



SURDNA FOUNDATION

THRIVING CULTURES

The Thriving Cultures program is based on a belief that communities with robust arts and culture are more cohesive and prosperous, and benefit from the diversity of its residents. We know that artists and cultural organizations can help us explore shared values and spark innovation, imagination and advancement for our communities.

Too often, however, arts and culture is undervalued as a catalyst for creating just and sustainable communities, which is a key priority for the Surdna Foundation.

The Thriving Cultures Program seeks to create just and sustainable communities in four ways:

- **Teens' Artistic and Cultural Advancement**
We support artistic training programs that help teens explore their cultural identity and equip them with the life-enhancing skills they need to achieve their educational and career goals.
[View guidelines below.](#)
- **Community Engaged Design**
We support efforts to involve artists, architects and designers in community-engaged problem solving and development efforts.
[View guidelines below.](#)
- **Artists and Economic Development**
We support efforts that provide artists with business training and financial resources that enable them to be, and create, valuable economic assets for their communities.
[View guidelines below.](#)
- **Artists Engaging in Social Change**
We support the potential of artists to be catalysts for social change and to promote the cultural traditions of their communities.
[View guidelines below.](#)

We seek organizations that:

- Embrace artistic and design excellence;
- Find innovative ways to use arts and culture to make communities more just and sustainable;
- Prioritize the needs of low-income communities and people of color in their work;
- Maintain sound financial practices and management;
- Demonstrate a capacity and willingness to share best practices and knowledge with their colleagues and others in the field.

We also believe that the Foundation's three programs are strongly interrelated and necessary to create just and sustainable communities. We therefore encourage cross-cutting proposals that connect to the work of the Foundation's Strong Local Economies and Sustainable Environments programs.

The Surdna Foundation is committed to continuous learning through our grantmaking. We view grant guidelines as living documents and will update them periodically to better target resources and increase our impact.

Generally, the Thriving Cultures program does not fund:

- Individuals, academic fellowships or for-profit entities;
- Capital campaigns or endowments;
- In-school art programs.

TEENS' ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL ADVANCEMENT

We believe that art and culture training programs can help young people achieve their educational and career goals, and catalyze change in their communities.

The Thriving Cultures Program therefore supports programs that successfully connect teens to artistically rigorous and culturally relevant programs that equip them with practical and life-enhancing skills. We value programs that prepare young, emerging artists to be creative and innovative leaders in their communities.

What we fund:

Overall, we seek organizations that have a proven and longstanding commitment to serving teens and that emphasize skill building. We seek funding opportunities that:

- Provide high quality arts training that integrate life skills. These skills include: written and oral communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and leadership development;
- Encourage teens to connect to their cultural identity through art-making;
- Provide young people with a well-developed, sequential curriculum that meets the increasing skills of participants;
- Foster strong mentoring opportunities for artists with teens;
- Employ accomplished faculty and guest artists who engage teens in art forms that reflect their cultural interests and community;
- Use research and evaluation tools to track the progress of teens' success over time;
- Share best practices in regards to training and evaluation in order to strengthen the field of youth arts training.

We give preference to organizations that:

- Embrace artistic and design excellence;
- Find innovative ways to use arts and culture to make communities more just and sustainable;
- Prioritize the needs of low-income communities and people of color in their work;
- Maintain sound financial practices and management;
- Demonstrate a capacity and willingness to share best practices and knowledge with their colleagues and others in the field.

We do not fund:

- Individuals;
- In-school arts programs, including elementary or middle-school programs;
- Projects that enhance in-school arts training (e.g. guest artists, professional development for arts faculty);
- Recruitment efforts at specialized public arts high schools, arts-focused charter schools or community music schools;
- One-time projects;
- Organizations that solely provide arts-integrated learning (e.g. arts as a pedagogy for teaching other academic subjects or as a mode for health and social services delivery).

COMMUNITY ENGAGED DESIGN

Frequently, cities and developers fail to engage the community in design efforts that integrate local priorities, values and concerns. That's why Surdna supports the field of "community engaged design"—where community members contribute to decisions, policies and projects that impact their lives. We believe that artists, architects, and designers can play an important role in translating community values into design solutions that will benefit the communities where they live and work.

Thriving Cultures seeks to share and replicate the best practices of community engaged design. We seek efforts where artists, designers and architects engage community members in decisions that will result in community benefit and social impact. We acknowledge that design and development is not neutral and that collaborative community design involves innovative partnerships that provide under represented communities with the design assistance they need to maximize their own benefit from development dollars being spent in their communities.

The Thriving Cultures Program supports ways to share and replicate the best practices of community engaged design. We support efforts where artists, designers and architects engage community members in decisions relating to product design, land use, public space, civic infrastructure, and urban planning.

What we fund:

We seek funding opportunities that:

- Engage the community in design decisions relating to product design, land use, public space, civic infrastructure, and/or urban planning;
- Weave arts and culture into community engagement processes in order to spark the imagination of residents and create design solutions that reflect their concerns and values;
- Develop design projects that align with broader community goals and that model an equitable approach;
- Promote best practices and establish frameworks on how to successfully use the community-engagement process to impact design and implementation to the benefit of the local community.

We give preference to organizations that:

- Embrace artistic and design excellence;
- Find innovative ways to use design, arts and culture to make communities more just and sustainable;
- Prioritize the needs of low-income communities and people of color in their work;
- Maintain sound financial practices and management;
- Demonstrate a capacity and willingness to share best practices and knowledge with their colleagues and others in the field;
- Draw on the expertise of multiple sectors (i.e. public, private);
- Receive financial support from diverse sources.

We do not fund:

- Housing development projects;
- Capital expenses and capital campaigns;
- International projects.

ARTISTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening the role of arts, culture, and creativity is essential to a community's economic growth, cultural vibrancy, and resiliency. Efforts around the country are recognizing how artists and cultural organizations can contribute to economic development.

We understand that arts and culture organizations bring jobs, tax dollars and tourism revenue to local communities. However, artists and creative workers often struggle financially and lack the resources to build their businesses. Just like other successful enterprises and small businesses, artists can overcome these obstacles if they have access to training and financing. These supports increase their ability to be effective economic contributors to their communities.

The Thriving Cultures Program supports efforts that provide artists with business training and financial resources that enable them to be, and create, valuable economic assets for their communities.

What we fund:

We seek funding opportunities that:

- Operate business and entrepreneurship training programs for artists and cultural organizations;
- Provide financing to artists and artist-centered enterprises (such as financial institutions and resource providers);
- Support arts and culture-based programs and services that directly engage and support the people who live and work in the area as a strategy for equitable economic development. These activities may include:
 - Cultural programming;
 - Business incentives that help build the local creative economy;
 - Cross-sector collaborations that yield opportunities for all residents to reap the cultural and economic benefits from neighborhood growth;
- Document (both qualitatively and quantitatively) the growth of arts-based, creative industries in neighborhoods;
- Identify and share best practices in order to strengthen the field of arts and economic development.

We give preference to organizations that:

- Embrace artistic and design excellence;
- Find innovative ways to use arts and culture to make communities more just and sustainable;
- Prioritize the needs of low-income communities and people of color in their work;
- Maintain sound financial practices and management;
- Demonstrate a capacity and willingness to share best practices and knowledge with their colleagues and others in the field;
- Partner with public and/or private entities that are committed to fostering artists and the field of arts and culture;
- Demonstrate a commitment to economic and cultural equity;
- Engage the deep reserves of talent, civic pride, and leadership of a community and proactively address its needs.

We do not fund:

- Individuals.

ARTISTS ENGAGING IN SOCIAL CHANGE

Artists and culture bearers give voice to cultural identity and are often powerful catalysts for social change. They not only carry forth cultural traditions but also create new traditions rooted in their community and identity. By contributing to the cultural richness of their communities, they strengthen and embolden them.

Thriving Cultures values artists and culture bearers who nurture, sustain, and grow our communities' cultural traditions, which reflect the identities and beliefs of its people. Furthermore, we understand that artists can help foster discourse and influence a community's social change goals.

The Thriving Cultures Program therefore supports programs that help artists and culture bearers deepen our cultural understanding or help communities achieve social change.

What we fund:

We seek funding opportunities that:

- Deepen a collective understanding of diverse cultures through high quality art-making;
- Provide resources and support to artists and culture bearers who use their artistic practice to promote their communities' values and traditions;
- Engage communities with well-developed methods of cultural practice and art;
- Articulate clear goals around a program's potential to support a community's social change priorities.

We give preference to organizations that:

- Demonstrate a commitment to artistic and design excellence;
- Find innovative ways to use arts and culture to make communities more just and sustainable;
- Prioritize the needs of low-income communities and people of color in their work;
- Maintain sound financial practices and management;
- Demonstrate a capacity and willingness to share best practices and knowledge with their colleagues and others in the field;
- Operate ongoing programs that contribute to a community's cultural diversity and/or art forms;

We do not fund:

- Individuals;
- In-school arts programs;
- Organizations that primarily present, rather than produce, art;
- Organizations that solely provide arts-integrated services (e.g. arts as a mode for rehabilitation or therapy, health and social services delivery).