



## **2025-2026 Arts Action Fund Overview**

Welcome to Arts Connect Houston's 2025-2026 Arts Action Fund!

### **What is the Arts Action Fund?**

The Arts Action Fund historically has invested a total of \$250,000 annually in arts education programs across Houston ISD to ensure students have access to meaningful arts opportunities as part of their complete education. This year, the total funding amount is \$200,000 and will be used for arts education programming in Houston ISD and Aldine ISD.

The Fund's goal is to unlock potential for new opportunities by fiscally supporting high-quality, effective partnerships between Arts & Culture Partners and any Houston ISD/Aldine ISD school.

The Arts Action Fund thoroughly reviews submitted applications, including a review of school needs and priorities, organization capabilities, and program elements, among others. In doing so, Arts Connect places priority on serving underfunded campuses in Houston ISD and Aldine ISD with reduced access to the arts.

The Arts Action Fund is the first of its kind in Houston and exists as a catalyst for closing arts access gaps in schools. Through the Arts Action Fund, Arts Connect Houston provides capacity building opportunities to expand knowledge and understanding of how the arts impact student education and well-being.

**Please contact Mandy Whited, Programs & Partnerships Manager, with any questions by clicking [here](#).**

**All questions will be answered within two business days and responded to [here](#).**

### **Who is Arts Connect Houston?**

Arts Connect is building a future in which every child thrives because they have a complete education that includes the arts. By maximizing change through collective impact, Arts Connect ensures that the entire community understands the fundamental necessity of the arts for all children. Using data, advocating for change, building capacity, and opening avenues for strategic funding, the initiative creates new pathways for students, schools, and districts to embrace high-quality arts education.

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## **Funding Amounts & Pathways**

### **Funding Amounts**

A total of \$200,000 is available for 2025-2026 Arts Action Fund Grants.

- *Aldine ISD* - A total of \$45,000 will go towards Aldine ISD grants, exclusively for Seed Grants.
- *Alief ISD* - The remaining \$15,000 will go towards Alief ISD, grant funding structure/timeline TBD.
- *Houston ISD* - A total of \$140,000 will go towards Houston ISD grants with \$40,000 devoted to Learning, Innovation & Action Grants and \$100,000 devoted to Seed Grants.

### **Funding Pathways**

During the 2025-26 school year, the Arts Action Fund will continue to focus on two strategies:

1. Learning, Innovation & Action (LIA) Grants (*Houston ISD only*)
2. Seed Grants

#### ***Learning, Innovation & Action Grants (Houston ISD Only)***

The Learning, Innovation & Action Grant application for Houston ISD may be found [here](#). Preview the application [here](#). Only Houston ISD schools are eligible to receive a Learning, Innovation & Action Grant.

#### ***Grant Amounts***

A total of \$40,000 is available for Learning, Innovation & Action Grants in the 2025-26 Arts Action Fund. Applications for Learning, Innovation & Action Grants may range from \$3,500 to \$8,500.

#### ***Seed Grants***

The Seed Grant application for both Houston ISD and Aldine ISD may be found [here](#). Preview the application [here](#).

#### ***Grant Amounts***

A total of \$100,000 is available for Seed Grants in the 2025-26 Arts Action Fund. Applications for Seed Grants may range from \$500 to \$3,500.

## **Eligibility & Award Limitations**

### **Eligibility to Apply to the Arts Action Fund**

Any active non-profit Arts & Culture Partner may apply for the Fund. An Arts & Culture Partner is required to apply on behalf of a Houston ISD or Aldine ISD school.

In the 2025-26 school year, “active” is defined as completing the Annual Partner Survey and having attended the August 7th in-person Partner Convening. You may find an up-to-date list of Arts & Culture Partners eligible to apply to the Arts Action Fund [here](#).

### **Application Review & Grant Approval**

All applications will be selected based on the rubric shared in application requirements, Review Committee feedback, campus need, priority, and available funding.

The Review Committee may approve a submitted application but award less than the initially requested grant amount. Arts & Culture Partners will be able to review the final award amount and determine if they would like to move forward with the program.

### **Organizational Limitations**

Organizations may submit a total of 12 applications across Learning, Innovation & Action and Seed Grants, for grants at both Houston ISD and Aldine ISD schools.

Organizations may receive a maximum of one (1) Learning, Innovation & Action Grant. Between Learning, Innovation & Action and Seed Grants, for grants at both Houston ISD and Aldine ISD schools, organizations are eligible to receive a possible total of \$12,800 in funding.

### **School Limitations**

A Houston ISD school may receive up to one (1) Learning, Innovation and Action (LIA) Grant and up to three (3) Seed Grants per school year. Houston ISD schools are eligible to receive a possible total of \$19,000.

An Aldine ISD school may receive up to three (3) Seed Grants per school year. Aldine ISD schools are eligible to receive a possible total of \$10,500.

All schools may have unlimited applications submitted on its behalf but what is approved will be dependent upon available funds and equitable distribution within the district.

### **Funding Limitations**

The Arts Action Fund does not support after-school or weekend arts education programming exceeding 10% of the provided grant.

Grants with the purpose of filling the role of a certified Fine Arts Teacher will not be considered.

**Please note! The goal of the Arts Action Fund is to invest in partnerships to increase student access to high-quality arts education opportunities.** Applicants should request funding based on the program amount needed. Please do not apply for the highest grant amount if the additional funds are not needed by the applying organization and campus. We want to be sure to work as a collective and ensure all interested students can participate – we can only do this when submitted funding requests are accurate to the program need and not pursuing excess funding.

## **Learning, Innovation & Action Grant Details**

Grants range from \$3,500 - \$8,500 with \$40,000 available. Organizations are eligible to receive a maximum of one (1) Learning, Innovation & Action Grant.

### **Learning, Innovation & Action Grant Purpose & Goal**

The main goal of the Learning, Innovation & Action Grant is to invest deeply in expanding pre-existing partnerships<sup>1</sup> between an Arts & Culture Partner and a Houston ISD school. This funding, grounded in an established relationship, allows space to explore an innovative idea that is responsive to campus' needs. All parties must be invested in the overall concept and how it deepens arts education impact for students.

### **“Innovative Idea” as Defined for the Purpose of this Grant**

From the perspective of the Houston ISD school: “*Innovation*” should be thought of as something the school, its students, and the community has not seen or done before.

From the perspective of the Arts & Culture Partner: “*Innovation*” should be thought of as something the organization could not do without this grant. An Arts & Culture Partner might use this funding to ‘test’ a big idea, take risks, and/or develop a series of program elements necessary to take the ‘next big leap’ in their programming - ensuring more in-depth and higher impact for Houston ISD students.

Some examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Organization A knows School N has never provided a campus-wide arts experience. Organization A works with School N to determine a program that is impactful to all students and applies for an LIA grant to support a campus-wide arts experience for all grade levels.
- Organization H works with School P to create an end-of-year student production. Students from School P get to write a theater performance, learn dances to perform, and practice to deliver a play as a part of the production. Organization H offered this opportunity because School P only offers Choir to students. This student production allowed for students to explore diverse art forms beyond choir through creative writing, dance, and theater.

Grant approval will be based on innovation, school priority and available funds, as evaluated by the Review Committee.

Programs supported through a Learning, Innovation & Action grant must:

- Be offered during the school day; up to 10% of the program and its budget may be used after-school
- Provide arts education experiences, instruction or integration opportunities
- Focus on creative writing, dance, music, theater, and/or visual arts
- Demonstrate a strong relationship with the school
- Address students' needs at the campus
- Address a current school need that cannot be filled by campus staff
- Be innovative as defined above

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<sup>1</sup> A ‘pre-existing partnership’ is defined as an Arts & Culture Partner having worked with either the campus or an educator on the campus within the last 18 months.

## **Seed Grant Details**

Grants range from \$500 to \$3,500 with \$100,000 available. Organizations can submit a maximum of 12 Seed applications per organization and no organization can receive more than \$12,800 via the Arts Action Fund (LIA and Seed Grants combined).

### **Seed Grant Purpose and Goal**

A Seed Grant may support programming in any discipline (including creative writing, dance, music, theater, and visual arts) delivered virtually or in-person through any arts education method (including experience, instruction and/or integration).

The main goal of a Seed Grant is to ensure the support of partnership development to increase access for students to experience the arts at their school. For some partnerships, this may start a relationship. For others, the grant will seed a continued relationship.

Some examples may include, but are not limited to:

- My organization will deliver a one (1) hour arts experience to 200 students. The cost for 100 students is \$250. In total, we will request \$500.
- My organization will deliver a residency for 25 students over four (4) days. The cost for one (1) hour is \$500. In total, we will request \$2,000.
- My organization will deliver a residency for 25 students over eight (8) days. The cost for one (1) hour is \$500. The total cost is \$5,000 but we will request \$3,500 and the school will cover the additional \$1,500."

Grant approval will be based on school priority and available funds, as evaluated by the Review Committee.

Programs supported through a Seed Grant must:

- Be offered during the school day; up to 10% of the program and its budget may be used after-school
- Provide arts education experiences, instruction or integration opportunities
- Focus on these arts disciplines: creative writing, dance, music, theater, and/or visual arts
- Address a current school need that cannot be filled by current campus staff

## 2025 - 2026 Arts Action Fund Timeline

August 20, 2025 - Application launches

August 29, 2025 - Arts Action Fund Partner Information Session

***September 4, 2025 - Aldine ISD Open House***

***September 18, 2024 - Houston ISD Open House***

| <b>Round One: Learning, Innovation &amp; Action</b>            | <b>Round Two: Seed</b>   |
|--|--|
| September 12, 2025<br>Applications Due                         | October 8, 2025<br>Round Two Review Committee Training         |
| September 16, 2025<br>Round One Review Committee Training      | October 10, 2025<br>Applications Due                           |
| September 22 - October 3, 2025<br>Application Review           | October 14-24, 2025<br>Application Review                      |
| October 7, 2025<br>Review Committee Panel Discussion           | October 28, 2025<br>Review Committee Panel Discussion          |
| October 9, 2025<br>Grant Notification                          | October 31, 2025<br>Grant Notification                         |
| October 24, 2025<br>Grant acceptance packets due               | November 14, 2024<br>Grant acceptance packets due              |
| November 14, 2025<br>Grant payments made                       | December 5, 2024<br>Grant payments made                        |
| January 23, 2026<br>Late grant acceptance packet payments made | January 23, 2026<br>Late grant acceptance packet payments made |

### **Post-Grant Timeline (Reporting)**

February 2, 2026 - Mid-semester check-in reporting form released

March 20, 2026 - Mid-semester check-in reporting form due

March 23, 2026 - Final reporting form released

May 22, 2026 - Request for extensions due

June 12, 2026 - Final reporting form due



## Arts & Culture Partner Grant Acceptance Packet

Grantees must complete the Grant Acceptance Packet through Submittable by the stated deadline. Once submitted, the grant will be paid out to the organization on the outlined timeline.

### Grant Acceptance Packet Materials

- **Letter of Acceptance:** Information on grant award, payment process, final reporting expectations, and general grant requirements.
- **Service Agreement:** A service agreement must be signed for each approved application
- **School Letter of Agreement:** This letter of agreement should be shared with the Houston ISD school by the Arts & Culture Partner and will require signature from the established Arts Liaison and the Principal.
- **Program Timeline and Impact:** The Arts & Culture Partner will identify the program delivery timeline, program schedule, expected impact (number of students, classrooms and grade levels). It will require signature from the established Arts Liaison and the Principal.
- **Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS):** All organizational representatives who will, at any point throughout programming, be present on a Houston ISD campus will be required to complete the Houston ISD Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) process. This includes but is not limited to staff members, administrators, teaching artists, contractors, volunteers, etc.

### Late Grant Acceptance Packets

#### ***Late Learning, Innovation & Action Grant Acceptance Packets***

Learning, Innovation & Action Grant Acceptance Packets are due on October 24, 2025. Late Grant Acceptance Packets will have delayed payment. **Any Grant Acceptance Packet received after December 31, 2025 will be voided and the grant rescinded.**

Learning, Innovation & Action Grant Acceptance Packets received between November 14, 2025 (three weeks after the deadline) and December 31, 2025 will be considered substantially late.

**Should both a Grant Acceptance Packet and Final Reporting be substantially late, the organization will be deemed ineligible to apply for the Arts Action Fund in the 2026-2027 Fund.**

#### ***Late Seed Grant Acceptance Packets***

Seed Grant Acceptance Packets are due on November 14, 2025. Late Grant Acceptance Packets will have delayed payment. **Any Grant Acceptance Packet received after December 31, 2025 will be voided and the grant rescinded.**

Seed Grant Acceptance Packets received between December 5, 2025 (three weeks after the deadline) and December 31, 2025 will be considered substantially late.

**Should both a Grant Acceptance Packet and Final Reporting be substantially late, the organization will be deemed ineligible to apply for the Arts Action Fund in the 2026-2027 Fund.**

## Final Reporting

The Final Reporting form will be released to all organizations in Submittable on March 23, 2026.

- **Deadline:** All reporting for the 2025-26 Arts Action Fund will be due by June 12, 2026.

- **Payment:** As mentioned in the “Payment Schedule” section, all grants will receive 100% payment up front. If impact numbers - including but not limited to: the number campuses, students, classrooms, grade levels, and direct student learning hours - reduce in final reporting more than 20%, the grant receiving organization may be asked to return funds if there is not sufficient reason shared for the reduced impact. If the final program budget is less than the initial granted amount, the grant receiving organization may be asked to return funds if there is not sufficient reason shared for the discrepancy.

### **Final Reporting Materials**

- Student impact data, arts education disciplines, topics addressed, TEKS alignment, final program timeline (days present on campus and hours), and program modifications made
- Program photos and proof of social media promotion
- Final program outcomes for the Arts & Culture Partner
- Final program budget
- School Feedback Form provided in the Final Reporting form shared via Submittable in March 2026. The form is sent by the organization to the campus representative. The campus response is optional and will not impact the organization's status with Arts Connect
- artlook® profile updated to a) add the program description for the program you completed with Arts Action Fund support and b) list the school you worked with through this grant.

### **Late Final Reporting Forms**

Final Reporting forms received after July 3, 2026 (three weeks after the deadline) will be considered substantially late. Should both a Grant Acceptance Packet *and* Final Reporting be substantially late, the organization will be deemed ineligible to apply for the Arts Action Fund in the 2026-2027 Fund.

## **Payment Schedule**

### **Round One, Learning, Innovation & Action Grants**

- The "Grant Acceptance Packet" should be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on October 24, 2025.
- The Grant Acceptance Packet will be processed, and the 100% payment will be distributed on November 14, 2025.
- Arts & Culture Partners should receive payment within two weeks.
- **Any Grant Acceptance Packet received after December 31, 2025 will be voided and the grant rescinded.**

### **Round Two, Seed Grants**

- The "Grant Acceptance Packet" should be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on November 14, 2025.
- The Grant Acceptance Packet will be processed, and the 100% payment will be distributed on December 5, 2025.
- Arts & Culture Partners should receive payment within two weeks.
- **Any Grant Acceptance Packet received after December 31, 2025 will be voided and the grant rescinded.**

As mentioned above, all grants will receive 100% payment up front. Arts Connect Houston is only responsible for the portion of funding granted through the Arts Action Fund. ACH is not responsible for any funds promised to an Arts & Culture Partner by the Houston ISD campus.

## **Returning Funds**

If impact numbers - including but not limited to: the number campuses, students, classrooms, grade levels, and direct student learning hours - reduce in final reporting more than 20%, the grant receiving organization may be asked to return funds if there is not sufficient reason shared for the reduced impact. If the final program budget is less than the initial granted amount, the grant receiving organization may be asked to return funds if there is not sufficient reason shared for the discrepancy.

## **Arts Action Fund Grant Extension Request**

If your program has any significant changes (i.e. program content, impact, budget) or your organization needs to request a program extension into the 2026-27 school year, please email [mandy@artsconnecthouston.org](mailto:mandy@artsconnecthouston.org) to request an extension by May 22, 2026.

There is a formal process that must be followed for your grant to receive an extension. If this process is not followed, Arts Connect will ask that the grant be returned in its entirety.

## **My Application Was Denied, Now What?**

- If a grant application is denied, you will receive an official denial letter via Submittable.
- At that time, the Arts & Culture Partner can request feedback from the Review Committee and Arts Connect Houston staff.
- If the Arts & Culture Partner or Houston ISD school has remaining questions, both parties will have the opportunity to meet with the project lead. This meeting can be requested via Messages in Submittable.
- Please keep in mind that the Arts Action Fund does not have unlimited resources and has been utilized to 100% in the previous five years with only a 50% approved rate from applications submitted. Your application may be denied simply due to a lack of resources.

## **Arts Action Fund Support**

### **Open House**

During Open Houses, educators will have an opportunity to learn more about the Arts Action Fund and connect with diverse Arts & Culture Partners.

For the first year, Arts Connect Houston will host an Aldine Open House. The Open House will be held on Thursday, September 4 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Bamberg Professional Development and Resource Center.

Arts Connect Houston will also host our annual Houston ISD Open House in partnership with the Fine Arts Department. The Open House will be held on Thursday, September 18th from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at HSPVA.

For Arts & Culture Partners: Your RSVP for both Open Houses is in the Annual Partner Survey. Surveys submitted after 8/7/2025 are not guaranteed a table.

For Aldine ISD District educators and staff: Please register for the September 4th Open House at: [bit.ly/25aldineopenhouse](https://bit.ly/25aldineopenhouse)

For Houston ISD District educators and staff: Please register for the September 18th Open House at: [bit.ly/25hisdopenhouse](https://bit.ly/25hisdopenhouse)

### **Need Support?**

- We ask that you submit questions by email to [mandy@artsconnecthouston.org](mailto:mandy@artsconnecthouston.org).
- Your question will be read and a response will be posted [here](#) within two business days.

### **Arts Action Fund Review Committee**

If you would like to nominate someone to be a Review Committee Member, please do so by emailing [mandy@artsconnecthouston.org](mailto:mandy@artsconnecthouston.org) by September 2, 2025.

### **Review Committee Process and Grant Review Rubric**

A Review Committee composed of diverse arts and education leaders will assess all grant applications. Each application will be reviewed for elements mentioned below in the established rubric. The application will be evaluated based on the student and campus needs first, then the program and its impact followed by the organization's goals.

Read more about the rubric [here](#).

### **Grant Approval Process**

Following the Review Committee process, the Arts Connect Houston Board Chair reviews and approves the disbursement of recommended grants set forth by the Review Committee. The Board Chair, and other Board Members, **do not** make grant approval and/or denial recommendations.