



## Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-249784-OMS-21  
Project Category: Lifelong Learning

### The Delaware Contemporary

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$44,675
Amount of cost share:	\$61,728

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:  
<https://www.ims.gov/grants/awarded/igsm-249784-oms-21>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category (if applicable) to which you are applying.

## Narrative

### Project Justification

Creative Arts Club (CAC): Building a Creative Future (BaCF) will improve the well-being of our community by providing teen arts education in a museum setting for those without school art programs, and will enhance the after-school art club experience exponentially by adding vocational exploration of museum and creative industry-related careers. High schools in our area identified a critical need, that they have little to no art curriculum because of reduced funding, a problem common across the U.S. The CAC: BaCF program serves our community's at-risk teen audience through partnership with Title-1 designated high schools throughout the city of Wilmington and New Castle County, with emphasis placed on **service to youth living in low-income households and to youth who identify as a minority**. The combined demographics of the three Title-1 high school partners currently participating in the museum's CAC: BaCF program reveal approximately 35% of students live in low-income households; 56% identify as Black and 26% as Latinx. A 2011 study, *Arts Education in America*, shows that access to arts education for African-American and Hispanic populations is significantly lower than for their White peers and has been steadily declining for three decades. Even though research proves the arts are a good investment for low socioeconomic students – boosting academic performance and college attendance and decreasing dropout rates – schools are not utilizing the arts as a tool to reach their neediest students. **Those who could use the academic benefits of art the most are receiving it the least** (Rabkin, N., & Hedberg, E.C. (2011). *Arts Education in America: What the Declines Mean for Arts Participation*).

The schools value the study of the arts and the development of critical thinking, problem-solving and observational skills that arts education bring. Together with representatives from the high schools involved, our museum staff worked to build the CAC program, now in its seventh-year, locally supported by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fund and the schools themselves. Collaborative partners for the CAC: BaCF program include the high schools and their teaching monitors, the museums' Teaching Artists and the variety of career professionals who serve as Creatives-in-Residence and Guest Speakers, all whom contribute directly and importantly to the development of the project, consulting with museum staff to refine and further develop the components and the model. *Please see Supportingdoc3 for letters of support from partners.*

Partnerships created and sustained through the CAC: BaCF program align with the **Lifelong Learning project category** and provide students with instruction after school in an inquiry-focused museum setting allowing for authentic experiences with museum staff and creative professionals in a formal and informal learning ecosystem. These partnerships will allow TDC to **advance our strategic plan** by weaving the museum more tightly into the fabric of our community to create a lasting impact on participants and our community through high-quality educational experiences and civically engaging projects that push boundaries and inspire new ways of looking at the world to promote lifelong learning and sustained engagement with the arts.

**IMLS Goal to Promote Lifelong Learning:** The BaCF program includes workforce development for CAC participants through cross-disciplinary learning and sustained engagement with a diverse set of peers, museum staff, and creative professionals. CAC: BaCF provides at-risk teens with equitable opportunities to broaden their career horizons and pursue a creative career, and will aid in TDC's as well as IMLS' ongoing efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through participation in inquiry-based learning activities and civic projects, students will develop artistic and cultural literacies as well as cross-disciplinary skillsets critical to achieving success in any career. This preparation also develops individuals who become ambassadors for contemporary art and museums and who volunteer, continue to interact in museum spaces and who will, in their diversity, contribute toward the museum field's need to improve diversity and inclusion in the cultural organization.

### Project Work Plan

Building a Creative Future (BaCF) extends the success of the museum's Creative Arts Club (CAC), a 7-year pilot program funded by local foundations and participating schools, with the addition of a program of creative

professionals to promote job preparedness and cross-disciplinary skill development for participating students. CAC: BaCF is an innovative partnership that joins three community high schools with The Delaware Contemporary (TDC). Once a week for 32 weeks each academic year, 85-115 student participants spend at least one academic year in the program, meeting in school for the first month, then after-school at the museum and on weekends for civic and social engagement activities.

**Specific Activities:** Starting in September, TDC's Teaching Artists travel to the participating high schools to meet and recruit students for the CAC: BaCF program. During the in-school sessions, meeting once a week for one month, TDC's Teaching Artists will identify students' areas of interest, appreciation of and experience with the arts, and levels of self-awareness through discussion and a pre-program student assessment. Program goals and objectives will be defined during this time.

During CAC: BaCF sessions held at the museum, students will engage with creative and museum professionals to create individual and collaborative artworks in response to contemporary ideas and issues, as well as participate in the planning and execution of two civic projects. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to visit the work spaces of select participating creative-industry professionals as well as visit an arts and/or cultural institution during the course of the program. This program serves as the students' "art class" which is not included in their schools' offerings. The museum-an unfamiliar or intimidating setting for some-becomes a safe, familiar environment where teens can develop meaningful relationships with peers and adults. Sustained engagement with a diverse set of peers, Teaching Artists, professionals in creative fields and the museum helps teens feel known and valued. Teaching Artists from TDC conduct workshops on multiple art mediums and the creative process. These sessions are for students of all artistic levels, from those who carry their own sketch pad to those who think they have no artistic talent but appreciate art and the social aspect of being part of artistic creation. CAC: BaCF is designed around the social, cognitive and emotional needs of adolescents, providing a welcoming and inclusive learning environment at this crucial time of their development. TDC's Teaching Artists maintain a safe and positive club environment that encourages artistic expression, understanding, collaboration and other artistic exploration opportunities and skill development for participants to highlight their talents.

**BaCF: Creatives-in-Residence** - To further increase professional opportunities for participating students, TDC complements the current CAC art production curriculum with a program of regional artists and creative professionals as guest artists and speakers – **Creatives-in-Residence (CIR)**. Seventy-five percent of the **CIRs** will identify as minority and come from locally-based businesses. These professionals will work with CAC students to define and understand career expectations and required preparation for professions in the creative industry including: museums and non-profits, furniture design, couture fashion design, architecture, graphic design, interior design, product design, commercial photography, and urban design. In addition to representing minority artists/creative professionals, the selected CIRs will be chosen based on the interests of the teen participants and their experience and commitment to working with students in grades 9-12. Each of the CIRs will be vetted and mentored by professional teaching artists and museum educators to refine their teaching skills, prepare them for working with students, and ensure informed and age-appropriate engagement with the program participants.

The CIR program consists of four one-month residencies and a concluding two-month residency. Professionals meet with the entire CAC group for the first meeting of the month to introduce their body of work and the work of others in their industry. The following three meetings, the CIRs will rotate through three to four groups of students to create and complete a project using the professional tools of their particular creative trade. Throughout the four residencies, the students will be actively producing artwork and products with both the CIRs and the Teaching Artists. The final Creative in Residence works for two months with students as they research, develop, and implement a culminating exhibition and pop-up retail operation to showcase and

sell their body of commercial artwork produced throughout the program. *Please see Supportingdoc1 for examples of past CIRs.*

**In order to promote civic engagement and promote relevant social programming for their peers, the CAC: BaCF participants will also** develop two large-scale social activities at the museum for teens from across the region. Teens will develop programs that appeal to other teens and generate an increase in youth attendance and engagement at the museum. They become active ambassadors and community builders among other youth, not just recipients of services developed by museum staff in collaboration with their schools. These events will be developed and planned by the CAC: BaCF participants and examples of teen events include exhibition openings and/or the opening of a culminating retail space at the end of the school year where teens are able to exhibit and sell merchandise they created throughout the program. *Please see Supportingdoc1 for photos of previous teen events and artwork included in culminating retail space.*

Authentic work with an impact on the museum's community makes teens feel like museum insiders with valuable skills and talents to contribute. Space, staff, and artists are highly accessible, and the work is collaborative, project-based, and culminates in visible results: public programs, events, and exhibitions. CAC alumni say they felt fortunate and respected in this environment, instead of like stereotypical teens—troubled, isolated, or unwanted.

Interaction with contemporary art and artists connects teens with adults who embrace risk, experimentation, and questioning in their work. Participants engage with art, responding and interacting through dialogue, projects, and activities. They are able to expand their thinking about what art is, what it means in society, the life of a working artist, and prospective careers in the arts. Supportive staff mentor and welcome teens with respect and trust, promoting self-confidence at a stage in life when connecting with adults can be difficult. The programs are staff-intensive and involve professionals from varied backgrounds, including art education, contemporary art, and youth development.

Since TDC has piloted the Creative Arts Club part of the proposed project (CAC: BaCF) for **7 years**, the goals, assumptions and risks of the work are realistic and achievable. Additionally, the Building a Creative Future: Creative Arts Club has undergone a partial one-year pilot program, largely interrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020-2021 academic year CAC: BaCF program activities are being delivered virtually to students via Zoom, Youtube, and the Schoology platform. *Please see Supportingdoc1 to access the 2020/21 CAC: BaCF virtual program content.* TDC staff conduct virtual interviews of the creative professionals in conjunction with recorded art making tutorials for student projects. TDC staff pre-packages all program supplies and delivers project kits to partner schools or directly to the students' homes. Museum staff and teaching artists also conduct weekly zoom sessions in order to support the student's art making projects and maintain social and emotional connections with participants. Additionally, museum staff and teaching artists conduct virtual studio visits and offsite trips to local museums and cultural institutions. The shift to virtual program delivery for the 2020-2021 academic year provides an accessible framework for continuing to provide essential art and social experiences for students in an ever-changing safety and learning landscape that can be replicated if needed.

The Project Director and TDC's Outreach Manager/lead Teaching Artist are primarily responsible for implementing CAC: BaCF. They have the skills and experience necessary to complete the work successfully as demonstrated in the 7-year pilot. The plan is developed in accordance with the framework and strategies employed in the *Room to Rise: Lasting Impact of Teens Arts Programs* (Whitney Museum, 2015 previously cited) with the core components piloted for 7 years by the museum.

The financial and other resources identified that are required for the scope and scale of the project are provided in the project budget based on 7 years' experience and the partial pilot year for BaCF. The methodology for tracking the project's progress is that the Project Director and certified Teaching Artist

review status monthly, ensuring that the curriculum is on track, that field trips occur on a timely basis and that contracts with Creatives-in-Residence are in place and executed in a timely manner.

CAC: BaCF participating high schools meet with TDC every summer to discuss learning needs and determine goals for the program in the upcoming year. Teaching monitors accompany the students to the museum to provide additional support as well as to have the opportunity to engage with students in an informal learning environment. Supportive staff mentor and welcome teens with respect and trust, promoting self-confidence at a stage in life when connecting with adults can be difficult. The Creatives-in-Residence (CIRs) are TDC's primary partners to administer instruction for the project, they are experienced and have expertise in their professions. The CIRs will be chosen based on the interests of the teen participants and their experience and commitment to working with students in grades 9-12. Each of the CIRs will be vetted and mentored by professional teaching artists and museum educators to refine their teaching skills, prepare them for working with students, and ensure informed and age-appropriate engagement with the program participants.

**Sequence of Activities:** Please see the *Schedule of Completion* attachment for the sequence and timeline of the project.

**Tracking Progress:** Participating students will complete pre-and-post program evaluations to assess attitudes and skill sets in addition to program impact. Progress toward achieving intended results of the program will be tracked through informal observation by TDC's Teaching Artists, as well as through collaboration with school educators to observe participants performance in core academic subjects and regular vocational assessments carried out through the participating partner schools.

**Sharing Results:** A model of Building a Creative Future will be produced and shared with other museums at conferences on teen participation in the arts in Fall, 2023. **TDC assures that IMLS support will be acknowledged** in any grant products, publications, websites and presentations developed with IMLS funding.

### Project Results

In addition to providing authentic and sustained access to arts engagement for students in schools with no formal arts instruction, the CAC: BaCF program establishes the museum as a welcoming and accessible space for teens after school. By providing consistent and sustained support from program staff the CAC: BaCF program supports students' personal development; arts participation and civic engagement; leadership skills, artistic and cultural literacy; and social capital.

It is anticipated that the CAC: BaCF program will support student's personal development as they gain the self-awareness and understanding needed to reach their individual potential. Similar programs have demonstrated a long term impact on participant's frequency of attendance at arts events and organizations, level of active participation with various art forms, and practices related to art appreciation in daily life, thus supporting life-long engagement with the arts and cultural sector. The CAC: BaCF program will also develop students' leadership skills and capacity to think independently, communicate with others, and influence others in an ethical and socially responsible way. Through program activities, participants will develop the ability to observe, analyze, interpret, and make meaning from visual content and cultural values and practices. Students will enhance their social capital or the values, trust, and networks that people use to build bridges with individuals and groups within and outside their communities.

Data used by TDC to assess the success of the program includes the following methods to collect data and determine areas of success and need for improvement. At the beginning of the academic year students will complete a pre-program assessment that is used to measure pre-program engagement, establish their commitment to the program, inform program specific projects or activities, and establish benchmark data to measure student growth and impact of the project. Upon completion of program projects, students must fill out an Artist's Self-Reflection and Evaluation form that describes their approach to the project, what they found successful, and what they could improve upon. Students may also submit completed or in-progress works of art for display on a dedicated public wall at the museum. This allows an opportunity for students to

reflect not only on their work, but the work of their peers. At the end of the academic year, students also fill out a Creative Arts Club post-program survey.

Also collected is data from the following: 1) The number of participants who improve attendance and classroom performance; 2) A decrease in disciplinary action or other negative behaviors; 3) Number of participants who improve class participation; 4) Growth on the individual student employability rubric noted on the end-of-the year rubric that are provided to students periodically during the school year; 5) Teacher survey; 6) State Assessment in English Language Arts and Mathematics; 7) Classroom grades; and 8) Interviews with Parents/Caregivers.

What we have confirmed, with increasing confidence over the 7-year pilot, is that the students who are involved in after school activities centered on positive social and creative interplay in the arts, such as CAC, demonstrate improvement in all other factors that measure a student's success at school, including grades, attendance, discipline, and vocational employability skills. More importantly, the program creates critical thinkers who are able to see "outside of the box" through the development of problem-solving skills that are necessary for success in any career.

It is expected that students who participate in the CAC: BaCF will retain the highest standards and exhibit growth in the positive employability skills that are expected of all students. Measure: For 10-12 grade students, in all vocational-technical classes, key Employability Indicators are monitored by teachers and school administration on a regular basis. For each student, their measures on the beginning-of-the year employability rubric in each vocational-technical area will be measured against their end-of-the-year rubric. For students who are at the highest standard, this expectation will remain. For students who are not at the highest area in each indicator an improvement will be expected. For 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who are new to employability ratings, it is expected that by the end of the school year they will have rated at the top or only one measure from the top in each employability rating areas.

In addition to their personal and academic development, as students engage with museum educators, teaching artists, and creative professionals they will explore a variety of artistic media and develop their own body of personal and commercial artistic work. Along with a culminating student exhibition at the museum, students will also research, develop, and implement a pop-up retail operation to sell the merchandise they have created throughout the year. Examples of previous commercial student projects include custom skateboard decks, student designed and decorated tote bags, and unique hand-built and wheel thrown ceramic planters.

**Sustainability:** The benefits of teen arts programs in museums are well documented in the *Room to Rise: Lasting Impacts of Teen Programs by the Whitney Museum* (2015). As young people participate in the arts programs show significant improvement in conflict resolution, future orientation, critical response and career readiness. Arts participation also correlates with higher rates of tolerance and lower rates of juvenile delinquency and truancy (Arts and Lifelong Learning: Arts and Social Impact Fact Sheet. Americans for the Arts). It is TDC's intent to use the IMLS grant-funded project model product to seek funding from area business community partners and community foundations who award grants in the arts to sustain the teen art education program and workforce development in Building a Creative Future. The short and long-term outcomes are attractive to businesses who look for individuals with creative, critical thinking skills, leadership experience, collaborative teamwork, and complex problem-solving and decision-making skills.

The Delaware Contemporary  
 Creative Arts Club: Building a Creative Future

<b>ACTIVITIES - 1 YEAR</b>	<b>21-Sep</b>	<b>21-Oct</b>	<b>21-Nov</b>	<b>21-Dec</b>	<b>22-Jan</b>	<b>22-Feb</b>	<b>22-Mar</b>	<b>22-Apr</b>	<b>22-May</b>	<b>22-Jun</b>	<b>22-Jul</b>	<b>22-Aug</b>
Program Recruitment, In-School Sessions, Pre-Program Student Assessment												
CIR #1												
CIR #2 & Guest Speaker #1												
Civic Project #1 - Planning/Promotion/Execution												
Introduction of CIR #5: Phase 1 of Final Project Planning (Exhibition/Civic Proj. #2)												
CIR #3												
Museum Field Trip												
Guest Speaker #2												
CIR #4												
CIR studio/workspace field trip												
CIR #5 - Phase 2 of Final Project Planning - Documentation & Marketing												
Final Project - Student Exhibition and Civic Project #2												
Post-Program Evaluation												
Planning for 2022/2023 Programming												