicants who had applications not recommended for funding will be notified ahead of the Council's Annual Meeting in July.

GRANT PAYMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND REPORTING

Arts Council grants are distributed on a two-payment schedule. Grantees will receive 75% of the award ($7,500) upon execution of the contract and the remaining 25% ($2,500) upon execution and approval of the final report for each fiscal year.

Changes to the project scope or budget will not be accepted at the time of the final report. If changes are necessary, the Arts Council must approve proposed changes *before* any modifications are implemented.

There is no written interim report required for this grant. Rather, Arts Council staff may arrange for a site visit with grantees over the two-year grant period to learn about their progress. Minimal preparation is required.

A final report is due 30 days after the completion of each fiscal year. Grantees must detail how the funds were spent and how final project results compare to the application. Grantees will be expected to capture audience data, including number of participants and their county of origin. Grantees will be required to upload supporting attachments, including but not limited to:

- Photo/Video documentation (no more than five publishable images/video files. Include a short caption and the appropriate permissions to reproduce without limitations by the Arts Council.
- Aggregate anecdotal data from evaluation or surveys from participants

Grantees may be able to submit their final report earlier if the project is complete and all funds are fully expended.

APPLICATION DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

The application deadline is Thursday, February 27, 2025 by 12:00 PM ET (noon).

After you have carefully reviewed the application, submit the application by clicking on the "Apply Status" button under the "Status Changes" section of your application. To confirm your submission, check the "Current Status" section on the Application Forms Menu for "Application Submitted."

You may go back to the "View Full Application PDF" link and print a final copy of your application submission for your records.

Important: Incomplete applications, applications containing ineligible projects, and applications from ineligible organizations will not advance to the panel process.