Tips for Preparing an FY13 NEA Application

The FY13 Grants for Arts Projects guidelines are now available on the NEA website. To be fully prepared for the application process, read the guidelines very carefully, check out the NEA’s list of Frequently Asked Questions, familiarize yourself with the reporting requirements in advance, and be in touch with NEA staff. Read the League’s following tips for preparing a FY13 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 and Arts Education. Through the guidelines, you will find a brief description of the types of projects supported under the FY13 Art Works and Challenge America Fast-Track categories. 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 such as how to submit an application, determine eligibility, understand the grant review process, and select the right Art Works outcome for your project including.

**New** Electronic Submission of Work Samples

Beginning with FY13 applications, the NEA will only accept electronic submission of work samples via the NEA GrantsOnline™ System (NEA-GO). In the past, applicants could mail work samples to the NEA after completing the Grants.gov application process, but from now on, applicants must upload work samples electronically during specific windows of time using NEA-GO. Applicants are advised to prepare work samples well in advance of the deadline and have them fully ready to upload once NEA-GO becomes available.

WESTAF will email the Primary Contact/Grant Administrator identified on an orchestra's Grants.gov application with the login information (URL, User name, and Password) for accessing NEA-GO according to the following schedule:

- **Art Works: Music** applicants
  - Music applicants for the March 8, 2012 deadline will be contacted by WESTAF no later than April 9, 2012 and will have until April 13, 2012 to upload, preview/check, and submit work samples electronically.
  - Music applicants for the August 9, 2012 deadline will be contacted by WESTAF no later than September 4, 2012 and will have until September 10, 2012 to upload, preview/check, and submit work samples electronically.
Art Works: Arts Education applicants

- Arts Education applicants for the March 8, 2012 deadline will be contacted by WESTAF no later than April 2, 2012 and will have until April 6, 2012 to upload, preview/check, and submit work samples electronically.
- Arts Education applicants for the August 9, 2012 deadline will be contacted by WESTAF no later than August 27, 2012 and will have until August 31, 2012 to upload, preview/check, and submit work samples electronically.

Art Works: Media Arts applicants

- Media Arts applicants for the March 8, 2012 deadline will be contacted by WESTAF no later than March 26, 2012 and will have until March 30, 2012 to upload, preview/check, and submit work samples electronically.
- Media Arts applicants for the August 9, 2012 deadline will be contacted by WESTAF no later than September 4, 2012 and will have until September 10, 2012 to upload, preview/check, and submit work samples electronically.

Challenge America has one deadline of May 24, 2012. Challenge America applicants will be contacted by WESTAF no later than June 12, 2012 and will have until June 18, 2012 to upload, preview/check, and submit work samples electronically.

If an orchestra has submitted more than one application, (e.g. one on its own behalf and one as the parent of a component), each application will receive a separate email with separate login information. To ensure that you receive WESTAF's login information promptly, be sure to add noreply@culturegrants.org to your list of safe senders.

**New** Single Application Rule

Due to budgetary constraints, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) will no longer be accepting consortium applications beginning with FY13 grants. All applicants planning grant submissions to the NEA for deadlines occurring in 2012 should prepare accordingly with the knowledge that consortium grants will not be available. Organizations may submit one application in a calendar year to the agency: either in the Art Works or Challenge America categories, but not both.

Also, applicants in the Arts in the Media category should note that the projects supported in that funding category are now incorporated into Art Works within Media Arts; therefore Arts in Media applications will also be subject to the single application rule.

An exception to the single application rule is for the case in which a parent organization might apply on its own and then again on behalf of an eligible separately identifiable independent component. Click here for specifics.
Another exception to the single application rule is for *Our Town* funding for creative placemaking projects. Further details and complete guidelines for *Our Town* applications, due March 1, 2012, can be found [here](#).

**Additional Items of Importance**

1. **Arts Education**: Projects for short-term arts exposure, arts appreciation, or intergenerational activity should not be submitted under Arts Education; rather, they should be submitted under the appropriate artistic discipline, such as Music, for example. Further guidance about how to choose the appropriate category for arts learning projects can be found [here](#). Also, Art Works: Arts Education grantees should take note that they will need to submit their assessment tools in the final report and that these may be shared publicly.

2. **Presentation of Art**: For grant projects involving the presentation of art, selected grantees will be required to conduct surveys of audience members to gauge the nature and extent of audience response to these art experiences. These selected grantees will receive materials, technical assistance, and up to $1,000 in nonmatching supplemental funding from the NEA. If you are selected, you will be notified of your participation at the time of grant award.

**Contact NEA Staff - Early!**

NEA program staff is extremely helpful and willing to answer your questions! Consider being in touch with an NEA 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: Court Burns, Music Specialist (music organizations with names beginning A-L), 202 682 5590; Anya Nykyforiak, Music Specialist (music organizations with names beginning M-Z), 202 682 5487; Dinah Walls, Challenge America Fast-Track Specialist (organizations with names beginning A-E), 202 682 5586; Erin Waylor, Challenge America Fast-Track Specialist (organizations with names beginning F-Z), 202 682 5411; Denise Brandenburg, Arts Education Specialist, 202 682 5044; Laura Welsh, Media Arts Program Officer, 202 682 5738.

**Electronic Applications**

All applicants must submit their applications electronically through [Grants.gov](https://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 [here](#).
It is your organization’s responsibility to register with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR), where your organization's information must be renewed annually. Finalize a new or renew an existing registration at least two weeks before the application deadline. This should allow you time to resolve any issues that may arise with Grants.gov or CCR. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in your inability to submit your application.

Submit your grant application via Grants.gov no later than 10 days 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.

- The Grants.gov Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (Phone: 1 800 518 4726. email: support@grants.gov)
- 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 FY13 Grant Deadlines

The Access to Artistic Excellence and Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth categories have been replaced with a new funding category called Art Works, with the following outcomes: Creation, Engagement, Livability, and Learning. Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov by the dates below:

Art Works: March 8, 2012 deadline (January 1, 2013 earliest project start date) and August 9, 2012 deadline (June 1, 2013 earliest project start date). The types of projects eligible under the March and August application deadlines vary. Read the guidelines carefully.

Challenge America Fast-Track: May 24, 2012 deadline (January 1, 2013 earliest project start date)

Art Works
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: Grants generally will range from $10,000 to $100,000.

Challenge America Fast-Track Review
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, panelists are unanimous in one request to all applicant organizations, large and small: **Read the guidelines carefully.** For advice about Arts Education, applicants should contact Denise Brandenburg, Arts Education Specialist, directly.

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, if you choose to submit a collaborative one, think creatively about potential long-term partnerships with community organizations and be sure to make clear the collaboration is 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.” [http://www.arts.gov/grants/apply/GAP13/ApplicationReview.html](http://www.arts.gov/grants/apply/GAP13/ApplicationReview.html)
- 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, and make sure the samples reinforce the objective stated in your project. For Art Works Learning outcome applicants, work samples should demonstrate teaching and learning. Check the guidelines and stick to the suggested length.
- 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. Do not leave that section blank. In addition, if the orchestra has a deficit, provide a detailed explanation of plans to address it.
- Reminder: There are two different **Art Works** deadlines supporting a total of four outcomes. Pay special attention to the distinctions between the project types and outcomes that are funded for each deadline.
- You may submit your application through the Grants.gov system 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. Below is a chart of the page limits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment</th>
<th>Art Works</th>
<th>Challenge America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment 1:</td>
<td>One page</td>
<td>One page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment 2:</td>
<td>Three pages</td>
<td>Two pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details of the Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment 5:</td>
<td>Two pages plus any</td>
<td>Two pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographies</td>
<td>resumes for technical personnel, and a list of personnel of independent components</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment 9:</td>
<td>Three pages</td>
<td>Three pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic Activities</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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[americanorchestras.org]