

Five Hints for Applying to the Creative Forces Community Engagement Grant Program

1. Read the grant guidelines carefully and make sure your organization and project are eligible to apply to the grant program.
 - Before you start your application, carefully review the criteria for organizational and project eligibility detailed in the grant guidelines.
 - All grant projects are required to identify a partner that substantively contributes to the project in terms of funding, services, or in-kind donations. If aspects of this grant fall outside of your organization's mission or expertise, show that you can compensate for it through partnerships with other organizations or individuals.
 - Be sure to send any questions you have about the grant guidelines to creativeforces@maa.org well in advance of the application deadline to make sure you get an answer in time.

2. Make sure the intended participant and organizational outcomes of the grant program are relevant to your project and organization.
 - Intended Participant Outcomes:
 - Creative Expression: Participants have a better understanding of themselves and others by creating or engaging with art.
 - Social Connectedness: Participants have supportive relationships in their life and a sense of belonging to a community.
 - Resilience: Participants feel they can rebound from stress, unexpected events, or life's challenges.
 - Independence and successful adaptation to civilian life: Participants have both an individual and shared sense of purpose, as well a positive self-worth, that supports adapting and readjusting to civilian life.

 - Intended Organizational Outcomes:
 - Networked Organization: Grantees build networks and partnerships that support the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs for participants leading to stronger outcomes for participants.
 - Strengthened Capacity: Grantees build their capacity to design, implement, and evaluate programs that meet the need of participants
 - Increased Value of the Arts: Grantee partnerships and activities lead to an increased understanding of the value and impact of the arts across local participating networks and communities.

3. Be specific when you describe your project.

- Make it easy for grant panelists to understand the details of your project as they will be reviewing many applications at the same time.
- Be clear in describing the participants your project is designed to serve, the activities they will participate in, how they will benefit from participating, and when and where the activities will occur. Make a strong case for the “why” behind your specific project.
- Inspirational narratives can be helpful in communicating the value of your work, but don’t let inspirational language be a substitute for a detailed description of your project activities. You can assume that grant panelists are generally aware and supportive of community arts engagement projects for military connected communities.
- Back up your statements with data when possible.

4. Show how you are responsive to the military-connected community you serve.

- Describe how you include the voice of the military community you serve in the design of your project, including how your project is relevant to the needs and requests of your military community.
- Provide evidence of your organization’s military cultural competency. Note any military connected project staff or partners involved in your project and talk about training you to staff that better equips them to work with military communities.
- Demonstrate how the ways you collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of your project include feedback from the community you serve.

5. Develop a budget that clearly tells the story of your grant project activities.

- When you create your project budget, make sure you cross reference it with your project description. The project expenses included in your budget should tell the story of how your project will be implemented.
- Provide details in your project income that show how you are meeting the 1:1 matching requirement. For every dollar in grant funds you request, it must be matched by another internal or external (non-federal) funding source or in-kind donations from partners.
- Include line items in your budget that will enable you to conduct data collection and evaluation, participate in technical assistance and engage with other grantees, and support marketing and communications efforts for your project.