



Youth Arts Desk Research Year-Long Project Request for Qualifications

The Wallace Foundation seeks a research team with expertise and experience in the domain of community-based youth arts programs. In particular, we are interested in arts programs serving young people who must contend with systemic and structural barriers that can impede their development.

The work involved in this one-year grant or contract will involve providing rapid response support to our youth arts team—comprised of program, research, and communications experts—as they develop and investigate ideas for the Foundation’s next multi-year investment in youth arts programs. Research activities will emerge through the process of exploration and could include:

- Conducting literature scans
- Through desk research, characterizing particular sub-sectors within the field (e.g., programs with a specific focus, policy scans, staffing structures, etc.)
- Identifying and conducting interviews with experts in the field to gather input and reactions
- Providing thought partnership on potential directions and topics for exploration drawing on knowledge of field trends and context
- Attending (by zoom or in person) regular bi-weekly meetings with the Wallace youth arts team to present results and findings from the desk research and to be a full participant in the discussion about directions
- Attending weekly meetings with working groups

This work requires a deep familiarity with the field, such that your team can respond rapidly: knowing where to get information, who to talk to, and what conversations are important to listen to.

Timeline

The work, approximately 12 months, will begin in the first quarter of 2023.

Process

Wallace develops its multi-year initiatives by identifying pressing problems in the field that: a) need program investment to develop strategies; and b) could yield insights that would be beneficial to both program grantees and the larger disciplinary community. Through deep engagement with practitioners, the research literature, and the policy fields, we design an initiative, invite organizations who share an interest in addressing the identified problem, and commission researchers to study the work of the programs over a period of five to seven years. Research resulting from the study is intended to extend insights to others in the field, including other program leaders as well as the funders and policymakers who may set conditions affecting the field.

Wallace is in the process of completing a 10-year youth arts initiative with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, which was guided by a question relating to how general purpose afterschool programs could adopt and sustain strong arts programs. As we have begun to think about the next major initiative, over

the past two years we have commissioned several studies that have examined different aspects of the youth arts ecosystem. We have also engaged with leaders in the field and participated in fieldwide conversations. We bring the insights gained through these activities to the design table as we begin to plan for the next youth arts initiative.

In early 2023, the Wallace youth arts team, supported by the contracted research firm, will identify two or three different avenues of inquiry about which we hope to learn more. Ultimately, with guidance from our Board, one of these avenues is expected to be developed into a compelling plan for a 5-year, multi-million-dollar youth arts initiative to be launched in 2024-2025.

The contracted research team will collaborate with each of the small internal working groups assembled to explore one of the avenues of inquiry. Such explorations will entail: (a) better understanding the context and defining the problem currently faced in the field; (b) identifying relevant knowledge gaps in the research and practice literature; and (c) understanding the key actors and levers salient to the issue. Avenues of inquiry could be as wide-ranging as issues related to staffing and employment; curricular approaches; or to policy needs. They could also focus on state, local, or national networks or ecosystems. All of this is to be determined in early January, and will continue to evolve and be refined throughout the year. Our goal is to have narrowed in on a key question of importance to the field where the foundation's sustained investment could gain traction on the question by the end of 2023.

Because we will start with multiple avenues of inquiry, we seek a team that has demonstrated staff capacity to handle multiple parallel assignments or tasks, and to work within rapid turnaround times. The nature of this work involves what we call "desk research"—these are not full-fledged studies, but rather accounts of what is "out there" based on best thinking from expert perspectives. It is important that the research team has an expansive and inclusive understanding of where expertise resides.

Equity at Wallace

Wallace views equity as embedding fairness in the formal and informal systems, structures, and practices of our society, giving all people the opportunities and supports necessary to reach their full potential as human beings. The principles that guide us in our equity journey include:

- Our work foregrounds racial equity but is not limited to it. We are concerned with the marginalization of people based on any element of their identity.
- We believe achieving equity requires constructively addressing historical, structural, and systemic causes of racial and other forms of inequity and why they exist.
- Specific definitions of equity will vary from one context to another. As a funder, we are careful to avoid imposing a single definition on grantees.

Wallace is committed to supporting research that is designed and conducted with and for equity. To inform strategies for change, researchers should use strength-based approaches and account for structures, systems, processes, or practices that produce or reproduce inequities or overcome them. Research itself should be equity-centered—including partnerships, processes, and methods that center the voices and perspectives of communities that would stand to use or benefit from the research. Research teams should include principal investigators and other senior intellectual contributors with relevant lived experiences.

Budget

We have not assigned a dollar amount to the project, but we anticipate that the workload is likely to ebb and flow over the year. Please plan for the equivalent of 1.0 FTE distributed across two or three individuals who collectively bring senior perspectives and experience as well as research and presentation skills. Budgets should also include costs for four trips to NYC, and all administrative and equipment costs needed to accomplish the tasks described above. A 15% indirect rate is allowed.

If and when additional funds are needed for particular projects or scans that go beyond the scope described here, including incentives for research participants, we will fund those separately.

Qualifications

1. History of working with community-based arts organizations
2. Demonstrated deep knowledge of, and relational trust with, BIPOC-serving youth development programs and field
3. Evidence of strong professional relationships with the community-based youth arts field (program leaders, researchers, and policymakers), such that you are part of current conversations (conferences, working groups, special interest groups and projects) in youth arts
4. Demonstrated history of working in complex collaborations
5. History of publishing research relevant to this call

It is important to note that researchers who conduct the year-long collaborative research activities will not be eligible to apply to research RFPs emerging directly from this initiative design process.

Researchers would be eligible to apply for other research projects at Wallace, including other future youth arts studies at Wallace. To respond to this RFQ, please submit, by, **February 1, 2023** the following materials:

- A one page letter naming who from your organization would be on your team and describing why you are interested in this project.
- A list of relevant research projects/past experience, including for each entry, who from your team worked on the project, location, dates, and a 2-3 sentence description of the work.
- Resumes of key staff, that communicate the professional activities associated with qualification stated above.
- A 1-page statement of organizational capacity—what kinds of staff resources/expertise, systems, and procedures do you have in place that can support the rapid and parallel response activities envisioned as part of this project.
- Two sample research publications, relevant to the subject matter

We will respond to qualified applicants to set up an interview to discuss the project further.

Working with Wallace

We seek a highly collaborative and flexible team who can respond quickly, can accommodate changing and emerging priorities and questions, and can work independently. We seek a thought partner who, along with the rest of the team, has a vested interest in informing the design of a potentially impactful new initiative for young people. It is extremely important that the analyses you produce include the strengths and limitations of the findings or evidence, so that we can collectively weigh our understanding and make decisions about the need for further research in any given area.

Questions about this RFQ should be sent to youthartsresearch@wallacefoundation.org.