**2026 Request for Contract Proposals**

**Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program**

*September 29, 2025*

A Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program

The Office of Accessibility and VSA at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

**SUMMARY**

**Contract Description:** Implement internship opportunities for individuals with disabilities, ages 21-30, interested in pursuing production, technical, front-of-house, and administrative creative careers, 10-30 hours per week, for at least 10 weeks. Serve 5 or more individuals with disabilities who are paid at least minimum wage. On-the-job experiences must take place in integrated settings of individuals with and without disabilities interacting.

**Contract Amounts:**  Up to $25,500

**Contract Proposal Deadline:** November 7, 2025, 11:59 PM EST

*To request an accommodation or receive these materials in an alternate format, contact: Stephanie Litvak,* [*sslitvak@kennedy-center.org*](mailto:sslitvak@kennedy-center.org)*, at least two weeks prior to the submission deadline.*

**Background**

The Office of Accessibility and VSA (Access/VSA) welcomes and supports people with disabilities of all ages to learn through, participate in, and engage with the arts and culture. This longstanding commitment to individuals with disabilities, ensures that the Kennedy Center’s activities are grounded in accessible practices. This extends to internship opportunities in competitive integrated creative careers.

To this end, the Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program (CCIP) seeks to improve outcomes in competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities by creating pathways to employment in the creative economy through internships. The goal is to increase opportunities and capacity for individuals with disabilities who wish to pursue creative careers to develop technical and administrative skills and critical business knowledge for 21st century job readiness. At the same time, intern employers receive education and training to better shape programs and employment opportunities, as well as provide appropriate support and accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

**Program Description:**

The Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program (CCIP) provides career development opportunities in creative industries such as arts management or administration, front-of-house operations, design, production, or technical theatre for individuals with disabilities, ages 21-30. The program provides community-based internships that are designed to have immediate competitive integrated employment outcomes and lead to ongoing employment in a creative career. Program participants receive instruction and hands-on employment activities in which they develop critical 21st century business skills and knowledge needed for success in the creative career workforce, acquire real world experience working with actual employers, and have the opportunity to interact with peers and professionals in an integrated employment setting.

In the Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program, organizations and companies establish or demonstrate active partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, colleges, community colleges, universities, Centers for Independent Living, and/or disability service organizations to identify, recruit, and support program participants throughout the internship opportunity. Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Programs have clear participant recruitment strategies, defined skill development objectives, individualized employment plans, and provide 10-30 combined instructional and experiential hours per week per intern for at least 5 individuals with disabilities. Pay interns at least minimum wage.

**Definition of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)**

https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/cie

The goal of the program is that participants, post-internship, are prepared to succeed in competitive integrated employment (CIE) as defined below:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) defines competitive integrated employment (CIE) as work that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis for which an individual is:

* Compensated at or above minimum wage and comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer to employees without disabilities performing similar duties and with similar training and experience;
* Receiving the same level of benefits provided to other employees without disabilities in similar positions;
* At a location where the employee interacts with other individuals without disabilities; and
* Presented opportunities for advancement similar to other employees without disabilities in similar positions.

**Scope of Work**

To accomplish the above, eligible and qualified contractors are being sought to perform an Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program that has the following core components:

1. Engage and serve individuals with disabilities, ages 21-30, who demonstrate an interest in pursuing a creative career or working in a creative industry in immersive, site-based production, technical, front-of-house, and administrative internships.
2. Serve 5 (five) or more individuals with disabilities and pay each intern at least the minimum hourly wage for time spent in the internship program.
3. Provide 10-30 (ten to thirty) combined instructional and experiential hours per week per intern with a disability for at least 10 (ten) weeks. Program must be delivered in-person, and the on-the-job experience must be in an integrated setting where the interns interact with individuals without disabilities. Strong preference given to internships with an integrated cohort of individuals with and without disabilities. Taking many forms, examples of internships may include, but are not limited to:
4. Integrating individuals with disabilities into an existing internship program at an arts, cultural, or entertainment venue where each individual has a work placement, and all interns go through the same professional development instruction together as a cohort.
5. Placing interns in experiences to learn about marketing art products for sale; and engage in an on-the-job, integrated work experience in a local museum shop retail at a park or garden, or other creative industry setting.
6. Create an internship that provides instruction and hones production and technical skills, such as lighting design or sound engineering, stage management, or front-of-house ushering and box office at a local regional theater company.
7. Have clear and articulated job skill development objectives with measurable skill gains and individualized employment plans with clear outcomes for each intern.
8. Implement instructional workforce experiences that develop professional skills and capacities that relate to real world practices. These may include, but are not limited to:
9. Resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, portfolio development, and use of social media for promotion.
10. Networking opportunities, including participation in professional associations and/or organizations, attendance at conferences, and meeting with professionals in the local community.
11. Opportunities to work alongside established professionals, such as an arts manager, theater technician, museum exhibit designer, front of house theater staff, studio manager, or other professionals in technical or administrative creative careers.
12. Opportunities to learn about the “business of the business;” such as marketing, contracting, development, human resources, public relations, operations, facilities, finance, and customer service.
13. Attainment of industry credentials.
14. Access to and exploration of job search tools.
15. Implement on-the-job work experiences that cultivate business and professional skills necessary to obtain and sustain employment in a creative industry or a creative career and create **viable pathways** to competitive integrated employment. Preference given to partnering with potential community employers for embedded work experiences.
16. Demonstrate the capacity to engage and support individuals with disabilities by collaborating with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, community partners such as Centers for Independent Living, community college/college/university employment offices, and/or disability service organizations/providers. Where appropriate, provide information and connections to state/local service and VR agencies.
17. Understand and utilize current effective adult learning, instructional practices, strategies, and techniques and skill development for individuals with disabilities.
18. Involve personnel, consultants, and/or advisors with experience in employment, job coaching, and/or vocational rehabilitation in the development and/or delivery of the program preferred.
19. Verify disability of interns by collecting and retaining proof such as, but not limited to, IEPs, letters from a medical professional, documents from a university office of disability, or referrals by a Vocational Rehabilitation agency. Self-identification of disability is insufficient to prove eligibility to participate in the program.
20. Provide internships that are physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities, or are conducted such that requests for accommodation, effective communication, or physical access shall be fulfilled.

**Contract Amount, Term and Payment Structure**

The Kennedy Center is seeking proposals from contractors to perform an Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program. The Center will accept only 1 (one) proposal per contractor. Contract award is subject to Kennedy Center funding availability for the Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program.

1. **Contract Term:** The term of the contract will be for no more than 8 (eight) months, from January 1, 2026 – August 31, 2026, and execution of the services must take place within this period.
2. **Contract Amount**: Up to $25,500 per contract. The Kennedy Center reserves the right to award less or more than the proposed amount based on the scope of proposal submitted. The contract must be based on a firm, fixed-price quote that contains all information necessary to allow the Kennedy Center to comprehensively evaluate the proposed costs (see page 11).
3. **Payment Structure:** Payment will be made as frequently as monthly, upon demonstrated satisfactory completion of tasks and receipt of invoices from the contractor outlining completed deliverables.
4. **Reporting Requirements**: Contractors will be required to participate in the Kennedy Center Competitive Integrated Employment in Creative Careers (CIECC) evaluation project conducted by the George Washington University through the completion of monthly reports as guided by the evaluation team. Contractors will be trained to assist interns in completing pre- and three post- internship questionnaires (immediately, 3 months, and 6 months following internship completion). In addition, contractors will be required to participate in pre- and post- goal identification interviews. A final report must be submitted with the final invoice no later than September 9, 2026, at 11:59 PM EDT. The final report must address the actual results of the Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program and report in depth on participation data, program activities, outcomes, and impact at the end of their programs. The Kennedy Center reserves the right to conduct site visits and to request progress reports at any time during the contract period for amplification and clarification of contract activities.
5. **Acknowledgement and Logo**:Contractors will acknowledge their performance of an Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program on behalf of the Kennedy Center by using the required credit line and/or logo, and disclaimer on all program-related material and webpages/sites.
6. **Public Performance or Display:** Contractors must inform Kennedy Center staff of any intended public performance or display of material developed during the Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program.
7. **Professional Learning:** Contractors will be required to participate in the virtual CIECC Employer Community of Practice and attend the Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD) Conference August 11-14, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. All travel expenses and registration fees will be the responsibility of the contractor using the portion of the contract fee designated for this purpose.
8. **Unallowable Costs:** Contractors should not include the following expenses in proposed contract fee (see list of examples on page 7):
   * Food and beverages
   * Performance costs
   * Exhibit costs
   * Space rental, including workshop/residency/training classroom space
   * Equipment and durable education and art supplies (non-durable art supplies are acceptable costs, but must be listed in budget section)
   * Costs for culminating events, public events, receptions, fundraisers, tours, exhibitions, or performances
9. **Subcontracting:** Subcontracting is permissible only so long as contractor receives advance approval from the Kennedy Center before expenses are incurred and payments made. Contractor should not proceed until receiving written prior authorization. *For the purposes of this RFP, subcontracting is defined as the relinquishing of significant oversight and management to a third party or paying 65 percent or more of the total value of the contract to a third party.*
10. **Contract, Not Federal Grant**: Contract will be supported through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to the Kennedy Center. Although the Contract will not constitute a Federal grant or sub-award, the contractor will be subject to the reporting and auditing provisions of Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance). The expenditure of Federal monies will be subject to all applicable Federal guidelines. The Kennedy Center requires that the contractor adhere to such guidelines while providing services hereunder.

**Contractor Eligibility Requirements**

1. Eligible contractors may submit 1 (one) proposal 2026 Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program Requests for Contract Proposals.
2. Non-United States entities and individuals are not eligible and will not be considered.
3. Contractor must have at least three (3) years of experience operating an internship, apprenticeship, or pre-professional training program that focuses on positive employment outcomes in creative careers.
4. Contractor must demonstrate past practice or experience in working with individuals with disabilities.
5. Contractor must involve personnel, consultants, and/or advisors with experience in employment, transition to work, job coaching, and/or vocational rehabilitation in the development and/or delivery of the program.
6. Contractor must establish or demonstrate relationships with Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, schools/school districts, college/university employment offices, and/or disability service organizations/providers that will identify individuals to participate in the program.
7. Contractor must provide a clearly articulated plan to identify and recruitindividuals with disabilities, ages 21-30, to participate in the program, or demonstrate past history of success in recruiting individuals with disabilities for programs.
8. Contractor must demonstrate that it has the resources, staff, and capacity to manage and execute the proposed Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program and comply with professional learning and reporting requirements within the designated timeline.
9. Contractor must comply with any state, local, and, if applicable, organizational requirements regarding criminal background checks for program employees, contractors, and volunteers.
10. Contractor must comply with all federal, state, and local laws in the course of completing the Contract.
11. Contractors must: (a) conduct or be prepared to conduct upon request or need, the proposed program in spaces that are physically accessible to individuals with disabilities and (b) be able and prepared to provide, appropriate accommodations and effective communication upon request during all stages of the Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program.

**Contract Proposal Deadline**

1. Proposal Submission Deadline: November 7, 2025, at 11:59 PM EST.
2. Notification: Selected recipients will be notified by December 8, 2025.

**How to Submit a Contract Proposal**

Contractor may submit only 1 (one) Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program proposal for consideration. It is permissible for other organizations to name the Contractor as partner or collaborator in a separately submitted proposal.

1. Proposals must be submitted online at [**https://thekennedycenter.smapply.io/prog/accessvsa\_creative\_career\_internship\_program\_proposal\_2026**](https://thekennedycenter.smapply.io/prog/accessvsa_creative_career_internship_program_proposal_2026) by the submission deadline. Proposals received after the proposal submission deadline will not be considered. The Kennedy Center is not responsible for any delays in transmission of proposals via the Internet.
2. Proposals must be well-written, error-free, and adhere to the word limits indicated in each section of the online proposal form.
3. Attached to this RFP is a list of questions asked on the online proposal form.
4. Information and materials submitted in connection with the proposal process will not be returned, will be treated confidentially, and will not be shared.

**Questions**

Please direct questions about this RFP to:

Stephanie Litvak, Manger, Access/VSA Programs

Tel: 202-416-8847, Email: [sslitvak@kennedy-center.org](mailto:sslitvak@kennedy-center.org)

**Review Criteria**

Proposals will be reviewed utilizing the Contractor’s:

1. **Strength**, based on:
2. Past practice and experience providing quality creative career internship, apprenticeship, or pre-professional training and employment programs that demonstrate post-program employment success.
3. Demonstrated ability to identify, recruit and engage individuals with disabilities ages 21-30. *Please note that organizations or companies without specific programming for individuals with disabilities, but with evidence of organizational strength in the area of disability employment, accessibility, or inclusive programming will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.*
4. Quality and clarity of the program goals and objectives, including those connected to CIE.
5. Capacity to manage and execute the program.
6. Appropriateness of the budget and the resources involved.
7. Qualifications of the personnel involved.
8. **Merit** of the proposed program, including the:
   1. Alignment of the program to the core components of the Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program and competitive integrated employment (see page 2-3 of this RFP).
   2. Quality of the internship experience in both incorporating creative industry technical skill development and individualized CIE plans for program participants.
   3. Number of individuals with disabilities ages 21-30 served and per capita cost per individual with a disability.

Additionally, the Kennedy Center will take into consideration the geographic range of applicants in order to support its objective of national breadth in programming.

*The content of this program was developed under grant H421F240164 from the U.S. Department of Education (Department). The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities described or discussed in this program. The content of this program may contain examples of, adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by another public or private organization. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. The content of this program does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department. This program is not intended to represent the views or policy of or be an endorsement of any views expressed or materials provided by any Federal agency (EDGAR 75.620).*

**Examples of Unallowable Costs**

Unallowable costs are those identified in CFR 200 including, but not limited to the following:

**Food and beverage:**

* All beverages, non-alcoholic and alcoholic
* Snacks, coffee breaks, or meals for activity participants
* Snacks, coffee breaks, or meals for staff, teaching artists, professional development presenters, etc.

**NOTE:** If a hotel stay is required for a professional development presenter, or to fulfill required Access/VSA LEAD Conference attendance, per diem per the GSA rate for the traveler is allowed. <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

**Production costs (performances and exhibits):** Any and all costs associated with putting on a performance or mounting an exhibition.

* Producing and presenting a performance
* Producing and presenting an exhibit
* Staff costs (organization staff, actors, directors, stage managers, production staff) to produce and present a performance or exhibit.
* Rehearsals
* Sets, props, costumes
* Framing, presentation easels, hanging materials

**Durable Equipment and supplies:**

* Fidgets, noise cancelling headphones
* Computers, tablets, mobile phones, cameras, software, apps
* Software and digital licenses
* Furniture, ramps, elevators, building signage, facility improvement

**Space rental:**

* Performance space
* Exhibit space
* Workshop classrooms
* Studio space
* Office space

**Culminating activities:**

* Performance and rehearsal spaces
* Tours of performances or exhibits
* Receptions, fundraisers
* Public events

**2026 Access/VSA Creative Career Internship Program**

**List of Proposal Form Questions**

**Proposals must be submitted using the online form at**

**[https://thekennedycenter.smapply.io/prog/accessvsa\_creative\_career\_internship\_program\_ proposal\_2026](https://thekennedycenter.smapply.io/prog/accessvsa_creative_career_internship_program_%20proposal_2026)**

**by November 7, 2025 at 11:59 PM EST**

1. General information
   1. Name of Organization or company
   2. Legal Name of Organization or company (if different from above)
   3. Mailing address (for checks)
   4. Physical address (if different from above)
   5. Website
2. Primary contact for contract
   1. Name
   2. Title
   3. Telephone
   4. Email
3. Alternate contact for contract
4. Name
5. Title
6. Telephone
7. Email
8. Fiscal agent for contract (if applicable)
   1. Name of fiscal agent
   2. Address of fiscal agent
   3. Fiscal agent contact name
   4. Title
   5. Telephone
   6. Email
9. Total proposed contract fee

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1. Projected number of interns (integers only)
   1. Number of interns with disabilities
   2. Number of interns without disabilities
   3. Average number of hours per week 1 intern will spend on instructional and experiential activities combined (10-30 hours per week minimum)
   4. Average number of weeks per internship (at least 10 weeks per intern)
2. Is this internship program an integrated opportunity where individuals with and without disabilities will learn together as a cohort? Yes/No/Other, please explain.
3. Does the internship on-the-job work experience take place in an integrated setting where interns with disabilities interact with individuals without disabilities? Yes/No/Other, please explain.
4. Description of proposed program, including program goals and objectives. (maximum 400 words. It is not necessary to explain why this program is needed)
5. What are the expected intern employment outcomes? (maximum 300 words)

Be specific about the competitive integrated employment outcomes interns will have accomplished by the end of the internship. When the internship is over, what will the interns next steps be towards employment?

1. List and describe the instructional and workforce development experiences interns with disabilities will undertaketo develop their professional skills and capacities. (maximum 200 words)
2. Which on-the-job experiences will the program include (check all that apply):
3. Specific instruction in workforce skills: e.g., core office skills needed to get a job, using a computer, job search techniques, exchange with professionals, resume writing, reading a contract, building a website, and using social media for self-promotion..
4. Arts administration/management: Duties that support and assist in the contracting organization’s and/or external job site’s mission.
   * 1. Technical job skills: Training and/or professionally led time spent learning and doing the technical aspects of the creative career intern job.
     2. Other, please explain.
5. What accessibility strategies will you use to support interns with disabilities to be successful in the program (in your space and/or in external job placements)? What partners might you want to have in place to guide you, such as Vocational Rehabilitation? (maximum 200 words)
6. How will you reach out to your community to identify interns with disabilities for this program? (maximum 100 words)

Name(s) of partner Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, Centers for Independent Living, community college/college/university employment offices, and/or disability service organizations/providers, including name and title of contact person.

1. Proposed dates and locations of internship and external job placements for interns with disabilities. (maximum 100 words)
2. Primary purpose or mission of organization or company (maximum 100 words)
3. Organization or company qualifications
   1. Is your organization a United States nonprofit entity?
   2. Is your organization a United States commercial entity?
   3. How many years of experience does your organization or company have operating an internship, apprenticeship, or pre-professional training program?
   4. How many years of experience does your organization or company have working with individuals with disabilities?
   5. Describe your organization or company’s experience and capacity to deliver proposed program, including your employment success rate and the number of interns who went on to find gainful employment. (maximum 150 words)
4. Personnel

Provide short biographies of key program personnel, including staff, consultants, and advisors. (maximum 100 words each person)

1. Proposed Contract Fee Justification

Enter below a budget that provides sufficient transparency into the calculation of the proposed contract fee using the expense categories provided. Only include Other Sources Amount of income if a line-item calculation exceeds the line amount proposed for Access/VSA Contract Fee Amount.

*Please note that unallowable costs will be removed from Access/VSA Contract Fee Amount (see RFP page 4, #8 and page 8 for a list of unallowable costs).*

In the **calculation boxes**, show the calculation for the line amount and include any necessary narrative explanation. Use dollar signs.

In **amount boxes**, use whole numbers only. Do not use dollar signs or commas.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Expense Category | Show Calculation & specify items | Enter Access/VSA Contract Fee Amount | Enter Other Sources Amount (if calculation is for more than the Access/VSA contract fee) |
| a. Personnel  Organization staff  Costs associated with staff working directly on program delivery & CCIE evaluation assistance  (person x rate x hours) |  |  |  |
| b. Fringe (of personnel) |  |  |  |
| c. Intern Wages  Minimum wage required (person x rate x hours x weeks) |  |  |  |
| d. Contractors  (person x rate x hours) |  |  |  |
| e. Program Travel  (mileage, parking) (person x trip x rate) |  |  |  |
| f. Required Access/VSA Conference Travel  (airfare, hotel, GSA per diem $92/day (3 days) + $69/day (2 travel days), conf registration $450) |  |  |  |
| g. Supplies  List supply items and show calculation. |  |  |  |
| h. Other  List items and show calculation |  |  |  |
| i. Subtotal Direct Costs |  |  |  |
| j. Indirect Costs  Not to exceed 14% of 19i Subtotal.  Costs associated with your organization’s operations and management.  List items and show calculation. |  |  |  |
| k. Total proposed contract fee amount, should match amount in question 5 |  |  |  |