



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-255978-OMS-24
Project Category: Lifelong Learning
Project Type: Small Project (\$5,000-\$25,000)

The Delaware Contemporary

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$24,438
Amount of cost share: \$0

The Delaware Contemporary will continue its successful afterschool teen arts program through a series of learning experiences to foster exploration of museum and creative industry careers. The project team will partner with Title 1 high schools in New Castle County to recruit students who have limited access to arts opportunities. Through cross-disciplinary learning methods and engagement with the museum's teaching artists and a diverse group of Creatives-in-Residence, students will create their own works using a variety of art media, visit creative industry workspaces and cultural institutions, and participate in civic engagement projects. The program will culminate in an exhibition and pop-up retail operation to showcase students' artwork. These opportunities will help students develop professional skills, promote job preparedness, broaden career horizons, and overcome barriers to success. Project outcomes will be tracked through informal observation, program surveys, and collaboration with educators.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Performance Measurement Plan

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

Narrative

Project Justification

Creative Arts Club (CAC): Building a Creative Future (BaCF) will improve the well-being of our community by providing teen arts education in a museum setting for those with little to no access to art programs through their school curriculum, and will enhance the after-school art club experience exponentially by adding vocational exploration of museum and creative industry-related careers while also supporting these industry professionals through gained teaching experience and financial support. High schools in our area identified a critical need, that they have little to no art curriculum because of reduced funding, a problem common across the U.S. The proposed program supports IMLS' Agency Goal to **Champion Lifelong Learning** by providing equitable access to **shared knowledge and learning opportunities** through the arts, and by preparing teens for a career in a museum and creative industries **to support the professional development of the future workforce**. The CAC: BaCF program serves our community's under-resourced teen audience through partnership with Title-1 designated high schools and/or community centers located in low-moderate income areas throughout the city of Wilmington and New Castle County, with emphasis placed on **service to youth living in low-income households and to youth who identify as a minoritized group**. The student demographics of our current Title-1 high school partner, who was also a participant in the two-year pilot of the museum's CAC: BaCF program, reveal approximately 47% of students live in low-income households; 82% identified as Black/African American and 8% as Hispanic/Latino/a. A goal for the program in the proposed year is to expand upon our current relationship with the Latin American Community Center's (LACC) 12-18 aged youth through efforts to infuse the CAC:BaCF program into LACC's after school teen program. Participants will largely represent the Latino/a population and come from schools located in the Red Clay School District. A 2011 study, *Arts Education in America*, shows that access to arts education for African-American and Hispanic populations is significantly lower than for their White peers and has been steadily declining for three decades. Even though research proves the arts are a good investment for low socioeconomic students – boosting academic performance and college attendance and decreasing dropout rates – schools are not utilizing the arts as a tool to reach their neediest students. Additionally, a 2020 study identified the leading factor of arts-integration in high schools was size, with traditional public schools having the most options with increased enrollment, and public charter schools seeing the least. **Those who could use the academic benefits of art the most are receiving it the least** (Rabkin, N., & Hedberg, E.C. (2011). *Arts Education in America: What the Declines Mean for Arts Participation.*; Elpus, K. (2020). *Access to arts education in America: The availability of visual art, music, dance, and theater courses in U.S. high schools.*) The schools value the study of the arts and the development of critical thinking, problem-solving and observational skills that arts education brings. Together with representatives from the high schools and/or groups involved, our museum staff worked to build the CAC program, now in its eleventh year, historically supported by the 21st Century Fund and the schools themselves. Collaborative partners for the CAC: BaCF program include the participating high school(s) and/or community group, teaching monitors, the museums' Teaching Artists and the series of career professionals who serve as Creatives-in-Residence and Guest Speakers, all of whom contribute directly to the development of the project, consulting with museum staff to refine and further develop the components and the model. *Please see Supportingdoc3 for a letter of support from our school partner and new community group partner.*

Partnerships created and sustained through the CAC: BaCF program aligns most strongly with **Goal 1, Lifelong Learning**, providing students with instruction after school in an inquiry-focused museum setting allowing for authentic experiences with museum staff and creative professionals in a formal and informal learning ecosystem. Engagement with and projects designed by a diverse schedule of professionals **will offer participants experiential and cross-disciplinary learning that encourage exploration and discovery**. These partnerships reflect our institutional values and will enable us to advance our strategic plan by weaving the museum more tightly into the fabric of our community to create a lasting impact on participants and our community through high-quality educational experiences and civically engaging projects that push boundaries and inspire new ways of looking at the world to promote lifelong learning and sustained engagement with the arts.

Lifelong Learning: The BaCF program includes workforce development for CAC participants through cross-disciplinary learning and sustained engagement with a diverse set of peers, museum staff, and creative professionals. CAC: BaCF provides systemically disadvantaged teens with equitable opportunities to broaden their career horizons and pursue a creative career, and will aid in TDC's as well as IMLS' ongoing efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through participation in inquiry-based learning activities and a civic project students will develop artistic and cultural

literacies as well as cross-disciplinary skill sets critical to achieving success in any career. This preparation also develops individuals who become ambassadors for contemporary art and museums and who volunteer, continue to interact in museum spaces and who will, in their diversity, contribute toward the museum field's need to improve diversity and inclusion in the cultural organization industry. Lastly, the program also supports emerging creative professionals not only through teen engagement, but also through the provision of teaching opportunities for creative industry workers as Creatives-in-Residence and Guest Speakers that contribute to the workers' professional development and ability to advance shared knowledge. Participating professionals are also provided financial support for their involvement in the program.

Project Work Plan

Building a Creative Future (BaCF) extends the success of the museum's Creative Arts Club (CAC), a program established in 2012 and funded by local foundations and participating schools, with the addition of a program of creative professionals to promote job preparedness and cross-disciplinary skill development for participating students. CAC: BaCF is an innovative partnership that joins community high school(s) and community centers with The Delaware Contemporary (TDC). Once a week for 32 weeks each academic year, 15-30 student participants spend at least one academic year in the program, meeting in school for the first month, then after-school at the museum and on select weekends for civic and social engagement activities. Depending on the program partner, the meeting schedule may be adjusted to meet their immediate needs.

Specific Activities: Starting in September, TDC's Teaching Artists travel to the participating partners' location to meet and recruit students for the CAC: BaCF program. During the in-school sessions, typically meeting once a week for one month, TDC's Teaching Artists will identify students' areas of interest, appreciation of and experience with the arts, and levels of self-awareness through discussion and a pre-program student assessment. Program goals and objectives will be defined during this time.

During CAC: BaCF sessions held at the museum, students will engage with creative and museum professionals to create individual and collaborative artworks in response to contemporary ideas and issues, as well as participate in a large civic project where they will develop and execute an on-site exhibition gallery, complete with opening reception for friends, families, and stakeholders, with an optional merchandise shop. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to visit the work spaces of select participating creative-industry professionals as well as visit an arts and/or cultural institution during the course of the program. In most cases, this program serves as the students' "art class" which is not included in their schools' offerings. The museum--an unfamiliar or intimidating setting for some--becomes a safe, familiar environment where teens can develop meaningful relationships with peers and adults. Sustained engagement with a diverse set of peers, Teaching Artists, professionals in creative fields, and the museum helps teens feel known, valued and welcomed. Teaching Artists from TDC conduct workshops on multiple art mediums and the creative process. These sessions are for students of all artistic levels, from those who carry their own sketch pad to those who think they have no artistic talent but appreciate art and the social aspect of being part of artistic creation. CAC: BaCF is designed around the social, cognitive and emotional needs of adolescents, providing a welcoming and inclusive learning environment at this crucial time of their development. TDC's Teaching Artists maintain a safe and positive club environment that encourages artistic expression, understanding, collaboration and other artistic exploration opportunities and skill development for participants to highlight their talents.

BaCF: Creatives-in-Residence - To further increase professional opportunities for participating students, TDC complements the current CAC art production curriculum with a program of regional artists and creative professionals as guest artists and speakers – **Creatives-in-Residence (CIR)**. Seventy-five percent of the **CIRs** will identify as minority and come from locally-based businesses. These professionals will work with CAC students to define and understand career expectations and required preparation for professions in the creative industry including, but not limited to: museums and non-profits, film-making, couture fashion design, architecture, graphic design, interior design, product design, commercial photography, and urban design. In addition to representing minority artists/creative professionals, the selected CIRs will be chosen based on the interests of the teen participants and their experience and commitment to working with students in grades 9-12. Each of the CIRs will be vetted and mentored by professional teaching artists and museum educators to refine their teaching skills, prepare them for working with students, and ensure informed and age-appropriate engagement with the program participants.

The CIR program consists of four 4-week residencies and a concluding 6-week residency, with TDC's Lead Teaching Artist in collaboration with Guest Speakers providing instruction and art activities during the non-resident sessions. CIRs will meet the students either at their school (if space permits) or at the museum in week one of their residency to introduce their body of work and the work of others in their industry. The following meetings, the CIRs will work with the students in the workshop studio to create and complete a project using the professional tools of their particular creative trade. Throughout the four residencies, the students will be learning and actively producing artwork and products with both the CIRs and the Teaching Artists. The final Creative in Residence works for six weeks with students as they research, develop, and implement a culminating exhibition and pop-up retail space, either onsite at the museum or in a community space, with club-themed merchandise and to showcase and sell their body of commercial artwork produced throughout the program. *Please see Supportingdoc1 examples of CIRs and their areas of expertise and experience.*

In order to promote civic engagement and relevant social programming for their peers, the CAC: BaCF participants will utilize their culminating exhibition as an opportunity to invite their peers and engage them in social activities at the museum, created and designed by CAC: BaCF students. Teens will develop activities that appeal to their peers and generate an increase in youth attendance and engagement at the museum. They become active ambassadors and community builders among other youth, not just recipients of services developed by museum staff in collaboration with their school(s). The event will be developed and planned by the CAC: BaCF participants. Through the program's pilot years, TDC has observed higher levels of success and engagement when program participants are able to focus their efforts on the design, promotion, and delivery of one social event for their peers. Students are encouraged to bring school friends and peers to the CAC:BaCF sessions throughout the year, which serve as a social and learning experience for guest students, and contribute to future, prolonged program participation. Utilizing the CAC: BaCF exhibition reception event and the opening of a culminating retail space at the end of the school year allows teens to share their hard work with their family and friends, as well as, develop their sense of pride and self-confidence. These events, planned by teens for teens, connect the students' projects with their peers as well as TDC visitors and stakeholders. The flexibility of time to experiment with different artistic mediums and processes allows students to build a body of work and skills they can be proud of, while also helping to inform activities/programming that will captivate their peers and offer new and relevant pathways for their peers to connect with the museum. *Please see Supportingdoc1 for photos of previous teen events and artwork included in the culminating exhibition space.*

Authentic work with an impact on the museum's community makes teens feel like museum insiders with valuable skills and talents to contribute. Space, staff, and artists are highly accessible, and the work is collaborative, project-based, and culminates in visible results: public programs, events, and exhibitions. CAC alumni say they felt fortunate and respected in this environment, rather than the teenage stereotype—troubled, isolated, or unwanted.

Interaction with contemporary art and artists connect teens with adults who embrace risk, experimentation, and questioning in their work. Participants engage with art, responding and interacting through dialogue, projects, and activities. They are able to expand their thinking about what art is, what it means in society, the life of a working artist, and prospective careers in the arts. Supportive staff mentor and welcome teens with respect and trust, promoting self-confidence at a stage in life when connecting with adults can be difficult. The programs are staff-intensive and involve professionals from varied backgrounds, including art education, contemporary art, and youth development.

Since TDC has piloted the CAC part of the proposed project for eleven years now, three of those years with the BaCF addition, the goals, assumptions and risks of the work are realistic and achievable. As mentioned, the incorporation of Building a Creative Future (BaCF) into CAC has undergone a partial three-year pilot program, largely interrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19. However, our pivot during that time and emergence beyond the pandemic has taught us many lessons. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020-2021 academic year CAC: BaCF program activities were delivered virtually to students via Zoom, Youtube, and the Schoology platform. TDC staff conducted virtual interviews with the creative professionals in conjunction with recorded art making tutorials for student projects. Once schools and the museums opened back up, we had to define a new relationship with our CAC students. Sleep and social emotional issues plague high school students since schools reopened, which may indicate their lower attendance to extracurricular, especially arts-based, programming (*Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2022, 19(5), 2553; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19052553>). With the new reality, increasing and retaining recruitment is our main priority, an effort that has proven successful. TDC offers high schoolers an extension to their STEM-focused curriculum in a safe space designed specifically for them. Our classroom was recently updated to reflect a modern sensibility, one that

respects teens as young adults. We have learned from the students themselves what they want, and incorporate that into the program goals and objectives. The importance for Gen Z to feel welcome and seen authentically is paramount to our program mission.

The Project Director, TDC's Museum Programs and Learning Manager, and the Lead Teaching Artist are primarily responsible for implementing CAC: BaCF. They possess the skills and experience necessary to complete the work successfully as demonstrated in the pilot years. The plan is developed in accordance with the framework and strategies employed in the *Room to Rise: Lasting Impact of Teens Arts Programs* (Whitney Museum, 2015 previously cited) with the core components piloted for 11 years by the museum.

The financial and other resources identified that are required for the scope and scale of the project are provided in the project budget and are based on 11 years' CAC experience and the 3-years' for BaCF. The methods for tracking the project's progress is that the Project Director and Teaching Artist review status monthly, ensuring that the curriculum is on track, that field trips occur on a timely basis and that contracts with Creatives-in-Residence are in place and executed in a timely manner.

CAC: BaCF participating high school(s) and/or community groups meet with TDC each summer leading up to the program to discuss learning needs and determine goals for the upcoming year. Teaching monitors accompany the students to the museum to provide additional support as well as to have the opportunity to engage with students in an informal learning environment. Supportive staff mentor and welcome teens with respect and trust, promoting self-confidence at a stage in life when connecting with adults can be difficult. The Creatives-in-Residence (CIRs) are TDC's primary partners to administer instruction for the project, they are experienced and have expertise in their professions. The CIRs will be chosen based on the interests of the teen participants and their experience and commitment to working with students in grades 9-12. Each of the CIRs will be vetted and mentored by professional teaching artists and museum educators to refine their teaching skills, prepare them for working with students, and ensure informed and age-appropriate engagement with the program participants.

Sequence of Activities: Please see the *Schedule of Completion* attachment for the sequence and timeline of the project.

Tracking Progress: Participating students will complete pre-and-post program evaluations to assess attitudes and skill sets in addition to program impact. Progress toward achieving intended results of the program will be tracked through informal observation by TDC's Teaching Artists, individual student project rubrics, and through collaboration with school educators to observe participants' performance in core academic subjects in addition to the pre/post-program assessment.

Sharing Results: A model of Building a Creative Future will be produced and shared with other museums highlighting the importance and impact of teen participation in the arts. Due to the program interruptions as a result of COVID, in combination with Engagement Staff turn-over at the museum in recent years, our efforts to disseminate the BaCF model have been delayed. **TDC assures that IMLS support will be acknowledged** in any grant products, publications, websites and presentations developed with IMLS funding.

Project Results

In addition to providing authentic and sustained access to arts engagement for students in schools with little to no formal arts instruction, the CAC: BaCF program establishes the museum as a welcoming and accessible space for teens after school. By providing consistent and sustained support from program staff the CAC: BaCF program supports students' personal development; leadership skills, artistic and cultural literacy; and social capital; arts participation and civic engagement.

It is anticipated that the CAC: BaCF program will support student's personal development as they gain the self-awareness and understanding needed to reach their individual potential. Similar programs have demonstrated a long-term impact on participant's frequency of attendance at arts events and organizations, level of active participation with various art forms, and practices related to art appreciation in daily life, thus supporting life-long engagement with the arts and cultural sector. The CAC: BaCF program will also develop students' leadership skills and capacity to think independently, communicate with others, and influence others in an ethical and socially responsible way. Through program activities, participants will develop the ability to observe, analyze, interpret, and make meaning from visual content and cultural values and practices. Students will enhance their social capital or the values, trust, and networks that people use to build bridges with individuals and groups within and outside their communities.

To assess the success of the program, TDC uses the following methods to collect data and determine areas of success and areas in-need of improvement: At the beginning of the academic year students will complete a pre-program assessment that is used to measure pre-program engagement, establish their commitment to the program, inform program specific projects or activities, and establish benchmark data to measure student growth and impact of the project. Upon completion of program projects, students must fill out an Artist's Self-Reflection and Evaluation form that describes their approach to the project, what they found successful, and what they could improve upon. Students may also submit completed or in-progress works of art for display on a dedicated public wall at the museum. This allows an opportunity for students to reflect not only on their work, but the work of their peers. At the end of the academic year, students also fill out a Creative Arts Club post-program survey.

Also collected is data from the following: 1) The number of participants who improve attendance and classroom performance; 2) A decrease in disciplinary action or other negative behaviors; 3) Number of participants who improve class participation; 4) Teacher survey; 5) State Assessment in English Language Arts and Mathematics; 6) Classroom grades; and 7) Interviews with Parents/Caregivers.

What we have confirmed, with increasing confidence over the program's eleven years, is that the students who are involved in after school activities centered on positive social and creative interplay in the arts, such as CAC, demonstrate improvement in all other factors that measure a student's success at school, including grades, attendance, discipline, and vocational employability skills. More importantly, the program creates critical thinkers who are able to see "outside of the box" through the development of problem-solving skills that are necessary for success in any career.

It is expected that students who participate in the CAC: BaCF will retain the highest standards and exhibit growth in the positive employability skills that are expected of all students. Measure: For 10-12 grade students, in all vocational-technical classes, key Employability Indicators are monitored by teachers and school administration on a regular basis. For students who are at the highest standard, this expectation will remain. For students who are not at the highest area in each indicator an improvement will be expected. For 9th grade students who are new to employability ratings, it is expected that by the end of the school year they will have rated at the top or only one measure from the top in each employability rating areas.

In addition to their personal and academic development, as students engage with museum educators, teaching artists, and creative professionals they will explore a variety of artistic media and develop their own body of personal and commercial artistic work. Along with a culminating student exhibition at the museum, students will also research, develop, and implement a pop-up retail operation to sell the merchandise they have created throughout the year. Examples of previous commercial student projects include custom skateboard decks, student designed and decorated tote bags, and unique hand-built and wheel thrown ceramic planters.

Sustainability: The benefits of teen arts programs in museums are well documented in the *Room to Rise: Lasting Impacts of Teen Programs by the Whitney Museum* (2015). As young people participate in the arts programs show significant improvement in conflict resolution, future orientation, critical response and career readiness. Arts participation also correlates with higher rates of tolerance and lower rates of juvenile delinquency and truancy (Arts and Lifelong Learning: Arts and Social Impact Fact Sheet. Americans for the Arts). We fully support and are following the development of Arts Education for All, a Congressional Act that will increase visibility and support for programs like CAC nationally. It is important to reintroduce the arts to create holistic educational standards. It is TDC's intent to use the IMLS grant-funded project model product to seek funding from area business community partners and community foundations who award grants in the arts to sustain the teen art education program and workforce development in Building a Creative Future. The short and long-term outcomes are attractive to businesses who look for individuals with creative, critical thinking skills, leadership experience, collaborative teamwork, and complex problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Applicant Name: The Delaware Contemporary

Project Title: Building a Creative Future for Under-Served Youth through the Advancement of the Museum's After School Arts Club

Performance Measure	Data We Will Collect	Source of Our Data	Method We Will Use	Schedule
<p>Effectiveness: The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results</p>	<p><i>Example: At the end of each month, using a report prepared by the registrar, we will compare the cumulative count of rehoused objects against the total number proposed for the project.</i></p> <p><i>Example: At the end of each project year, our external consultant will present results of the ongoing observation-based evaluation and compare them against our intended project results.</i></p>			
	<p>At the beginning of the academic year students will complete a pre-program assessment that is used to measure pre-program engagement, establish their commitment to the program, inform program specific projects or activities, and establish benchmark data to measure student growth and impact of the project. At the end of the academic year, students will fill out a post-program evaluation to reveal the impact of the program on participants.</p> <p>Progress toward achieving intended results of the program will be tracked through: informal observation by TDC’s Teaching Artists each week, individual student project rubrics completed after each art and civic project, and through collaboration with school educators to observe participants’ performance in core academic subjects in the beginning of the year compared to the end of the year.</p>			
<p>Efficiency: How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group</p>	<p><i>Example: Twice per year, we will assess our expenditures for program supplies on a per-person-served basis.</i></p> <p><i>Example: Each quarter, we will calculate the dollar value of volunteer hours contributed to the project as recorded in our online volunteer management system.</i></p>			
<p>Monthly, time sheets for project staff will be recorded and program expenses will be reviewed.</p> <p>Costs minimized by strategizing museum classroom and education resources to supplement new materials needed for instruction. Employee and staff time leveraged to better address specific needs of the program, rather than broad oversight from the top down.</p>				
<p><i>Example: At the beginning, the mid-point, and end of the project, we will administer a satisfaction survey to staff who have participated in the training.</i></p> <p><i>Example: We will gather opinions about our online services through questionnaires provided to every 20th user.</i></p>				

<p>Quality: How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group</p>	<p>Pre-program assessments will be compared to post-program assessments to reveal the quality of and expectations set for the program.</p> <p>Progress toward achieving intended results of the program will be tracked through: informal observation by TDC's Teaching Artists each week, individual student project rubrics completed after each art and civic project, and through collaboration with school educators and community center leaders to observe participants' performance in core academic subjects in the beginning of the year compared to the end of the year.</p>
<p>Timeliness: The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe</p>	<p><i>Example: Every six months, our Project Director will assess the fit between our proposed Schedule of Completion and actual activity completion dates.</i></p> <p><i>Example: Each quarter, each project partner will submit to our Project Director a templated report showing their progress on meeting project milestones.</i></p> <p>The methods for tracking the project's progress is that the Project Director and Teaching Artist review status monthly, ensuring that the curriculum is on track, that field trips occur on a timely basis and that contracts with Creatives-in-Residence are in place and executed in a timely manner.</p> <p>During monthly meetings for key staff, staff will assess project performance for the prior month and review necessary preparation for the upcoming month.</p>