Exploring Engagement Fund
Initial Application Instructions

Please review this four-step process before beginning to prepare your application:

Step 1: Confirm Eligibility
Step 2: Review Criteria
Step 3: Download and Complete the Initial Application and Budget
Step 4: Create an Online Account and Submit

Step 1: Confirm Eligibility

To determine if your organization is eligible to apply for the Exploring Engagement Fund, review the criteria below.

Eligible organizations must:

- **Benefit the people of California.** Your arts organization must be based in California (verified by the address on your organization’s most recently filed Form 990), and the proposed project must take place in California.
- **Have arts as the central focus of its mission and programs.** Exploring Engagement Fund grants are for California arts organizations, and are not intended for organizations established primarily to provide social services, even if those organizations use the arts as a vehicle for service delivery. Please see the Ineligible Organizations section below for further information.
- **Maintain 501(c)(3) public charity status.** “Friends of” organizations may be eligible; please see our Exploring Engagement Fund FAQ for more information. For organizations with fiscal sponsors, please see the Organizations with Fiscal Sponsors section below. For further information, please see the “Ineligible Organizations” section.
- **Receive no more than 50 percent of revenue from government sources.** Irvine’s trust restriction limits us from awarding grants to organizations that enjoy “substantial support through taxation.” For the Exploring Engagement Fund, we define this as 50 percent of revenue from government sources. To determine your organization’s percentage of government support, please apply this formula, using figures from your organization’s most recently filed Form 990:

  \[
  \text{Total Amount of Government Grants (Form 990, Part VIII, Line 1e)} \div \text{Total Revenues from All Sources (Form 990, Part VIII, Line 12)}
  \]

- **Demonstrate annual operating expenses of at least $100,000.** Applicants must have a track record of at least $100,000 in operating expenses per year. We confirm this with the organization’s most recently filed Form 990 (Part 1, Line 18). For more information on this eligibility criteria, please see our Exploring Engagement Fund FAQ.
- **Not have any currently active grants or outstanding reports due to the Foundation.** Organizations with an active grant from Irvine or an outstanding report due to the Foundation are not eligible to apply to the Exploring Engagement Fund. To be eligible, the end date of your existing grant must be at least one month prior to the date of your application submission, and your final narrative and financial report must also be received and approved by the Foundation prior to submitting an initial application.
Previous Exploring Engagement Fund Grantees

Previous Exploring Engagement Fund grantees are eligible to apply to the Exploring Engagement Fund again once their grants have ended and all final reports have been completed and approved. However, because the Exploring Engagement Fund is intended to support organizations to experiment with new engagement practices and to profile new projects that engage Californians in the arts, applications from previous grantees need to clearly demonstrate how the proposed project fits the criteria of risk-taking and experimentation in order to be competitive. Applications requesting continued support for projects previously funded through the Exploring Engagement Fund will not be competitive.

Organizations with Fiscal Sponsors

If your organization does not have 501(c)(3) public charity status, we will accept an application only if you have an established relationship with a fiscal sponsor. Both the fiscal sponsor and the fiscally sponsored project must be based in California. Individual artists who have fiscal sponsorship are not eligible; the Exploring Engagement Fund is focused on arts organizations.

Applicants working with an approved fiscal sponsor must have their own track record of $100,000 or more in annual expenses.

Should you be invited to submit a full proposal, we will review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two entities to verify the level of oversight provided by the fiscal sponsor.

Ineligible Organizations

The following types of organizations are not eligible for the Exploring Engagement Fund:

- Government agencies or tax-exempt organizations under any category other than sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1) or 509(a)(2). Examples of ineligible organizations include public schools, business leagues, chambers of commerce and 509(a)(3) supporting organizations.
- Nonprofit organizations established primarily to provide social services, even if those organizations use the arts as a vehicle for service delivery.
- Colleges and universities, including university art departments and visual and performing arts presenters affiliated with universities (unless the presenter operates as an independent arts organization with its own 501(c)(3) status). Colleges and universities may partner with an eligible nonprofit arts organization on an Exploring Engagement Fund project. However, the partner nonprofit organization, not the university, should be the lead applicant.
- Public broadcasting and/or public media entities. Public broadcasting and media organizations may partner with an eligible nonprofit arts organization on an Exploring Engagement Fund project. However, the partner arts organization, not the public broadcasting or media organization, should be the lead applicant.

If you have questions about your organization’s eligibility, we suggest that you contact us before submitting an Initial Application. Please email grantsadmin@irvine.org to confirm your organization’s eligibility.

Step 2: Review Criteria

The Exploring Engagement Fund is seeking arts organizations with innovative ideas and a readiness to take bold steps that will engage new and diverse populations. Projects supported by the Fund must represent an experiment for the organization intended to increase arts engagement in a new or deepened way. Grant awards are intended as risk capital for nonprofit arts organizations to:

- Experiment with new approaches to arts engagement utilizing two or three of these pathways:
  1. Who engages in the arts: Increasing arts engagement by low-income or ethnically diverse populations historically underserved by arts nonprofits. Please note that these are separate categories: ethnic background is distinct from economic circumstance.
  2. How they engage: Expanding the ways Californians engage in the arts by providing opportunities for active participation by those who are not professional artists. Projects could incorporate art-making by non-professional artists on their own, or facilitated by professional artists. This could include arts experiences involving innovative ways of performing, making and/or sharing the arts via the use of digital technologies, where appropriate to the project’s design. For more information, see Getting In On the Act: How Arts Groups are Creating Opportunities for Active Participation.
  3. Where engagement takes place: Expanding the use of diverse spaces for arts engagement and extending arts engagement (whether active or observational participation) to venues beyond arts-specific organizations and places. For example, this might include venues not typically used for arts participation, including easily accessible and/or familiar public spaces such as parks and community centers, or outdoor spaces adjacent to arts venues. For more information, see Why “Where”? Because “Who”: Arts Venues, Space and Tradition.
We think of the Exploring Engagement Fund as risk capital for our grantees, so we are looking for organizations ready to take risks and try new things in new ways. We specifically want our grantees to experiment with ways of engaging new and different audiences and participants. We anticipate that some of these experiments may fail, and we plan to learn, and help our partners learn, from both successful and unsuccessful projects.

- Represent a completely new investigation for the organization or a new approach to its work of presenting and/or producing. The proposed project can be a brand new project, or an experiment that takes a different approach with an existing project or practice. The project should aim to engage new and diverse populations by adding active participation opportunities for participants and/or incorporating the use of nontraditional spaces. If the proposed project builds on an existing program, it needs to reflect the experimentation and risk capital intent of the Fund and clearly take the existing work to a different level in order for the project to be competitive.

- Request support for up to two years for one distinct, new project. Applications requesting support for multiple projects (e.g., a different project in each year of a two-year request) will not be competitive. Applicants should focus their requests on one distinct, new project over a one- or two-year period.

- Project budgets should be reasonable and appropriately reflect the scope of the proposed project and the capacity of the applicant organization. Please refer to the chart below when determining the maximum amount your organization can request based on your annual operating expenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION BUDGET SIZE BY ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES</th>
<th>MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT PER YEAR OF PROPOSED PROJECT (2 YEARS MAXIMUM)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between $100,000 and $5 million</td>
<td>Up to 10% of annual operating expenses, with a maximum request amount of $125,000 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5 million and above</td>
<td>Up to $250,000 per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A portion of the requested funds may be used for planning purposes for the proposed project. The organization may also request up to 10 percent of its grant for indirect costs to support the organization’s general operations. Indirect costs should be included as a budget line item, with the total grant request not to exceed the maximum amount for which the organization is eligible to apply.

**Strong applications will describe projects with these attributes:**
- Employ an experiment-based approach to investigate new ways to expand arts engagement
- Identify creative and innovative approaches to arts engagement, which could include collaborating with artists to develop such approaches
- Represent a risk for the organization and clearly articulate why the organization is interested in undertaking the proposed experiment
- Successfully employ the Who, How and/or Where pathways outlined above

**Competitive applications will also:**
- Propose a project that clearly seeks to discover how to better engage the kinds of audiences and participants that have been consistently underrepresented at arts nonprofit programming in the past
- Creatively apply the engagement pathways described above, thoughtfully integrating them into the project’s design, and provide a strong rationale for the inclusion of both (or all three) selected pathways
- Provide a compelling rationale for pursuing the engagement experiment and what the organization hopes to achieve with the proposed project
- Provide a clear description of potential learning opportunities and challenges involved in taking the proposed risk for the organization
Youth-focused projects: The Exploring Engagement Fund does not support children and youth-focused projects (aged 0-17), including in-school, after-school or out-of-school arts education programs specifically designed to serve youth. Projects that target families (i.e., not primarily for children and rigorously designed for intergenerational arts engagement) may be appropriate for support.

One-time Project Support
The Exploring Engagement Fund will provide arts nonprofits with one-time project support and will not extend beyond the initial experiment. The Fund is also not intended to support the core operations or ongoing programming of an organization. Applications submitted for ongoing programs are not competitive. Projects that do not represent a risk for the organization and/or do not clearly articulate why the organization is interested in undertaking the proposed experiment are not competitive.

Geographic Areas of Priority
We will give preference to applicants based in the Foundation’s geographic priority areas – the San Joaquin Valley (Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare counties) and Riverside and San Bernardino counties. We are also interested in projects from organizations based in other regions of California that want to work in and partner with communities in these priority regions.

Step 3: Download and Complete the Initial Application and Budget
Before downloading the Initial Application Form, please be sure you have Adobe Reader version 11.0 or later. Download a free version. Mac users should only use Adobe Reader to type into the form (it won’t work with Mac Preview). When you’re ready, download and save the Initial Application Form as a PDF on to your desktop, then open the saved form from your desktop and complete the application.

We only accept applications through this form so that we can conduct an efficient and fair review of the many applications we receive. Please use 11-point font and limit your responses to the size of the viewable text boxes (without scrolling), even if you have the ability to type beyond the size of the box. Since our review committee prints the applications, we are unable to view any text beyond the viewable boxes.

Engagement Pathways
Projects must address at least two of the three engagement pathways:

- Who engages in the arts: Increasing arts engagement by low-income or ethnically diverse populations historically underserved by arts nonprofits. Please note that these are separate categories: ethnic background is distinct from economic circumstance.

- How they engage: Expanding the ways Californians engage in the arts by providing opportunities for active participation for those who are not professional artists. This could include arts experiences involving performing, making and/or sharing the arts via the use of digital technologies.

- Where engagement takes place: Expanding the use of diverse spaces for arts engagement and extending arts engagement to venues beyond arts-specific organizations and places. For example, this might include parks and community centers, or outdoor spaces adjacent to arts venues.
Project Description and Rationale

We want to understand why your organization is interested in experimenting with new ways of engaging Californians in the arts and how you will utilize the proposed engagement pathways. Provide a strong rationale as to why the particular engagement pathways were proposed and how these pathways will be effective in reaching the intended participants. Your application should also address one of the four pathway combinations outlined below that directly pertains to your project.

1. **Who Engages and How They Engage** — A project that serves low-income or ethnically diverse Californians historically underserved by arts nonprofits by expanding active participation in the arts.
   
   • Describe who the project is targeting, and explain why this population is being targeted. Please provide details about ethnicity or socioeconomic status where appropriate, and explain how the target participants differ from those the organization currently serves.
   
   • Describe the activities offered to the target participants to actively make or practice art, the ways they will do so, and why these programs are relevant to the target participants.
   
   • Describe how participants might use technology to engage with the arts as part of the proposed project, if applicable.

2. **Who Engages and Where They Engage** — A project that serves low-income or ethnically diverse Californians historically underserved by arts nonprofits by utilizing non-traditional spaces for arts engagement.
   
   • Describe who the project is targeting, and explain why this population is being targeted. Please provide details about ethnicity or socioeconomic status where appropriate, and explain how the target participants differ from those the organization currently serves.
   
   • Describe the use of the non-traditional venue(s) for arts engagement, and explain why the venue is being selected.
   
   • Describe what artistic programs are being offered and why these programs are relevant to the target participants.

3. **How They Engage and Where They Engage** — A project that expands active participation in the arts and utilizes non-traditional spaces for arts engagement.
   
   • Describe the activities offered to the target participants to actively make or practice art, the ways they will do so, and why these programs are relevant to the target participants.
   
   • Describe the use of the non-traditional venue(s) for arts engagement, and explain why the venue is being selected.
   
   • Describe who you intend to serve with this project and if the target participants differ from those the organization currently serves.
   
   • Describe how participants might use technology to engage with the arts as part of the proposed project, if applicable.

4. **Who Engages, How They Engage and Where They Engage** — A project that serves low-income or ethnically diverse Californians historically underserved by arts nonprofits by expanding active participation in the arts and utilizing non-traditional spaces for arts engagement.
   
   • Describe who the project is targeting, and explain why this population is being targeted. Please provide details about ethnicity or socioeconomic status where appropriate, and explain how the target participants differ from those the organization currently serves.
   
   • Describe the activities offered to the target participants to actively make or practice art, the ways they will do so, and why these programs are relevant to the target participants.
   
   • Describe the use of the non-traditional art venue(s), and explain why the venue is being selected.

Instructions for writing your project goals and objectives

1. **Project Goal(s)**
   
   Goals should be aspirational, providing a broad statement of purpose for the project, and do not need to be measurable or time-limited. Try to limit the number of goals provided, as stronger applications typically have three or less goals.

   Examples:
   
   • To increase the engagement of low-income individuals in the arts through programs in non-traditional arts venues.
   
   • To increase opportunities for active participation in the arts among San Joaquin Valley immigrants.
2. Project Objectives

Objectives are measurable and happen within a specific time period. In developing your objectives, consider the question: “What steps will you take to achieve the goal and in what timeframe?” Objectives are not a listing of all activities and benchmarks. Rather, objectives are a set or grouping of activities that collectively achieve your goals. Objectives should include specific deliverables and be quantitative and time-bound to the extent possible. Your project should have three to eight objectives, as appropriate, and include at least one objective that identifies what your organization intends to learn through your proposed experiment.

Examples:
- To develop and present two community-based theater performances with nonprofessional actors from the Latino community by February 2015.
- To provide six opportunities per year for low-income adults to create artworks and receive instruction by professional artists at local community centers in 2015 and 2016.

Step 4: Create an Online Account and Submit

You must have an account to access our online system. New portal users should register to create an account. Existing portal users can use their existing user name and password; if your organization has previously submitted an application or received funding from Irvine, please contact grantsadmin@irvine.org to confirm your login information.

The link to create your online account and submit your completed Initial Application Form is provided below. The online system will ask for information regarding your project and organization (i.e., target audience, geographic scope, budget size), contact information, and financial figures from your most recent IRS Form 990. It will be helpful for you to have the following information in hand:

- Your organization’s name, address, website and federal tax ID number
- The name, title, email address and phone number of your organization’s executive director. This is the person to whom we will address correspondence about our funding decision.
- The name, title, email address and phone number of the project contact. This is the person to whom we will address questions about the application. (This will typically be the registered user who is completing the online application.)
- A one-sentence description of the proposed grant describing the activities the proposed grant will fund
- The budget for the proposed project
- Your organization’s most recently filed IRS Form 990

In addition to providing administrative data about your organization, you will also need to provide the following financial information using your current year financial statements, your most recently filed IRS Form 990 and your two most recent audited financial statements (in-house financial statements from the most recent two fiscal years can be used if audited financials are not available):

- Annual Operating Expenses from your most recently filed IRS Form 990 (Part 1, Line 18)
- Total Current Assets (source: Statement of Financial Position or Balance Sheet)
- Total Current Liabilities (source: Statement of Financial Position or Balance Sheet)
- Unrestricted Net Assets (source: Statement of Financial Position or Balance Sheet)
- Change in Unrestricted Net Assets (source: most recent audit or in-house financial statements from the past two years); please indicate a negative change with a negative sign “-“

You will be prompted to attach only the electronic copy (PDF) of your completed Initial Application Form. Additional materials will not be accepted. You will receive an email confirmation once your Exploring Engagement Fund Initial Application has been successfully submitted.