Investing in disability through funding and accessible, equitable grantmaking

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Disability in the United States

Approximately 1 in 4 (27%) of adults in the U.S. are living with disabilities

44% of adults ages 65+ have disabilities

The largest minority group in the U.S.

Disability is an asset to organizations

- Helps maintain and grow audiences
- Brings in new and exciting programs (disability arts, physically-integrated dance)
- Disability intersects with other ways you may be working to attract audiences
- Disability and accessibility are part of DEIA efforts

"When disabled artists and disability artistry are not centered, supported, and welcomed as important contributors to the field, **the field misses out on the innovation, creativity, imagination, and artistry that comes from the disability community**.

Audiences and artists should know our work. As people invested in the arts, **we owe it to ourselves and to the future to engage with the work of disabled artists**."

Dancer and choreographer Alice Sheppard

Jerron Herman, Laurel Lawson, and Alice Sheppard from Kinetic Light, *Wired*. Photo by Robbie Sweeny

Opportunities for funders

Support for disabled artists

Support for accessibility for both artists and audiences

Support for arts education to help build the talent pipeline

Ensuring disability equity in grantmaking

Specific funding for disability

- Targeted funding for disabled artists
- Accessibility funding
  - Mini grants (under $5,000)
  - Full sized grants
- Capital funding for accessibility
- Accessibility/disability funding as a project type

Disability/access project types

Examples of project types in your regular grants:

- Programming for disabled audiences and artists
- Equipment purchase/rental
- Program access
- Capital improvements
- Accessibility assessment
- Access consultants

- Have grants for artists? Consider adding funds for access

NEA guidelines example: Project type

- Disability-led projects or projects that meaningfully engage disabled artists and/or students in pursuit of artistic and creative goals. (Dance)

- Projects that advance and/or sustain the creative work of and/or careers for people with disabilities through employment, industry training, technical assistance, and organization capacity-building (Theater and Musical Theater)

Access in the grant application

- Make the application process accessible:
    - Ensure that website and applicant portal are accessible for screen-reading software
    - Provide alternative formats for guidelines
    - Provide alternative means of applying, where possible
    - Provide guidelines and questions in downloadable document to allow completion offline before submitting

Application process, cont.

- Make the application process accessible:
  - Allow information and materials to be saved throughout the process so an applicant can enter data in multiple sessions if needed
  - Strongly encourage applicants to start process well before the deadline
  - Allow an applicant to verify that the correct documents were uploaded

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Compliance – Section 504 and ADA

- Recipients of federal and state funds are required to provide physical access, effective communication, and reasonable and necessary accommodations for staff and visitors with disabilities.

- You must assess and ensure subgrantee compliance.

Compliance monitoring options

- Application: Assurance of compliance
- Application: Accessibility question(s)/checklists, budget line item
- Assessment of facilities and programs:
  - Checklists
  - Site visits/ full assessments
- Some SAAs require full assessments for operational fund recipients, every 3 years, etc.

Equitable grant review process

- Include people with disabilities in your grant review panels, as they:

  - Can provide new and authentic perspectives and insights into on the applications

  - May be more likely to recognize issues related to accessibility

- Connect with the disability community and the disability arts field to find qualified panelists with disabilities.

Access accommodations for panelists

- Screen-reader friendly materials
- Print copies of materials
- Alternative formats (braille, large print)
- Reading assistants for written/electronic materials
- ASL and/or captions for meetings and work sample videos
- Accessible meeting spaces
- Breaks during meetings

Ensure accessibility for panelists

- Ask up front if they need access accommodations

- Communicate expectations for work load, timing, and process

- Research vendors and costs and budget for access

Next steps

- Conduct an accessibility assessment of your organization and your grantmaking
- Look at your application process and compliance monitoring process
- Look at your panel selection, work requirements, and accommodations process
- Consider new grant opportunities, start small with small grants
- Consider adding disability/accessibility project types that increase equity

Funders' resource

- [Careers in the Arts Toolkit](#)

  - [Resources for Arts Grantmakers](#)

  - [Artist Profiles](#)