The Institute of Music for Children is excited to announce the opening of the Professional & Creative Development Fund.

What is it?

This fund will provide six grant awards (two valued at $5,000 and four at $2,500) for working artists to support projects or opportunities that advance their creative development, increase their individual/business capacity and/or expand public engagement with their art. Grants will be awarded based on standardized scoring of well-developed projects with sound budgets.

Who is it for?

Eligible applicants must...

- Be a working artist who is at least 18 years old
- Have been living in New Jersey for at least one year prior to applying
- Articulate a clear narrative of why they are applying and what the funds will be used for, as stipulated in the applicable grant application

Submission Guidelines

The application will include demographic information, eligibility questions, a resume, a creative statement, project proposal, budget, and work samples. Your project proposal can be in writing or via video submission.

The budget can include expenses such as self-publishing, renting studio or gallery space, renting a performance venue, marketing, creative collaborations, exhibitions, and supplies/equipment, travel, etc. If your project's expenses exceed the funds available for this grant, please indicate in your budget plan how you will fill the gap.

Scoring Guidelines

Scope and Presentation of Work Samples (10 points)
Scope and Presentation of Work Samples will be scored based on the breadth and depth of the artist's shared work, including their demonstration of capability, scope, and interests.

Technical Skills (10 points)
Technical Skills will be scored based on how well the applicant demonstrated a strong command of their art forms in their existing work.

Originality/Innovation of Proposed Project (10 points)
The application will be scored on the originality or innovation of the proposed project.

Artist's Vision (10 points)
The application will be scored on how well the work samples and/or the project proposal reflect the artistic vision as described in the Artist Statement. You will be scored on the content of the response, not on the specific writing or writing style of the Statement.

Grant review timeline

Application Deadline: November 30, 2026
Notification Deadline: End of February, 2027
1st Payment Date (75% of grant amount): End of March, 2027
2nd Payment Date (25% of grant amount): Final payments will be sent upon an interim update from the artist.

Grantees will have until December 31, 2027 to share project progress *unless granted prior approval from the Institute of Music for Children.*

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is a Working Artist? A "Working Artist" is at least 18 years old, works in the arts sector (including producing art, teaching, and/or administration), consistently produces and/or sells their artwork, and/or is actively engaged in exhibitions, commissions, panels, and/or collaborations that support their career.

How long must I have been living in New Jersey to be eligible? You must have been living in New Jersey for at least one year prior to applying.

What if I change my project idea? Grantees must submit changes in project scope and receive approval prior to spending funds.

What if I am not confident in my writing ability? Your application will not be scored on the quality of your writing, but the content at the core of your application.

How much time will the application take? We anticipate the application will take less than an hour to complete once you have your artistic statement and work samples/documentation selected.

How will the Optional Letters of Support impact my application? The Letters of Support won't be scored on their own, but may impact the scores of existing categories, based on the specific content in the letter.

What if I have questions? Applicants can contact artistgrants@instituteofmusic.org or call (908) 469-1211 x. 104 for questions or application assistance.

ABOUT US

The Institute of Music for Children engages children and youth in artistic expression and the creative process. Guided by our vision of HARMONY – Helping Achieve Responsible, Motivated, Optimistic, Neighborhood Youth – the Institute is building a community of high-achieving citizens who are arts lovers and arts makers through professional instruction, mentorship, and family engagement.

The Institute is one of New Jersey's fastest-growing arts-based youth development organizations. The Institute serves more than 1,000 urban youth annually. A recipient of five Citations of Excellence from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the Institute offers economically accessible, high-quality arts training in a secure environment.

Core Programs

Summer Arts Institute: Provides an immersion program that instructs 220 youth in a variety of art forms for five weeks in July and August.

Afterschool Arts Institute: Offers 12- and 24-week sessions of private and group instruction for 350 students in musical, dramatic, and visual arts disciplines. The program includes Teen Arts Night, a signature.

Youth Leader Job Training & Readiness Program: Hires and trains 40 outstanding teens as classroom mentors and in other critical roles.

Community Arts Institute: Provides arts residencies in schools, juvenile detention centers, libraries, public housing and other community venues.

Visit us at https://www.instituteofmusic.org/ or on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.