



Culture empowers



Power of culture

Express Yourself DREAM Performance.
Photo: Dean, May 2025

FY27 YouthReach Info Session

Introduction

- YouthReach: History and Updates

Is this grant right for us?

- Creative Youth Development
- Eligibility

How do we apply?

- Application Sections
- Review and Prioritization Criteria
- Help and Resources

**Live question & answer session
(also in the Q and A)**

Questions during the Presentation

- Please put questions in the Q&A section and/or attend our Office Hours.
- We will answer in the Q&A and live at the end of the session.

What is Creative Youth Development?



City Strings United's Early Learners class performs in "Stringfest" at the Kroc Center in Dorchester, in a collaborative concert presented by Celebrity Series' Neighborhood Arts Initiative. Photo: Robert Torres, Celebrity Series, 2024

“Creative Youth Development is a recent term for a longstanding practice that integrates creative skill-building, inquiry, and expression with positive youth development principles, fueling young people’s imaginations and building critical learning and life skills.”

Mass Cultural Council has invested more than \$26 million dollars to a total of 188 organizations through the YouthReach grant program.



Values of Creative Youth Development

Creative Youth Development (CYD) is a commitment to supporting young people's stories, ideas, and dreams through creative expression and honoring their lived experiences.

In order to create environments that promote Creative Youth Development, these three concepts should be present:

- **Youth voice**
- **Racial equity and social justice**
- **Collective action**



Performance Project, Young people performing in First Generation's Mother Tongue, at UMass Bowker Auditorium. Photo: Ed Cohen, 2024

YouthReach: for more than 30 years



MassPoetry, Photo: Francois Visuals, 2025

99% reported, “writing or performing poetry allows me to express my identity in a safe space.”

Mass Poetry’s 2025 SW@MP program surveys

Through experiences in arts, humanities, and sciences, YouthReach grantees provide...

Youth centered environments where young people can both widen and deepen their skills and interests

- Further developing **creativity, self-discovery, voice and storytelling**
- Building community and relationships **through collaboration and fostering belonging**

AND

- Developing **leadership, collective action, and social change** in collaboration with their communities.

Changes to YouthReach

Changes to YouthReach:

All former YouthReach grantees need to apply. Even with “Partner Status.”

To streamline our application and allow greater access, we have worked to:

1. **Decrease applicant workload** by removing evaluative site visits and our logic model requirements
2. **Broaden eligibility for schools and for nonprofits who work with schools** to apply in any arts, humanities, and /or sciences
3. Offer a **four-year granting model** instead of a three-year granting model.

YouthReach Funding Period

Successful applicants are eligible to receive funding for a two-year or four-year period:

- **Year 1:** Funding period July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027
- **Year 2:** Funding period July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028
- **Year 3:** Funding period July 1, 2028 – June 30, 2029
- **Year 4:** Funding period July 1, 2029 – June 30, 2030

**All awards are contingent upon Mass Cultural Council's allocation and receipt of sufficient funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and National Endowment for the Arts.



Youth Arts Impact Network Art Making: Keys to Belonging..
Photo: Swaback

Optional Section



Roots Rising Market Crew teens showing off locally grown plants sold at the Pittsfield Farmers Market., Photo: Staff 2025

94% of their young people felt more prepared for the workforce and had a stronger work ethic and **100%** had more pride in their community – Farm Crew, Roots

4. An optional section is available for organizations who invest in promoting the **mental health**/well-being and/or **workforce development**/career pathways for young people.

- A higher award amount
- Addressing the additional needs
- Acknowledging the additional costs

Grant amounts will be determined by the money available, and the number of projects recommended for funding.

Questions about CYD & YouthReach Changes?



Raw Art Works, RAW Stars lead
a VanGo art activity at a park in Lynn.
Photo: Staff, 2024.

Eligibility Quiz

Can We Apply?



Are We Eligible? Are you a...



Música Franklin students perform at the 7th annual Fun Fest in Turners Falls alongside Larksgrove. Photo: Clifford Oliver, 2025.

- Massachusetts **Non-Profit 501(c)3 organizations**
- **Unincorporated organization using a Fiscal Agent.** A fiscal agent can either be a municipal entity, a non-profit entity incorporated in Massachusetts or registered as a foreign corporation doing business in Massachusetts.
- **Non-Profit Organization** (including Massachusetts Public Colleges/Universities)
- **Tribal, Municipal or State Government Entity Programs** of State or Federal Government in Massachusetts
- **Pre-K – 12 School** (with DESE School ID)

You will need to look up your organization on the Secretary of the Commonwealth (SOC) website and confirm that your organization is listed, and your status has not been dissolved or revoked.

Program Eligibility: Arts, Humanities, or Science

The proposed youth programming must be **primarily**

- 1. Arts**
- 2. Humanities**
- 3. Sciences**

Proposed programs may take place **after-school , out-of-school, or possibly during school hours.**



Flying Cloud. The Conte Elementary School Girls Science Club prepared microbiology slides after a plant dissection. Photo: Angel Heffernan, 2024

Check to see if your organization...

- Is registered with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's (SOC) Office
- is registered with the Division of Public Charities of the MA Attorney General
- Has a favorable 501(c)3 status with the IRS

Or check to see if your school...

- Is recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) with a 2025-2026 DESE School ID: <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

You can find more information about eligible fiscal agents in our [online FAQs](#)



musicconnects, End of year concert at the Mattahunt School. Photo: Adah Hekto, 2024

Eligibility Questions

- Has your organization operated a Creative Youth Development (CYD) program for a minimum of six months between **2024 and 2026**?
- Does your program provide a **specific and consistent group of young people** hands-on, sequential, **cumulative learning through creation**?
- Does your program serve **Massachusetts young people who are ages 4-24**?
- **Is your program committed to best practices in Creative Youth Development?**

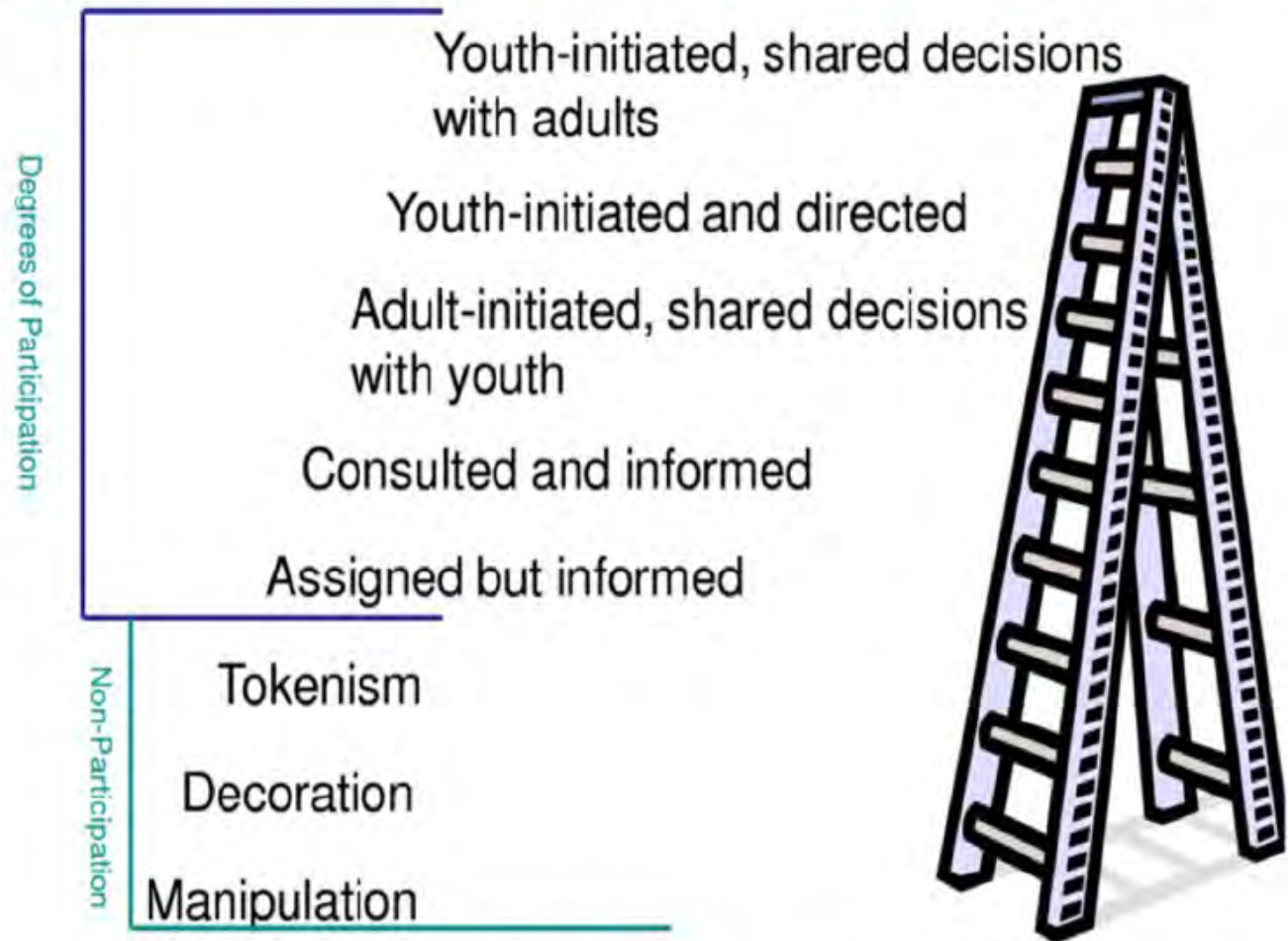
Applicants must see themselves in this definition:

Creative Youth Development (CYD) is a commitment to supporting young people's stories, ideas, and dreams through creative expression and honoring their lived experiences. In order to create environments that promote Creative Youth Development, these three concepts must be present: Racial Equity and Social Justice, Youth Voices, and Collective Action.

CYD Key Characteristics

- 1.) Provide safe and healthy youth spaces
- 2.) Are assets-based
- 3.) Foster the development of positive relationships and social skills
- 4.) Are youth driven
- 5.) Set high expectations for growth and learning
- 6.) Address the broader context in which Creative Youth Development operates

Ladder of Youth Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*
Florence; UNICEF Innocent Research Centre.

Applying for and receiving other grants



Organizations set to receive funding from the following Mass Cultural Council programs may apply to YouthReach, but if granted, may only receive funds from one program.

- [FY27 Cultural Investment Portfolio](#) or [FY27 OGO grant recipients](#)
- [FY27 Creative Experiences Grant](#)
- [FY27 Cultural District Investment Grants](#)

YouthReach and OGO/CIP

Are you currently an OGO grantee or want to apply for it in the future?

You can apply for YouthReach this cycle BUT you can't receive both.

Here are the details:

- YouthReach and OGO applications will alternate years.
- OGO will be open in Spring of 2027 for the next cycle.
- YouthReach applications cycle will be FY27-FY30
- YouthReach will open in Spring of 2028 for the next cycle.



Art Garden, Fall ARTeens group doing an ink icebreaker exercise. Photo: Wegscheider, 2024

Prioritization Factors

Funding priorities are **DIFFERENT** from eligibility!

Applicants that have not received funding from Mass Cultural Council in the **last three fiscal years** (FY26, FY25, FY24)

Applying to the Mass Cultural Council **for the first time.**

Applicants that are **BIPOC Centered Organizations** or **BIPOC Majority Schools.**

Applicants that have completed the **Arts and Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment**



New Bedford Whaling Museum High School Apprentices engaged in a three-day High School Science Discovery program at the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts.
Photo: Drew Furtado, 2025



Questions about CYD, Program Eligibility, and Prioritization?

Save the Harbor, Save the Bay, Save the Harbor youth staff learning how to use various sensors to measure water temperature, pressure, dissolved oxygen, salinity, and light with MIT Sea Grant. Photo: Kristen Barry, 2024

Application Process



826 Boston, YLAB student Muna (yellow microphone) and Teaching Artist Asiyah Herrera (red microphone) speak on a panel about their experience writing the libretto of *To The People Like Us* at the opera's premiere at the Strand Theatre. Photo: Mike Mejia, 2025

Applicant and Contract Information

Intro to Grants Management System - Users



- Every person that logs into Grants Management System is called a "User". What makes one User distinct from another is their email address.
- Your email address is like your unique ID
- Only one User per email address and one email address per User.
- When you log in to the system you use your email address as the username.

Reminders



Margarita Muniz Academy, Photo: Santos, 2024

- The **primary contact** applies for the grant and the final report
- **Contract authorized signatory** and **Contract authorized officer** are **two DIFFERENT** people. They are the contacts for the contracts and electronic paperwork (Docu-Sign)

Application Summary

1. Applicant Information
2. Contract Information
3. Organization and Program Overview
4. Program Design & Fiscal Management
5. **Optional Narrative:** Health and Wellness and/or Workforce Development Documentation



Hanover Theatre. The cohort of WYSH poses during their studio rehearsal, Photo, Unity Mike, 2024.

Organization and Program Overview



The Care Center, Je'Nye Williams reading her poetry from the Nautilus II annual art/poetry anthology at Odyssey Bookshop in South Hadley. Photo: Marjory Zaik, 2025

1. Primary Mission or Purpose
2. Project Title
3. Program History
4. Program Description and Purpose

Asking about numbers of ...

- Young people in your organization,
- Programs in your organization
- Young people in your most recent CYD program

4. PROGRAM DESIGN & FISCAL MANAGEMENT

Leadership

Staff (Upload) Teaching

Please upload a summary of key teaching staff

- Name
- Title
- Bio
- Relevant Trainings

Curriculum or Plan (Upload)

Three pages or less

- An example of a curriculum or plan for FY27.
- Goals connected to your program's designed activities

4. PROGRAM DESIGN & FISCAL MANAGEMENT

NARRATIVE:

How does your program's design, staff chosen, and budget address the values and needs of the young people you work with?

How do they show your priorities in meeting young people's needs?

NUMBERS:

How many young people do you anticipate being involved in your proposed YouthReach program in FY27 (July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027)?

Number of hours per week of proposed program?

How long, on average, is a young person typically involved with your organization?

Are you applying for **two or four years** of YouthReach funding?

Provides evidence that:

1. The design of your program is centered in understanding the needs of young people – such as fueling their interests, connections, and opportunities.
2. Leadership is strong
3. The organization prioritizes resources to meet the diverse needs of the young people the program serves

4. PROGRAM DESIGN & FISCAL MANAGEMENT

1. Organizational Budget

2. Program Budget FY27

3. Key Program Expenses FY26/FY27

(mental health, youth wages, teaching artists, transportation, food)

Enter a 0 if your program does not include that specific expense. Please do not leave any values blank.

4. Optional \$ Section - FY26 proof of \$2500 in investments

Mental health & wellness and/or workforce development

Optional: Mental Health & Workforce Criteria

Review criteria score is based on evidence that:

1. Funds are used to employ youth or address mental health needs
2. Young people are listened to and cross-sector partnerships have been thoughtfully established
3. Staff and program design demonstrate the ability to hear and address needs

Workforce: Staff provide growth opportunities, constructive feedback, learning, connections, and opportunities.

Mental Health: Staff are equipped with degrees/certifications/and/or evidence of trainings and design programs to address needs.



Community Day Charter Public School. Two Webster Lower School students are excited to begin today's ensemble practice! Cristen Farrell, 2024

Optional: Narrative Questions

Mental Health

1. How does your program currently **assess and track the need for mental health** and wellness support for your young people?
2. What **support and partnerships** have young people reported they need to navigate their mental health? How have you **developed cross-sector partnerships** to help address those needs?
3. How are **staff prepared** to intentionally provide ways to help youth with their mental health?

Workforce

1. How does your program currently use funds to support young people in **paid leadership/workforce roles**?
2. What help are they needing to **navigate connections, resources and opportunities**? How have you **developed cross-sector partnerships** to help address those needs?
3. How are **staff prepared** to intentionally provide ways to help youth explore their next steps in leadership/employment?

Application Narrative and Review Criteria

1. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
2. **EQUITABLE PRACTICES**
3. **CREATE: Youth Voice** (creativity, craft, storytelling)
4. **CONNECT: Relationships** (self-discovery, healing, collaboration, and mutual learning)
5. **CATALYZE: Youth Leadership** (leadership and social justice)
6. **OUTCOMES**

1. Community Engagement



Ballet Rox Recital
Students performing at the spring recital
"Movement for the Earth" Photo: Arthur
Barabell, 2025

Narrative

What are your community's unique characteristics and needs, how do you know, and how does your program respond to these unique community strengths and needs?

Review criteria score :

1. Community is defined
2. Community strengths and needs are understood
3. Programming is designed to address those needs with accountability.

2. Equitable Practices



Berkshire Pulse, students in Contemporary 4 practice lifting one of their colleagues, 2024

Narrative

What thoughtful recruitment/outreach practices are you engaging in, and how are you mitigating barriers and increasing accessibility, including collaborating to offer culturally responsive programming?

Review criteria score

1. Outreach and recruitment is thoughtful
2. Barriers are identified and addressed
3. Culturally responsive programming is offered/implemented

3. Create: Youth Voice

(creativity, craft, storytelling)



Cambridge Community Art Center's 28th Annual Do It Your Damn Self!! National Youth Film Festival, Photo: Lionel Blaise, Jr. Teen Media Program Manager 2025

Narrative

How does your programming center young people's creativity, and enable young people to express their voice, strengths, interests, and the cultures of their communities?

Review criteria score:

1. Young people are heard .
2. Opportunities for self-expression and creative risks are prioritized .
3. Interests and cultures are explored

4. Connect: Relationships

(self -discovery, healing, collaboration, and mutual learning)



Two of Sociedad Latina's Youth Artists work with a teaching artist from Berklee College of Music on songwriting and lyric writing. Photo: Hannah Latham 2024

Narrative

How do you help young people form meaningful relationships with adults and peers and support the expression of their identities?

What range of supports do these partnerships offer?

Review criteria score

1. Young people are supported in being seen and respected by others.
2. Opportunities for connection with caring adults and peers are embedded.
3. Collaborations are established with responsive partnerships with expertise.

5. Catalyze: Youth Leadership

(leadership and social justice)



New England Aquarium,
NEAq ClimaTeens Presentation
Photo: Tiffani Macarelli, 2025

Narrative

What does youth leadership and decision-making look like within your organizational structure ?

What are the ways your program offers opportunities for collective action/engagement?

Review criteria score

1. Young people are valued with their next steps supported.
2. Leadership opportunities and pathways for young people are offered.
3. Youth involvement culminates into collective action or engagement.

6. Outcomes



"A post survey found that 71.4% of the youth who attended weekly group sessions felt their mental health had improved."

– La Colaborativa

Narrative

1. Describe the indicators that will help you determine the success of your goals and how you aim to track these.
2. How is feedback from youth participants collected and used to improve your program?

Provide an example of numbers, statistics, quotes, photos, and/or video that speak to your impact. Upload a one-page document that provides numbers, quotes, photos, or upload a video (not longer than 5 min) that speaks to the impact of your program and contains the voice of your young people

Review criteria score

1. Young people are listened to.
2. Data that is valued is collected.
3. Programs track for understanding impact and improvement.

Are there resources that can help?



Origination, Photos By Drizzy, 2024

JOIN US! Youth Arts Impact Network/Partnership

YAIN Website <https://bit.ly/YAIN>

FOCUS: Evaluation knowledge, tools , resources in COMMUNITY

2014 The Youth Arts Impact Network (YAIN) began

2021 EdVestors and Mass Cultural Council's formal partnership

OFFICE HOURS: [Julia Gittleman](#) - Consultant

*Performance Measurement,
Evaluation Design
& How to Use Data to Effectively Tell Your Story*

Email at julia@mgaconsultants.com

Mendelsohn, Gittleman & Associates, LLC



Outcome – YAIN Resources

<https://youthartsimpactnetwork.weebly.com/impact-and-initiatives.html>

Current Initiatives



Create

- Creativity & Craft
- Voice and Storytelling



Connect

- Self-Discovery and Healing
- Connection, Collaboration, and Mutual Learning



Catalyze

- Social Justice
- Cultivating Leadership



EdVestors

[CYD Indicators Framework One-Pager](#)

[CYD Indicators Framework Complete](#)

We're here to help!

Weekly Office Hours

Register at [Agency Dates – Mass Cultural Council](#)

Office Hours:

- Tuesday **Feb. 24** 3:00 PM-4:00 PM
- Friday **Feb. 27** 12:00 PM -1:00 PM
- Weds. **March 3** 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM
- Weds. **March 18** 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM
- Tuesday **March 31** 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Other Questions?

Send them to our new email that will reach our team:

Youthreach@mass.gov

For technical support reach out to:

Grants.Team@mass.gov

CYD Resources

Youth Arts Impact Network (YAIN)

<https://youthartsimpactnetwork.weebly.com/>

YAIN CYD Monthly Resources and Opportunities

<http://www.bit.ly/YAINresources>

Indicators and Outcomes of CYD

<https://youthartsimpactnetwork.weebly.com/impact-and-initiatives.html>

[The Ten Dimensions of Powerful Arts Education](#) - The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation

Other Useful Links

- [ArtSake](https://artsake.massculturalcouncil.org/): <https://artsake.massculturalcouncil.org/>
- [Mass Cultural Council Opportunities pages](https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/tag/opportunities-resources/): <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/tag/opportunities-resources/>
- [General FAQs](https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/contracts/faqs/) - <https://massculturalcouncil.org/about/contracts/faqs/>
- Check out [Creative Ground](https://www.creativeground.org/search) for artists and organizations
<https://www.creativeground.org/search>

2021 CYD BIPOC Alumni Council

Hear directly from CYD alums:


- [We Must See Ourselves as Catalysts](#)
- [Alumni Zine](#)
- [Alumni Blog Post 1: Creative Youth Development BIPOC Alumni Council Shares Their Findings](#)
- [Alumni Blog Post 2: Reflections on the Creative Youth Development BIPOC Alumni Council](#)
- [Blog Post 3: Youth Arts Leader's Film Explores Representation in CYD](#)

[Opening Next: Creative Experiences Grant](#)





Questions?



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