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ArtsFund doubles investment in youth arts access, expanding unrestricted funding to organizations across Washington State

The Youth Arts Opportunity Fund has awarded \$442,000 in unrestricted funding to 67 arts and cultural organizations serving underserved youth in urban and rural communities across the state.

SEATTLE – October 7, 2026 – ArtsFund has awarded **\$442,000 in unrestricted funding to 67 organizations across Washington State** through its Youth Arts Opportunity Fund. The program's expansion comes as Washington school districts and arts and culture nonprofits face continued budget pressures to maintain arts opportunities for youth. Through the unrestricted support these awards provide, recipients have the flexibility to direct funds where they are most needed. From supporting teaching artists and staff to operating costs, these funds can help make sustained access possible.

Access to arts education varies widely across Washington school districtsⁱ. Arts and culture organizations play an important role in addressing those gaps by providing arts opportunities for youth through in-school and after-school learning programming. Youth Arts Opportunity Fund previously focused on funding organizations in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. Now the program reaches 16 counties, ranging from Pend Oreille County to the Olympic Peninsula. The expansion reflects ArtsFund's statewide commitment to building healthy, equitable, and creative communities through the arts.

ArtsFund President & CEO, Michael Greer said, "Young people across Washington deserve meaningful access to arts experiences, regardless of where they live. Unrestricted funding helps ensure the critical organizations creating these opportunities have the flexibility they need to continue serving and strengthening their communities."

The Youth Arts Opportunity Fund (YAOF) is designed to increase access to and participation in meaningful, robust, sustained arts experiences for historically underserved youth across Washington State. Applicants were invited to apply to the program, with 52% of applicants receiving an award.



Among the 67 grantees, 55% were first time YAOF grant recipients. Awards range between \$5,000 - \$15,000. The Fund prioritizes arts organizations that demonstrate a deep commitment to youth engagement, placing priority on groups that dedicate more than 25% of their operating budget to youth programming.

YAOF Awardees reflect the range of organizations providing arts opportunities for youth. In Yakima County, Yakima Music en Acción provides tuition-free, year-round music and leadership programming to youth through after school programs. In Skagit County, the Children's Museum of Skagit County serves approximately 70,000 visitors annually through hands-on creative experiences for children and their caregivers, free community days, and partnerships with libraries and schools for Skagit Kids Read Week.

For over a decade, the Youth Arts Opportunity Fund has invested over \$2 million in organizations expanding access to arts experiences for nearly 1 million Washington youth. Funded and administered by ArtsFund, the program and its expansion were guided by a [panel](#) of community members and experts in youth education.

See the complete list of 2026 grant recipients [HERE](#).

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About ArtsFund

ArtsFund supports the arts through leadership, advocacy, and grantmaking in order to build a healthy, equitable, and creative Washington. ArtsFund was originally founded to bring corporate and civic leaders together to help establish and sustain our region's arts and cultural institutions. Over its grantmaking history, ArtsFund has granted approximately \$144MM to over 1,000 organizations reaching all 39 of Washington state's counties. Through ArtsFund's advocacy work, including its longstanding arts impact research reports, which provide essential research on the value of the arts; and its leadership programs, like Board Leadership Training, which grow skills and build capacity among arts and cultural organizations, ArtsFund supports the health and wellbeing of our communities. Learn more at www.artsfund.org.

[Washington State Arts Education](#)