**2025-2026 Request for Contract Proposals**

**Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program**

*January 9, 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 accessible, professional performing arts experiences with related educational programming for students with disabilities, pre-kindergarten–grade 12, ages 3 to 18. Serve 100 or more students with disabilities. Must be a nonprofit performing arts venue to apply.

**Contract Amounts:** Up to $13,000

**Contract Proposal Deadline:** March 13, 2025, 11:59 PM EDT

**Webinar—RFP Q&A** *(optional to participate, ASL interpretation and captioning provided)*:

February 11, 2025, 3:00-4:00 PM EDT. Register at <https://kennedy-center.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_MM-OFzl0Q8WsWfqZgcrntQ>

*If you are unable to attend the live webinar, by registering you will automatically receive a link to a recording following the webinar’s completion.*

*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**

As the nation’s performing arts center, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts has a goal of providing powerful, culturally relevant educational experiences for all. To this end, the Kennedy Center’s Access/VSA Programs extend across the United States to address a variety of disability-related, arts education initiatives in the literary, media, visual, and performing arts.

**Program Description:**

The Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for KidsProgram fosters the engagement of students with disabilities, pre-kindergarten–grade 12 (*ages 3 to 18, or students up to age 22 receiving special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Act.*), in the arts and culture of their community by providing opportunities for students with disabilities to learn through, participate in, attend, and enjoy accessible, professional performances.

The Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program intentionally includes students with disabilities as audience members for professional performances conducted at a performing arts venue and provides related pre- and/or post-event in-school, community, or in-performing arts venue educational programming. The program may be delivered in-person, virtually, or a combination of the two, as permissible according to local gathering restrictions. The program provides appropriate accommodations and accessibility services such as: sign language interpreters and captioning; large print, braille and/or audio versions of print materials; audio description; and social stories and sensory/autism friendly environments. The program also ensures that performing arts venue staff, educators, and volunteers are properly prepared and trained, and may provide subsidized tickets or admission fees for students with disabilities and their teachers or aides.

**Scope of Work**

To accomplish the above, eligible and qualified performing arts venue contractors are being sought to perform an Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program at the local, state, or regional level to expand the Kennedy Center’s program impact.

**All Access/VSA Programs have the following core components:**

1. Are arts-based, educational, and involve individuals with disabilities.
2. Are physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities or are conducted such that requests for accommodation, effective communication, and/or physical access shall be fulfilled.
3. Have clear and articulated learning objectives and intended outcomes.
4. Address state/national arts education standards.

**In addition, for the Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program,** **core components include:**

1. Engaging and serving a minimum of 100 (one hundred) students with disabilities, pre-kindergarten through grade 12 *(ages 3-18, or* *students up to age 22 receiving special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)*.
2. Providing a minimum of 1 (one) accessible, professional performance in a theater or performing arts venue with an accompanying pre- and/or post-event educational experience, such as an in-school workshop or assembly or a pre- or post-performance discussion. Please note:
   1. Offering students with disabilities multiple opportunities to attend a performance and accompanying educational event or activity over the course of the contract is preferred.
   2. The provision of study guides and/or social stories does not qualify as the accompanying educational component.
   3. Performances by children and performances in schools do not qualify.
3. Having active and engaged partnerships or relationships with at least one local school or school district serving students with disabilities.
4. Demonstrating the capacity to engage special education programs and/or specialized schools that serve students with disabilities through an existing partnership.
5. Demonstrating experience and the capacity to provide accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities.
6. Providing access training for staff and volunteers.
7. Understanding and utilization of current effective teaching practices, strategies, and techniques that facilitate learning for students with disabilities and allow students with disabilities to be fully included in arts programming.
8. Substantively involving personnel, consultants, and/or advisors with special education credentials in the development and/or delivery of the program.

**Contract Amount, Term and Payment Structure**

The Kennedy Center is seeking proposals from contractors to perform Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Programs. The Center will accept only 1 (one) Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program proposal per contractor. Contract award is subject to Kennedy Center funding availability for the Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program. For contractors with a 2024-2025 Access/VSA program contract, a 2025-2026 contract award is also contingent upon satisfactory completion of the 2024-2025 contract.

1. **Contract Term:** The term of the contract will be for no more than 11 (eleven) months, from October 1, 2025 to August 31, 2026, and execution of the services must take place within this period.
2. **Contract Amount**: Up to $13,000 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 10).
3. **Payment Structure:** Payment will be made in 2 (two) parts upon demonstrated satisfactory completion of tasks and receipt of final report and invoice from the contractor. Payments will occur on the following schedule:
   * **Payment 1:** 60% of contract amount after October 1, 2025 with receipt of signed contract agreement, payment timing contingent on Kennedy Center’s receipt of budgeted U.S. Department of Education funds.
   * **Payment 2:** 40% of contract amount upon receipt of final report and invoice.
4. **Reporting Requirements**: A final report must be submitted with the final invoice no later than Wednesday, September 9, 2026, at 11:59 PM EDT. The final report must address the actual results of the Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program and report in depth on participant data, program activities, outcomes, and impact at the end of their programs. The Kennedy Center reserves the right 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 Performing Arts Access for Kids Program on behalf of the Kennedy Center by using the required credit line and logo 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 Performing Arts Access for Kids Program.
7. **Professional Learning:** Contractors will be required to participate in professional learning by attending 1 (one) Kennedy Center Access/VSA conference. At least 1 (one) key program personnel must attend the 3-day Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD) Conference, August 12-14, 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 6):
   * Food and beverages
   * Performance costs
   * Exhibit costs
   * Space rental, including workshop/residency/training classroom space
   * Equipment and durable education and art supplies **(consumable/non-durable art supplies are acceptable costs, but general categories of supply items must be listed in budget narrative 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 partially 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 award 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 still will be subject to all other applicable Federal guidelines and the Uniform Guidance provisions. The Kennedy Center requires that the contractor adhere to such guidelines while providing services hereunder.

**Contractor Eligibility Requirements**

1. Eligible contractors may submit proposals to a maximum of 2 (two) different 2025-2026 Access/VSA Requests for Contract Proposals, but the Kennedy Center will issue a contract offer for no more than 1 (one) proposal per eligible contractor.
2. Commercial, for-profit entities, non-United States entities and individuals are not eligible and will not be considered.
3. Contractor must be a brick-and-mortar nonprofit performing arts venue, such as a theater, concert hall, or performing arts center.
4. Contractor must have at least three (3) years of experience operating an arts education program.
5. Contractor must demonstrate past practice or experience in working with children and youth with disabilities, between pre-kindergarten and grade 12 *(ages 3 to 18, or students up to age 22 receiving special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)*, and in providing accessible programs and accommodations for individuals with disabilities.
6. Contractor is required to have at least 1 (one) key program staff member, consultant, or advisor with special education credentials *(including, university/college degrees in special education, state/school district certificates in special education)* who is substantively involved in the development and/or delivery of the program.
7. Contractor must establish or demonstrate a partnership with a minimum of one school or school district serving students with disabilities, pre-kindergarten-grade 12, whose students will participate in the programs.
8. Contractor must demonstrate that it has the resources, staff, and capacity to manage and execute the proposed program within the designated timeline.
9. Contractor must comply with any state, local, and, if applicable, school district 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 Performing Arts Access for Kids Program.

**Contract Proposal Deadline**

1. Proposal Submission Deadline: March 13, 2025, at 11:59 PM EDT.
2. Notification: Selected recipients will be notified by June 30, 2025.

**How to Submit a Contract Proposal**

Contractor may submit only 1 (one) Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids 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 [**https://thekennedycenter.smapply.io/prog/accessvsa\_program\_site\_proposal\_2025-2026**](https://thekennedycenter.smapply.io/prog/accessvsa_program_site_proposal_2025-2026) 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, Manager, VSA Programs

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

**Contract Proposal Review Criteria**

Proposals will be reviewed utilizing the Contractor’s:

1. **Strength**, based on:
   1. Past practice and experience providing quality accommodations for students with disabilities.
   2. Demonstrated partnership with a school or school district serving students with disabilities, pre-kindergarten–grade 12 *(ages 3 to 18, or students up to age 22 receiving special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)**.*

*Please note that organizations without specific programming for students with disabilities, but with evidence of organizational strength in the area of accessibility or inclusive programming will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.*

* 1. Quality and clarity of the program goals and objectives.
  2. Capacity to manage and execute the program.
  3. Appropriateness of the budget and the resources involved.
  4. Qualifications of the personnel involved.

1. **Merit** of the proposed program, including the:
   1. Alignment of the program to the core components of the Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program (see page 2 of this RFP).
   2. Quality of experience for program participants.
   3. Number of students with disabilities, pre-kindergarten–grade 12, served and per capita cost per student with a disability.
   4. Potential of program to demonstrate likelihood of long-term impact and sustainability.

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

**Examples of Unallowable Costs**

Unallowable costs include, but are not limited to the following:

**Food and beverage:**

* Alcoholic beverages
* 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 teaching artist, professional development presenter, or to fulfill required Access/VSA conference attendance, meals for the traveler are allowed.

**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. **NOTE:** actors/performers who are teaching/leading a workshop/residency should be listed as teaching artists.
* Performances at a school
* Rehearsals
* Sets, props, costumes
* Framing
* Presentation easels, hanging materials

**Equipment and durable education and art supplies:**

* Fidgets, noise cancelling headphones
* Books, sheet music, CDs
* Computers, tablets, mobile phones, cameras
* Art supplies to give to teachers for their classrooms
* Purchase or rental of musical instruments
* Cartage of supplies or instruments
* Bulletin boards, display boards, dry erase boards
* Supply bins
* Software and digital licenses
* Ramps, elevators, building signage, facility improvement
* **NOTE: To include allowable consumable art supplies in the contract fee, an itemized list of general categories of art supplies must be entered in the budget narrative along with the calculation (e.g., $250 art supplies x 5 residencies: paint, glue, construction paper). Any calculation without an itemized list of art supplies will not be considered.**

**Space rental:**

* Performance and rehearsal spaces
* Exhibit space
* Workshop or residency classrooms
* Studio space
* Office space

**Culminating activities:**

* Performances or exhibits
* Tours of performances or exhibits
* Receptions, fundraisers, public events

**2025-2026 Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program**

**List of Proposal Form Questions**

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

[**https://thekennedycenter.smapply.io/prog/accessvsa\_program\_site\_proposal\_2025-2026**](https://thekennedycenter.smapply.io/prog/accessvsa_program_site_proposal_2025-2026)

**by March 13, 2025, at 11:59 PM EDT**

1. Access/VSA Program Name (unified form, check only one per application)
   1. Access/VSA Arts Connect All – Workshop/Residency Program (AWR)
   2. Access/VSA Media Arts Discovery Program (MAD)
   3. Access/VSA Theatre Discovery Program (TDP)
   4. Access/VSA Visual Arts Discovery Program (VAD)
   5. Access/VSA Museum Access for Kids Program (MAK)
   6. Access/VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program (PAAK)
   7. Access/VSA EZ Program (EZ)
2. General Information
   1. Name of Organization
   2. Legal Name of Organization (if different from above)
   3. Mailing address (for checks)
   4. Physical address (if different from above)
   5. Website
3. Primary Contact for Contract
   1. Name
   2. Title
   3. Telephone
   4. Email
4. Alternate Contact for Contract
   1. Name
   2. Title
   3. Telephone
   4. Email
5. 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
6. Total proposed contract fee

$\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.00

1. Projected Number of Program Participants (integers only)
   1. Number of students with disabilities
   2. Number of students without disabilities
   3. Average Number of hours of instruction or participation per student with a disability
2. Summary of proposed program (maximum 200 words)
3. What are the program’s goals and objectives? (maximum 200 words)
4. Which National Core Arts Standards will you address (anchor standards, <https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>)? Check all that apply

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CREATING: Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work. | |
|  | 1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. |
|  | 2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. |
|  | 3. Refine and complete artistic work. |
| PREFORMING, PRESENTING, AND PRODUCING: Performing (dance, music, theatre): Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation. Presenting (visual arts): Interpreting and sharing artistic work. Producing (media arts): Realizing and presenting artistic ideas and work. | |
|  | 4. Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation. |
|  | 5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation. |
|  | 6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. |
| RESPONDING: Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning. | |
|  | 7. Perceive and analyze artistic work. |
|  | 8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. |
|  | 9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. |
| CONNECTING: Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context. | |
|  | 10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. |
|  | 11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding. |

1. What are the expected student learning outcomes? Will you address student IEP goals? (maximum 300 words)

Be specific about what students will be able to do, know, or understand in each of the following areas:

* 1. Arts learning
  2. Social and emotional learning
  3. Academic learning

1. Describe the in-venue experience(s) (maximum 300 words)

Be specific about what accommodations you will provide to support participation by students with disabilities.

1. Describe the hands-on educational component(s) (maximum 300 words)

Be specific about how you will teach students with disabilities. What accommodations and/or adaptations will you provide to support participation by students with disabilities?

1. How will you assess student learning? What assessment criteria you will use to show evidence of student learning? How frequently will you assess student learning (e.g., pre-, mid-, post-workshop)? (maximum 200 words)
2. Proposed dates and locations. Please indicate back-up method of program delivery if in-person delivery becomes unavailable. (maximum 100 words)

15a. How will you reach out to your community to identify participants with disabilities for this

program? (maximum 100 words)

Name(s) of partner school, school district, and/or disability service organization, including name of contact person.

1. Primary purpose or mission of your organization (maximum 100 words)

16a. Optional Supplemental Materials

Provide accessibility brochures or other documents outlining accessibility accommodations or accessibility policies.

* 1. Below, provide a web link where information can be found, or
  2. Upload electronic copies of documents in Proposal Form Task 2.

1. Organizational qualifications
   1. Is your organization a non-commercial, nonprofit, brick-and-mortar performing arts venue?
   2. How many years of experience does your organization have operating an arts education program?
   3. How many years of experience does your organization have in providing accessible programs and accommodations for students with disabilities pre-kindergarten–grade 12?
   4. Describe your organization’s experience and capacity to deliver proposed Access/VSA Program (maximum 150 words)
2. Personnel
   1. Provide short biographies of key program personnel. (maximum 100 words each)
   2. Provide short biographies and list credentials of required personnel, consultants, and/or advisors with special education credentials *(including, university/college degrees in special education, state/school district certificates in special education)*. List above in 17a. individuals who solely have experience working with students with disabilities, but no special education credentials.
   3. Names of key partners/collaborators (those committing significant time, resources, or support)
3. 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, as will unspecified supplies and materials (see RFP page 3, #8 and page 6 for a list of unallowable costs).***Whole numbers only.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 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) |
| Organization program staff (program services/direct costs)  Costs associated with staff working directly on program delivery  (person x rate x hours x events) |  |  |  |
| * 1. Contractors & Consultants   (person x rate x hours x events) |  |  |  |
| * 1. Supplies & Materials   **List supply items** and show calculation. |  |  |  |
| * 1. Access services & Accommodations   List items and show calculation |  |  |  |
| * 1. Program travel   Mileage, airfare, parking, lodging, meals (person x trip x rate) |  |  |  |
| * 1. Required Access/VSA Conference travel   Registration, mileage, parking, airfare, lodging, meals. Up to $2,000 for LEAD. Estimated registration $450 LEAD, hotel $300 per night. |  |  |  |
| * 1. Other   List items and show calculation |  |  |  |
| * 1. Subtotal |  |  |  |
| * 1. Administrative overhead (management and general/indirect costs)   Not to exceed 10% of **18h Subtotal**.  Costs associated with your organization’s overall operations and management, including executive director salary when not working directly on program service delivery.  List items and show calculation. |  |  |  |
| * 1. Total proposed contract fee amount, should match amount in question 5 |  |  |  |

1. REQUIRED – GENERAL INFORMATION AND DATA

Please check all boxes that apply to the proposed contract work only:

* 1. Program Type

Inclusive programs (children with and without disabilities participating together)

Disability specific programs (mostly children with disabilities participating)

Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* 1. Program Venue

Mainstream Classroom

Special Education Classroom

Disability Specific School

Community Setting (not classroom/school based)

Healthcare/Hospital/Therapy Center

Museum/Arts Center

Theater/Performing Arts Center

Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* 1. Grade Level

Pre-Kindergarten

Elementary School

Middle School/Junior High School

High School

Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* 1. Artistic Genre

Visual Arts

Video/ Film

Dance/ Movement

Theater/ Drama

Music

Literary Arts

Multi-Arts

Media Arts

Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* 1. Disability Type

Severe/Profound or Multiple Disabilities

Mobility/Physical Disability

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Blind/Low Vision

Cognitive (intellectual disability, autism, learning disability)

Mental Illness or Emotional Disabilities

Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* 1. Nontraditional Learning Methods/Information Dissemination

Distance Learning

Webinar

Significant Information Published on Webpage

Electronic Publication

Conference Presentation

Other: Please specify\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_