TIPS FOR PREPARING AN FY10 NEA APPLICATION
February 2009

The FY10 Grants for Arts Projects guidelines are now available on the NEA web site, [http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/index.html](http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/index.html). To be fully prepared for the application process, read the guidelines very carefully, check out the NEA’s list of Frequently Asked Questions, and be in touch with NEA Music division staff. Read the League’s following tips for preparing an FY10 NEA application to find an overview of guideline changes and suggestions on where to find more complete information.

GET THE ESSENTIAL FACTS ON THE NEW GUIDELINES
The NEA directs applicants to funding opportunities through the field or discipline of the project, such as Music. Through the Music guidelines, you will find a brief description of the types of projects supported under each of the three FY10 Grants for Arts Projects categories: Access to Artistic Excellence, Challenge America: Reaching Every Community Fast-Track Review Grants, and Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth. Please read the category descriptions carefully to review the types of projects that are eligible for support. The NEA’s web site features very helpful answers to your Frequently Asked Questions ([http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/GAP10/FAQs.html](http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/GAP10/FAQs.html)) such as how to submit an application, eligibility, funding categories, and the grant review process.

CONTACT NEA STAFF - EARLY!
NEA program staff is extremely helpful and willing to answer your questions! Please consider being in touch with an NEA music specialist, well before the grant deadline nears, to talk through your plans for preparing an application. Seek comments regarding your previous applications to the NEA. Whether your project was funded or not, comments will strengthen your next application. Also, please note that after you’ve consulted with NEA staff, it is acceptable to submit a new, improved application for a project which has been declined in a previous application. The following NEA staff may be contacted: Wayne S. Brown, Director of Music and Opera; Court Burns, Access to Artistic Excellence, (music organizations with names beginning A-L) 202-682-5590; Anya Nykyforiak, Access to Artistic Excellence, (music organizations with names beginning M-Z) 202-682-5487; Erin Jenkins Waylor, Challenge America: Fast Track Review Grants 202-682-5700; Denise Brandenburg, Learning in the Arts, Music 202-682-5044; Laura Welsh, Arts on Radio and Television 202-682-5738.

ELECTRONIC APPLICATIONS
All applicants must submit their applications electronically through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), the federal government’s online application system. Grants.gov requires a multi-step registration process which must be completed before you can submit your application. **You should allow at least two weeks to complete this process.** Step-by-step instructions for registering are available at [http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/grantsgovChecklist.html](http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/grantsgovChecklist.html).
IMPORTANT: submit your application **no later than 10 day prior** to the deadline to give yourself ample time to resolve any problems that you might encounter. You take a significant risk by waiting until the day of the deadline to submit.

- Grants.gov help desk is available to assist you 7:00 am to 9:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. Phone: 1-800-518-4726.
- Submit your application outside the Grants.gov’s hours of heaviest usage, generally 12 noon to 5:00 pm Eastern Time.
- **The Arts Endowment will not accept late applications.**

**KEEP TRACK OF GRANT DEADLINES**

Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov by the dates below:

**Access to Artistic Excellence:** March 12, 2009 deadline (January 1, 2010 earliest project start date) and August 13, 2009 deadline (June 1, 2010 earliest project start date). **The types of projects eligible under the March and August application deadlines vary.** Read the guidelines carefully.

**Challenge America: Reaching Every Community Fast-Track Review Grants:** May 28, 2009 deadline (January 1, 2010 earliest project start date)

**Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth:** June 11, 2009 deadline (June 1, 2010 earliest project start date)

**MAILING ADVICE**

You should submit most of your application material electronically through Grants.gov. After this submission, you must send work samples directly to the NEA. Overnight delivery is recommended. Some or all of United States Postal Service First-Class and Priority mail the NEA receives may be put through an irradiation process, which may cause lengthy delays. Support material (e.g., CDs, videos) put through this process has been severely damaged. The Arts Endowment strongly suggests using a commercial delivery service, particularly for time-sensitive material. To save money, applicants may elect to use the “2nd Business Day” option which is acceptable.

**MULTIPLE APPLICATION OPPORTUNITIES**

The guidelines explain two distinct grant processes. An organization may submit only one application: **Access to Artistic Excellence** OR **Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth** OR **Challenge America: Reaching Every Community Fast-Track Review Grants.** However, an organization applying to the **Access to Artistic Excellence** OR **Learning in the Arts** categories may additionally apply for a consortium project as either the lead applicant or consortium partner. If you apply for a **Challenge America: Reaching Every Community Fast-Track Review Grant**, that is the one and only application allowed. Below is a quick comparison of the categories.

**Access to Artistic Excellence and Learning in the Arts**

**Process:** Full review by staff, advisory panel, the National Council on the Arts, and the Arts Endowment Chairman

**Notification:** Approximately eight months or longer

**Allowable Request:** May request funding in any amount from $5,000 to $150,000
Challenge America Fast-Track Review Grants

Process: Simplified application and expedited review
Notification: Within approximately six months
Allowable Request: Offers only one grant amount: $10,000.

EXTRA ADVICE FROM NEA PANELISTS
When NEA panelists meet to review grant applications, the League asks NEA staff for any extra tips for orchestras preparing applications. During grant review sessions for the Access to Artistic Excellence category, panelists are unanimous in one request to all applicant organizations, large and small: Read the guidelines carefully. For advice about the Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth category, applicants should contact that division directly.

Music panelists also offered the following specific guidance:

- NEA grants are awarded only for specific projects. Attempts to disguise requests for general operating support as projects are easily detected.

- When designing a project, think creatively about potential collaborations with other community organizations. Also, make clear that the collaboration is a long-term partnership, not just a one-shot relationship that will end after completion of the project.

- In the project narrative, be sure to identify a clear, singular, defined goal for the project, and outline concrete steps that will be taken to reach the goal. A project need not be new to the applicant organization to qualify for a grant, but will earn more serious attention if it is clearly integrated into your organization’s mission. Review your narrative against the “Review Criteria.”

- Artistic excellence and artistic merit are the only criteria used in the review of grant applications. When describing artistic excellence as it relates to an arts education project, explain the quality of artists and educators and how this could impact the arts learning experience. When describing artistic merit, describe the potential of the project to broaden access to the arts, expand and diversify audiences, or strengthen communities through the arts.

- Work samples are crucial for evaluating the artistic quality of your project. Pay very careful attention to the quality of your work samples, particularly audio recordings. Check the guidelines and stick to the suggested length. Be sure to indicate the appropriate tracks on the case cover or on the DVD or CD, as well as on your work sample index. Audio cassettes are not accepted. At this time, digital music files (.mp3 or .wav) are not accepted.

- For applications including a commissioning request, whenever possible, include opportunities for the commissioned work to be performed in multiple venues and for varying audiences.
• In the financial section of the application form, be certain to answer all questions as completely as possible. All applicants should answer the question regarding the organization’s fiscal health. In addition, if the orchestra has a deficit, provide a detailed explanation of plans to address it.

• Reminder: There are two different Access to Artistic Excellence deadlines. Pay special attention to the distinctions between the project types that are funded for each Access deadline.

• You may submit your application before the application deadline.

• Write as clearly and succinctly as possible. Do not use acronyms or initials unless they are well known. Use at least 12-point type and leave as much blank space as possible.

• Spell-check your grant narrative, and have it proof-read. Panelists feel failure to submit carefully prepared applications indicates potential carelessness in the execution of your project.

EXTRA ADVICE FROM NEA STAFF
Please be advised that when creating the required attachments, pay attention to the page limits as excessive pages will not be reviewed by the review panel. Here is a list of attachments with page limits:

Attachment 1 – Organizational Background, Limit: one page
Attachment 2 – Details of the Project, Limit: three pages
Attachment 5 – Bios, Limit: two pages plus any resumes for technical personnel, and a list of personnel of independent components
Attachment 9 – Programmatic Activities, Limit: three pages

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