

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

DENVER, CO – September 28, 2026 | The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, Colorado Creative Industries, Denver Arts & Venues, and Think 360 Arts for Learning are proud to announce that the fourth year of the **Equity in Arts Learning for Colorado Youth (EAL)** 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 youth. Through a competitive selection process, the fund aims to grant nearly half a million dollars for projects of up to one year.

Four Years of Collaborative Impact | Launched in 2023, this collaborative grant initiative brings together public and private funders to expand access to high-quality arts education for Colorado youth while strengthening partnerships between schools, artists, organizations, and communities across the state. Over its first three funding cycles, the initiative has invested more than \$1.3 million in 72 arts learning projects across 19 counties, reaching thousands of underserved youth and contributing to a growing statewide movement to elevate the essential role of arts education. Read about current and past funded projects [here](#).

"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).

Empowering Colorado's Youth Through the Arts | The EAL grant opportunity is grounded in the belief that access to the arts is fundamental to a vibrant and inclusive Colorado. Each cycle, collaborative funding partners seek to invest in projects that dismantle systemic barriers and expand high-quality arts learning for young people who have historically had the least access, including youth who identify as BIPOC or LGBTQIA+, youth with disabilities, and youth living in rural communities. Funded projects offer youth opportunities to develop their creative skills, explore their identities, form meaningful relationships, and make the arts an ongoing part of their education.

“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. “The impact of youth engagement with sustained arts learning is powerful. We invite others to take action as champions and supporters of this critical investment in our youth.”

Closing Gaps in Arts Education | Access to arts education remains uneven across Colorado. A December 2025 report from Think 360 Arts for Learning and the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts found that the number of credentialed arts teachers statewide declined 5% between 2021 and 2024. Of Colorado’s 187 school districts, 59 had no certified music teacher, 48 had no certified visual arts teacher, and 164 had no certified dramatic arts teacher. Although licensure alone does not provide a complete picture of the arts available at each school, the findings point to broader challenges in staffing and the arts-educator pipeline. Colorado also does not collect statewide data on arts course offerings or student participation, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of where access is most limited.

“While we know a grant alone cannot solve these statewide challenges, the EALs gives communities and schools an immediate way to respond to the needs of local youth,” said **Adam Kullberg**, Executive Director of Think 360 Arts for Learning. “By bringing schools, organizations, educators, and artists together, these projects create powerful ways for young people to connect with each other and their communities, see new possibilities for their futures, and build a more vibrant Colorado for all.”

Investing in Colorado’s Creative Future | As the national landscape shifts, Colorado remains steadfast in its belief that the arts should be accessible to every young person. The positive impacts of sustained arts learning on youth are well-documented: higher attendance and graduation rates, reduced behavioral issues, improved mental health and feelings of belonging, greater workforce and college readiness, and increased civic engagement. Yet, the young people who stand to benefit most from engaging in the arts are the least likely to have access to it. Through this collective investment, funding partners are equipping young Coloradans with the confidence and skills to participate more fully in their schools, communities, and future careers while helping shape a more equitable future for arts education across the state.

"Denver Arts & Venues is proud to once again help expand access to arts education – in music, theater, visual arts, film, crafts and more – for youth across our community," said Brooke Dilling, director of place-based cultural partnerships with Denver Arts &

Venues. "These are extraordinary experiences that help lay the groundwork for future success."

Applications Now Open | Think 360 Arts for Learning's Submittable grant portal is open for applications starting today, September 28, 2026. 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 **5:00pm on November 20, 2026**.

Proposals should:

- Respond to the distinct identities, strengths, and needs of participating youth
- Promote sustained learning and meaningful relationships
- Address a demonstrated gap in-school or community-based arts education
- Engage experienced professional artists or culture bearers
- Ensure programming is accessible to all participating youth

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.

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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

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