



Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Los Angeles

2026-27 Arts Workforce Empowerment (AWE)

Overview:

The Arts Workforce Empowerment (AWE) grant category provides targeted support for staff salaries: at minority-defined organizations consistently located within and serving communities experiencing prevalent poverty. Applicant organizations must be current mid-sized DCA grantee-contractors (already receiving either an Artistic Project Grant or an Outdoor Festival/Parade grant through our Cultural Grants Program), who remain in good standing with current reporting.

The purpose of the AWE supplementary-grant category is to support part- or full-time artistic or programmatic staff (payroll employees who are not working in fundraising or admin-specific roles) at mid-size nonprofit arts organizations and nonprofit community-festival organizations that hire and sustain a unit of workers from the clients and neighborhoods of their services. If your organization feels eligible, please email to request a phone date and discuss whether to apply. The salaried employees named in each proposal must reflect the exact kind of racial and/or social-equity that is promised by the organization's mission plus programs. AWE support is specifically intended to uplift workers and programmatic success within organizations that combat community poverty due to racial as well as other geographic/demographic social discriminations.

DCA respects that nearly all arts organizations are committed to lifting up their audiences through the skills of expert staff. Applause to the arts community for this value and goal. However, AWE is designed to support those organizations who perform the hardest work, best described by the black feminist slogan--LIFTING WHILE YOU CLIMB. Applicants for AWE demonstrate double or triple power to push up, through multiple oppressions, and climb while lifting staff+clients out of poverty. AWE grantees lift persons among their program-participants in order to build staff expertise with community-authentic "graduates" from the primary/specific neighborhood the organization serves.

Competitive applicants for AWE will be able to demonstrate all three of the following attributes:

- A) the organization's mission statement will name a specific population which is impacted by poverty as well as other systemic discriminations, and the organization has hired staff who represent this same population in order to drive authentic programs which serve this reflected population,
- B) the organization is embedded in its neighborhood/community in order to serve as a beacon of hope, and serve as a partner in community-empowerment with other non-arts businesses that uplift the same target population(s), and
- C) the organization has already been dedicated to the salaried-employment of staff members to be named for support in an AWE proposal because these staff members personally represent (in the best case come from and live within) the same more-deserving population(s) served by the agency's programs.

AWE applicants must also meet the following three qualifications:

- Headquartered within the City of Los Angeles.
- Sited in a community-context that connects their mission to their audience.
- Awarded a grant from DCA as a mid-size applicant in any artistic discipline, including outdoor festivals/parades.

Funding

AWE funding is available to eligible organizations based on geographic typology:

- **Venue-based:** The applicant organization is physically embedded in and serves a community with a standard venue or facility (owned or leased). Venue-Based organizations with budgets between \$400,001 and \$800,000 may request **\$10,000** of AWE support for **one (1)** part-time or full-time artistic or programmatic staff. Organizations with budgets between \$100,000 and \$400,000 may request **\$20,000** of AWE support for **two (2)** part-time or full-time artistic or programmatic staff members.
- **Mobile Service-style:** The applicant organization is mobile with a cultural specialization that is aimed at residents experiencing prevalent poverty. Mobile Services organizations with budgets between \$400,001 and \$800,000 may request **\$6,000** of AWE support for **one (1)** part-time or full-time artistic or programmatic staff. Organizations with budgets between \$100,000 and \$400,000 may request **\$12,000** of AWE support for **two (2)** part-time or full-time artistic or programmatic staff members.

Since the DCA Grants Admin Division budget for next year is not yet known, contracts for AWE grants may range between 60-100% of the ideal numbers given above per staff member.

Proposed Employee(s) and AWE Support Phase-Out

Employees proposed for AWE consideration must be graduated from the communities and past programs of the applicant agency AND the applicant-organization now employs them to instruct and engage the next generation of program participants. Employees must live in the County of LA, with priority assigned to LA City-based employees who live in 10-mile proximity to the applicant-organization's primary/constant service venue within the City of Los Angeles. Applicants should prioritize artistic staff and/or program coordinators or managers who deliver services in the community, rather than workers who primarily serve in administrative and/or fundraising capacities.

AWE funding is designed to assist arts organizations focused on low-income communities to groom former program participants into staff members for the first four (4) years of their part-time or full-time work. After four years of AWE support, grantees are expected to stabilize the jobs/employees and are welcome to re-apply with a new cohort of eligible entry-level employees.

Due Date

AWE applications are due by 11:59PM on Friday, **January 23, 2026**.

Application & Scoring

Click to access the online application: <https://culturela.slideroom.com/>

Before starting the application, please re-read the complete AWE program guidelines above and preview the specific AWE Application Questions and scoring format outlined beginning on the following page. Results will be communicated to applicants in May-June of the following year.

Inquires

General questions about AWE may be directed to Ben Espinosa at ben.espinosa@lacity.org between December and January. Answers to the most general questions will be responded to via email. First-time applicants are strongly encouraged to schedule a phone consultation at least two weeks before the application deadline to verify eligibility and discuss program requirements.

Please note: the DCA Grants Administration Division maintains the right to cancel this Request for Proposals at any time, due to budgetary and/or personnel limitations.

Arts Workforce Empowerment (AWE) Category -- Application Questions and Format

NOTE: Questions provided below for reference purposes only; application must be submitted online at: <https://culturela.slideroom.com/>

Applicant Information

1. Applicant Organization IRS Name

Please enter your organization's name in all CAPS, otherwise matching how it appears on your IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit status determination letter.

2. Applicant Organization Popular Name

Popular name, if different from your organization's IRS name.

3. Applicant Organization Website

4. Address of Organization Headquarters & ZIP Codes of one or two primary/constant areas/venues of programmatic service

5. Contact Person First & Last Name

6. Contact Person Phone Number

7. Contact Person Email Address

8. Organization Type

☐ Venue-based

☐ Mobile Service-style

9. Grant Request (based on your organization size, select one option)

☐ \$6,000 or \$10,000 -- for a current DCA grantee with a budget within \$400,001-\$800,000 in their former grant proposal to support one (1) specific employee

☐ \$12,000 or \$20,000 -- for a current DCA grantee with a budget within \$100,000-\$400,000 in their former grant proposal to support two (2) specific employees at \$6,000 or \$10,000 each

Current number of full-time employees at the applicant organization: ____

Current number of part-time employees at the applicant organization: ____

Approximate number of artists, teaching artists, and/or presenting artists contracted by the applicant organization each year: ____

Scoring Detail

Scores for AWE are determined from the 10 Aspects listed below, with a maximum of 1,000 points. Proposals scoring higher than 700 will be most competitive for full funding.

Calculate Aspects 1-6 based on the total number of persons employed full-time AND part-time (do not include independent contractors, only people on payroll and/or paid an hourly wage in your organization's most recently completed fiscal year. This should be the same year used to register your organization budget-size with DCA in your former proposal and open contract).

By submitting the numbers below, you certify that all the values and materials submitted for this funding opportunity are true and accurate at the time of submission.

- 1. Percentage of full and part-time staff members who represent non-European minorities in categories such as those listed below:**

Enter a whole number ranging from 0 to 100, representing the percentage of workers with a primary or mixed heritage that is African, Arab, Asian, Latinx, Muslim, and/or Native-American (100 Points Max).

- 2. Percentage of full and part-time staff members with disabilities protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (or use Aspect 2 to count staff members who are first- or second-generation immigrants to USA)**

Enter a whole number ranging from 0 to 100, representing the percentage of workers with disabilities protected by ADA or bringing fresh perspectives to USA as immigrants/refugees – but please don't mix the two types (100 Points Max).

- 3. Percentage of full and part-time staff members who are Lesbian, Gay, Queer, or Gender-nonconforming**

Enter a whole number ranging from 0 to 100, representing the percentage of workers who are Lesbian, Gay, Queer, or Gender-nonconforming (100 Points Max).

- 4. Percentage of full and part-time staff members who are women acting in the top half of the organization's salary range**

Enter a whole number ranging from 0 to 100, representing the percentage of women acting in the top half of the organization's salary range (100 Points Max).

- 5. Mission + Workforce Connectivity commensurate with AWE**

Review the percentages entered for the four aspects above. Place an asterisk next to one (1) of the four numbers which best indicates your mission-service-workforce connectivity. Then, please copy your official Mission Statement into the box below.

Note: Do not include a vision statement or anything other than the concise mission of your organization. This should be the same statement found on your website and most recent DCA grant proposal (unless your Board has approved a new mission statement between since then, in which case you can enter the current mission statement below with a parenthetical phrase afterwards, such as: *"(revised and approved October 1, 2025)"*

AWE reviewers will be rating the synchronicity of: a) the category of persons highlighted by you with an asterisk in Aspect 1, 2, 3, or 4, with b) the category of artist or cultural expression named in your mission statement, as well as c) this same category describes the staff person you have named for AWE support. If reviewers find great synchronicity in your efforts to hire staff that reflects your mission as well as your community-audience, the panel may duplicate the number marked with an asterisk as your score for Aspect 5 because this number represents the social-equity promise you are recognizably achieving through a specific mission for target services by authentic staff members to a more-deserving community (100 points maximum).

6. Economic Evenness

The Economic Evenness score reflects the difference between the highest- and lowest- paid *full-time* workers on your staff. For organizations who employ only part-time employees, the Economic Evenness score instead reflects the percentage of employees who are paid wage rates consistent with the City of Los Angeles' Living Wage Ordinance (100 points maximum).

Note: Organizations with only one employee (whether full or part-time) get an automatic score of 85 for Economic Evenness.

Organizations that employ two or more *full-time* employees:

- Enter the annual salary of the highest-paid full-time employee
- Enter the annual salary of the lowest-paid full-time employee

Note: if the highest-paid employee earns more than 8 times the lowest-paid employee), then you are not eligible to be a City vendor in this or any other grant program.

Organizations with no full-time employees but with two or more *part-time* employees:

- Enter a whole number ranging from 0 to 100, representing the percentage of part-time workers earning the City's current Living Wage of \$19.12 or greater per hour (\$17.87 per hour with health benefits of no less than \$1.25 per hour, OR \$19.12 per hour without health benefits)

DCA staff will then take your entries to generate an Economic Evenness score as follows: The factor-difference between the highest and lowest paid full-time workers on your staff will be calculated. For example: If the executive director earns \$110,000 and the full-time secretary earns \$35,000, then the factor-difference is 2.14 (\$110,000 minus 35,000 is \$75,000, and \$75,000 divided by 35,000 is 2.14). The factor-difference will then be subtracted from 10, then multiplied by 10 to arrive at an Economic Evenness Score. In the preceding example, 10 minus 2.14 = 7.86, multiplied by 10 generates a score of 78.6 out of 100.

For organizations that that employ only part-time employees, the whole number entered above will be translated into an Economic Evenness score (e.g. if 60% of your part-time employees earn a City Living Wage, then your EE score is 60 out of 100).

7. Employee Narrative

Tell us about one or two workers who provide community authenticity for your organization. Your AWE candidate must be a coordinator/manager who delivers services in the community; if eligible for a second candidate, then your second worker may have an administrative/fundraising function (Note: You may not apply to AWE to support two administrators).

Note: New positions and new employees are not eligible to be proposed. DCA's AWE category is meant to reinforce people who have been employed at the applicant- organization for at least six months prior to grant submission. If one position/worker named for AWE is the applicant organization's Executive Director, and you are not submitting their resume, please try to describe their accomplishments in a note signed by a Board Member.

8. Supplemental Material for Employees

Upload PDF documents that include: a) the official/organizational job description(s) for the one or two workers described, b) each employee's current resume, and c) description of accomplishments for the same employee(s).

9. Tripod of Goals, Location, and Character

In approximately 500-700 words, describe the triangulation of: a) the organization's mission statement; b) the poverty and related discriminations/obstacles within the community-context in which your agency provides services; and c) the optimism developed by the worker(s) named for AWE support.

Applicants are encouraged to reference census tract data and other relevant data sources, such as the Healthy Places Index to illustrate the prevalence of community poverty and other socio-economic hardships experienced within the organization's community-context.

After describing the tripod requested above, use any space remaining to describe any other key factors that demonstrate how your agency builds collective empowerment. Is your agency iconic for a neighborhood or community? Are you transforming clients where they live? Do you have constant business relationships that demonstrates how your agency cooperatively builds community betterment?

10. Interpersonal Video & Application Certification

The final scoring aspect for this proposal will be based on a video-interview or self-recorded video response, wherein the staff person(s) proposed for AWE support create a 20- to 25-minute video which covers 6 or more of the 8 prompts listed on the next page. Organizations requesting funding for 2 employees can submit two videos (combined run-time of 20 to 25 minutes). In each video one staff-member should introduce themselves and outline the case for their organization to receive funding. DCA reserves the right to fund either or both candidates. In the application, you will be asked to provide a web hyperlink to view your video(s) online (e.g. via YouTube, Vimeo, Google Drive, Dropbox, etc).

Because we are committed to reducing paperwork and grant-writing skills as obstacles to receiving AWE support, the only materials to be discussed and verified during panel review will be:

- a) Your calculations for Aspects 1-4 and Aspect 6, and
- b) Materials presented in Aspects 7-9, and
- c) The video-interview wherein the staff member(s) proposed for AWE funding address social-equity as well as the triangular relationship between your organization's mission, staff, and community beneficiaries through six or more self-selected questions. You will not be judged on the aesthetic of your video, only the content.

In advance of creating your video-interview, please consider the following eight questions below. During your interview-style video, please plan to have the staff member(s) proposed for AWE funding speak and answer no less than six (6) of the questions below for the camera:

1. Please introduce yourselves by name, title, position, and number of years (or months) with the agency? Describe how you "came through the ranks" to your position?
2. Please tell us the City Council District of your organization's office as well as your organization's most regular one, two, or three performance/program spaces? How many years have you been located here, as a renter or owner? And for the staff member(s) listed for AWE, please tell us about the City Council District of your primary residence, as well as and the number of years you have lived and worked in Los Angeles?
3. Considering the one culture you primarily serve (by mission and reflected in your human resources), is your agency based around a geographic neighborhood area, or a regional community, or a percentage of both?
4. Using census data as research (rather than personal allegory), please provide 5 or more statistics about the residents and frequent visitors to your neighborhood (the neighborhood of your most regular program spaces)? What are their major characteristics by: income, ethnicity, languages spoken, family type(s), educational attainment, etc.?
5. Describe your average client (the type of person who seeks your services/program)? Please describe them by: age, gender, income status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, special ability, immigrant origins, etc.? How often do they engage with your programs (per week or month)? How long are they enrolled or engaged (in months or years)? Lastly tell us about the diversity within your average clients (perhaps by going over the questions in this section a second time and noting the likely ranges from the average?
6. Please name three key partners (non-arts organizations) in your community that are likely to be unique to you, and not named in any other AWE proposals. These may be thought- partners, program-partners, neighboring businesses that provide in-kind resources, but not financial sponsors/funders.

7. From the past 3 to 5 years, please describe two specific themes (of specific works workshops, projects, programs, or festivals) that best describe your engagement with social- justice, equity, and/or community empowerment? Do you have a multi-year commitment to either of these recent themes?
8. Please name the top three obstacles to social justice in your neighborhood/community? How does/do your AWE-proposed staff member(s) represent overcoming these same or related obstacles (such that they are authentic role models for agency clients)?

To Five Tips for success:

1. AWE is based on past accomplishments, so please do not discuss future programs or partnerships.
2. Answer the question with clear and concise facts from the recent history of your organization (activities in the past 5 years only):
3. Prepare scripted answers that are 3-4 minutes maximum per question, and rehearse before you make your single-shot real-time video (as little editing as possible is preferred)
4. Try not to repeat yourself (citing the same facts for multiple questions may appear as sloppy rather than emphatic).
5. Videos longer than 25 minutes, may not be watched fully by the panelist.

By entering your full name below, you are certifying you are authorized to submit the proposal numbers and narratives on the group's behalf. And that the information contained in this application, including attachments and supporting materials, is true and correct at the time of submission. Furthermore, you understand that the AWE grant-opportunity can be canceled at any time before the legal-contracting of any selected grantee by the City of Los Angeles. And that the City's ability to offer AWE support to the highest-ranked community service-providers is contingent upon the availability of municipal funds.

Signature_____Date_____

How to submit:

Full applications, including links to video interviews must be submitted online by **January 23, 2026** at midnight to: <https://culturela.slideroom.com/>