

APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

Panelists will evaluate each application using the criteria below. **Organizations are not expected to meet every criterion** – the list includes a range of ways to demonstrate public benefit and alignment with Inspire Olympia funding goals.

Category: Programming Merit and Value

At a minimum, all applications should demonstrate:

- How the organization’s mission, goals, and programming align with the primary funding goals on page 3.
- A proposal for one or more public events or programs to advance arts, culture, heritage, and/or science.

The most successful applications will also demonstrate some or all of the following:

- How and why their programming is relevant and meaningful for intended participants and audiences.
- How the programming deepens, broadens, or diversifies cultural programs and services within Olympia.
- How programming benefits or supports people and communities in Olympia.
- How the organization sustains, expands, or improves existing programming.

If previously funded, an organization should also address:

- The public benefit outcomes of previous contract(s) with a focus on organizational sustainability and growth, and expanded equity and access.

Youth Education Programs, if applicable

At a minimum, all applications should demonstrate:

- How their classes, camps, or other educational programs for youth support active learning in arts, culture, heritage, and/or science and connect with broader youth development goals.
- Their experience, purpose, and values in developing and delivering youth education programs.

The most successful applications will also demonstrate some or all of the following:

- An understanding of best practices in youth education (such as including youth voice, articulating and evaluating specific learning goals, etc.).
- Individuals overseeing education programming or teaching classes have relevant experience or training in their cultural field and in working with youth.
- School day programs proposed for OSD students and professional development proposed for OSD-certified teachers demonstrate support for and alignment with basic education goals, clear instructional plans aligned with Washington State student learning goals, and collaboration/commitment from OSD teachers/administrators.

EXCERPT from 2026-27 Inspire Olympia Impact Application Guidelines, pp 11-13

Category: Community Engagement and Impact

At a minimum, all applications should demonstrate:

- Who they serve and how they engage with participants and audience members.
- How they build and develop community trust through approaches such as partnerships, collaboration, communications, and culturally relevant programming.

The most successful applications will also demonstrate some or all of the following:

- A history of and/or specific plans for continuing community engagement and programming to strengthen community connections and interactions.
- How they maintain and/or expand relationships with participants and partners.
- How community members are engaged in envisioning, planning, delivery, and evaluation of programming.
- Strategies for understanding community-specific needs and designing programs that respond to those needs.
- Meaningful collaboration with other local organizations – either inside or outside of the cultural sector – that improve or expand the impact of the work.

Category: Equity and Access

At a minimum, all applications should demonstrate:

- How the proposed programming aligns with Inspire Olympia’s vision for equitable, inclusive, and welcoming cultural programming.
- Clear, specific, and achievable plans and practices for supporting or increasing public access to their cultural programs.

The most successful applications will also demonstrate some or all of the following:

- An existing commitment to equity and access through current and past programming and internal practices.
- Strategies for identifying and minimizing systemic barriers to participation in their programs.
- Approaches that directly address specific types of access, such as financial access, location access, and improving access and experiences for people with various kinds of disabilities.
- Approaches that center communities impacted by structural racism and/or systemic oppression, which include the LGBTQIA+, and BIPOC communities, people with disabilities, older adults, etc.
- Awareness of the organization’s current capacity, challenges, and opportunities related to equity and access, and demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement.

Category: Capacity and Feasibility

At a minimum, all applications must include:

- Capacity for success based on the relevant lived or professional experience of individuals leading the proposed programs, or success with at least one similar program in the past.

EXCERPT from 2026-27 Inspire Olympia Impact Application Guidelines, pp 11-13

- Resources to make their plans happen, including human resources (staff, volunteer commitment) and a realistic mix of cash income and donated goods and services to match or exceed the funding request.

The most successful applications will also demonstrate some or all of the following:

- Program plans are well thought out, with an achievable implementation approach.
- Plans for communications/marketing to engage audiences/participants.
- Plans to measure and evaluate program success and outcomes.
- A practical and complete budget that is aligned with the proposal narrative.
- Appropriate compensation for individuals, artists, culture-bearers, and subject matter experts providing cultural programming and administrative support.