FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Equity in Arts Learning Grant Opens for Third Year, Awarding Nearly Half a Million for PK–12 Arts Education Statewide

DENVER, CO – September 23, 2025 | The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, Colorado Creative Industries, Denver Arts & Venues, and Think 360 Arts for Learning are proud to announce that the third year of the **Equity in Arts Learning for Colorado Youth** funding opportunity is now open for applications. Colorado arts and culture nonprofits, schools, and school districts working in collaboration with artists or cultural organizations statewide are eligible and invited to apply for **$10,000–$25,000** to support PreK–12 students. With a focus on removing systemic barriers and reaching historically underserved communities across Colorado, the fund aims to grant nearly half a million dollars for projects of up to one year.

First launched in 2023 with an ambitious goal to drive transformative change in PreK–12 arts education across Colorado, this collaborative effort supports innovative and deeply engaged arts learning programs statewide through a competitive grant process. In the first year of funding, 21 schools, school districts, and organizations across 10 Colorado counties were awarded funding for projects engaging thousands of underserved youth. In the second year, 27 schools and organizations representing 11 counties were granted funds for the 2025–26 school year, following a competitive two-stage evaluation process. In total, the program has invested nearly $1 million in support of arts learning for youth in Colorado since 2024. Read about current and past funded projects here.

The Equity in Arts Learning for Colorado Youth grant aims to activate systems-level change, reaching across schools and communities to address systemic inequities in access to high quality arts education. By working together, the collaborative funding partners seek to ensure that historically marginalized and underserved youth statewide have access to the life-changing power of the arts.

“For years, we have been sharpening our focus on creating a more equitable arts and culture ecosystem," said **Gina Ferrari**, Director of Grant Programs at Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. "In 2023, we took a significant step toward leveling the playing field in arts learning. Now going into our third year, it’s not just an initiative; it's a call to action for other organizations to join us."

"Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) is thrilled to invest in critical programs that offer the arts to Colorado’s youth in metro, rural and mountain communities. Arts programming helps young people build critical thinking skills, learn to collaborate with peers, and experience creative expression as part of their education, setting them up for success in academics and life,” said Josh Blanchard, Director of CCI, a division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT).

“Denver Arts & Venues is proud to be a funding partner to increase access to arts education for all youth in music, theater, visual arts, film, crafts, and more. These experiences can be life altering and help build confidence, community and lay the groundwork for future success,” said Sonia Rae, Cultural Affairs Program Manager, Denver Arts & Venues.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, students in high-poverty schools are more than twice as likely to have no access to the arts. The U.S. Department of Education reports that access to arts education for students of color is

significantly lower than for their white peers. For students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the problem is equally pervasive.

A 2021 report by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences found that strained school budgets in the wake of the pandemic further eroded arts programs, disproportionately affecting Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic students and exacerbating disparities in mental health and overall well-being.

In Colorado, rural school districts have faced particularly steep losses of art educators since the pandemic, as highlighted in Think 360 Arts for Learning's Arts recently released Licensed Arts Educator Report, a six-year analysis of trends in certified arts educators published this past spring. The positive impact of arts learning on youth is well-documented: higher attendance and graduation rates, reduced behavioral issues, improved mental health and feelings of belonging - yet students who stand to benefit most from arts learning are the least likely to have access to it.

As Daisy Fodness-McGowan, Executive Director of Think 360 Arts states: "We have the research, and we understand the profound benefits to our youth and teachers. Now it's about turning our commitments into reality and giving every child in Colorado access to the life-changing power of the arts."

"Our goal remains to raise a fund total that exceeds half a million dollars annually to support as many students as possible," **Ferrari** added.

Grant Guidelines, Timeline, and History | Think 360 Arts for Learning's Submittable grant portal is open for applications starting today, September 23, 2025. The funding opportunity is open to Colorado-based arts and culture nonprofits, schools and school districts, working in collaboration with artists and culture bearers. Letters of Intent will be accepted through 5 pm on November 21, 2025.

Proposals should:

- Emphasize the distinct identities and needs of youth
- Promote deep, sustained learning and the development of meaningful relationships
- Address clear gaps in school or community arts education
- Engage experienced artists and culture bearers
- Ensure accessibility for all youth participants

Visit https://think360arts.org/grant-opportunities for full grant guidelines and timeline, including an informational video about the opportunity, the application process, and proposal support available through Think 360 Arts for Learning.

For more information, contact:

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About Bonfils-Stanton Foundation

The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation is a leading private foundation dedicated to enriching Denver's cultural landscape and strengthening its nonprofit sector. Through transformative grantmaking, leadership initiatives, and support for the arts, the Foundation champions creativity, equity, and innovation, ensuring that the Denver community thrives through vibrant cultural experiences and visionary nonprofit leadership. Learn more: https://www.bonfils-stantonfoundation.org/

About Colorado Creative Industries

Colorado Creative Industries is a division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. Established to capitalize on the immense potential for our creative sector to enhance economic growth in Colorado, the mission of Colorado Creative Industries is to promote, support and expand the creative industries to drive Colorado's economy, grow jobs and enhance our quality of life. For more information, visit oedit.colorado.gov/colorado-creative-industries.

About Denver Arts & Venues

Denver Arts & Venues is the City and County of Denver's cultural agency, charged with enriching and advancing Denver's quality of life and economic vitality through the power of arts, culture, and entertainment. Managing some of the city's most iconic venues and programs—including Red Rocks Amphitheatre, the Denver Performing Arts Complex, Public Art Denver, and SCFD Tier III grants—Arts & Venues supports artists, cultural organizations, and creative communities citywide. Learn more: https://www.artsandvenuesdenver.com/about

About Think 360 Arts for Learning

Think 360 Arts for Learning is Colorado's leading provider of arts education programming, integrating visual, performing, digital, and literary arts into schools and communities across the state. Since 1963, the organization has partnered with professional teaching artists to inspire creativity, build community, and advance equity by engaging Coloradans of all ages in the transformative power of the arts. Learn more: www.think360arts.org