

The New York Community Trust

Request for Proposals to Advance the Pre-Professional Development of Young Artists from Historically Underrepresented Populations Proposals must be submitted online by 4:00 pm on May 8, 2026

The Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund

Sally Van Lier was a theatrical performer in New York in the 1920s who appeared in the original production of *Show Boat*. Throughout their lives, [Ms. Van Lier and her husband, Edward](#), were avid patrons of the City's cultural institutions and introduced many young people to the arts. Through the Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund, The New York Community Trust makes grants to arts organizations to support artists at two important stages of their artistic development: pre-professional, which describes the training and artistic growth of young people ages 6 to 18 before they attend college or conservatory programs; and young professional, during which adults ages 18 to 30 seek to establish a career in the arts. We issue a separate Request for Proposals (RFP) for each level of development, typically in alternating years. This year, we will exclusively consider proposals for efforts serving pre-professional artists.

Fellowships for Pre-Professional Artists

In October 2026, The Trust's Van Lier program will award grants to a small number of nonprofit organizations to provide fellowships to young artists between the ages of 6 and 18 who reside in New York City. The primary goal of the program is to help fellowship recipients achieve a significant professional credit that is likely to lead to future career opportunities. Funds may be used to support or expand an existing initiative or to start a new program. Highest priority will be given to groups serving artists from historically underrepresented backgrounds (e.g., those historically excluded on the basis of race or ethnicity, disability, and/or gender).

To be eligible for Van Lier funding, fellowship programs must:

- Help young people ages 6 to 18 pursue the study of one or more arts disciplines (e.g., dance, filmmaking, theater, music, visual arts).
- Provide recipients with artistic training and related services (e.g., opportunities to perform, exhibit, and/or publish artistic work; assistance applying to competitive high school and college arts programs).
- Recruit and select fellowship recipients, monitor artists' progress over the term of the fellowship, and track their subsequent professional development.
- Be located in, and primarily take place within, New York City's five boroughs.

Van Lier funding will not support fellowships that:

- Provide training in graphic design, media post-production, or arts administration.
- Serve young people who are, or will be, enrolled in a college, conservatory, or other post-secondary degree-granting program during the grant period.
- Are distributed by an organization with an annual operating budget below \$250,000, an accumulated deficit, or negative net assets.
- Are distributed by an organization that holds a current, active grant from The Trust's arts or arts education programs that concludes after October 2026.

Grants will extend for a period of two or three years and will not exceed \$150,000 per organization (\$75,000 per year for two years, or \$50,000 per year for three years). The Trust will not support an agency's Van Lier fellowship program for more than six consecutive years. Applicants must request support for at least two fellows, and they may request a maximum of \$25,000 per fellow, per year. The size and duration of each fellowship should be based on the activities involved and the resources and time needed for artists to achieve a significant professional credit. Grants are intended to cover fellowship costs; however, applicants may request support for limited administrative costs attributable to the program. Grants are designed to primarily benefit fellowship recipients rather than the sponsoring organization. Supplemental income from other sources is encouraged.

The Trust will require grantees to submit periodic reports on both the program as a whole and the status of each fellowship recipient, as well as to establish procedures for tracking recipients' artistic achievements after the fellowship. Organizations may choose to support either the same artists over the term of the grant or different artists for shorter periods. Individual artists may receive multiple Van Lier fellowships; however, in aggregate, they should not receive fellowships totaling more than four years of Van Lier funding from a single nonprofit organization.

Application Requirements

1. A proposal cover sheet for the Van Lier Pre-Professional Artist Fellowships RFP. Please make sure that the top of the proposal cover sheet you fill out says it is for this specific RFP—not The Trust's regular competitive grants program or another RFP. Details on how to complete this form are provided in the Submission Instructions section of the RFP.
2. A proposal narrative describing the project that does not exceed five single-spaced pages and includes information about:
 - Your organization's history and mission.
 - How your program for talented young artists meets the needs of young people from historically underrepresented populations in the arts.
 - The training, resources, performance and exhibition opportunities, and supportive services to be provided to fellows.
 - The role and qualifications of partnering organizations, if applicable.
 - The methods you will use to identify fellowship recipients, including how their level of financial need is assessed; the number of fellowships to be provided; and the names and brief profiles of intended recipients, if known. (*cont.*)

- Your plan for tracking recipients’ progress and career development after the fellowship, and for continuing the fellowship program beyond the grant period.
 - Previous Van Lier grant recipients should describe how support from The Trust has affected the organization overall. (For example, did it help attract new culturally diverse artists? How have previous fellows’ careers progressed?)
3. A multi-year project budget that indicates the annual and total costs of all fellowships. Please include an itemization of the costs per artist (e.g., personnel, space rental, travel, supplies, administration, etc.) and the total request from The Trust, specifying the amount requested for each fellowship. If applicable, please note other confirmed and projected funding sources.
 4. An organizational operating budget for the current year and projected operating budget(s) for the proposed grant period.

Submission Instructions

1. Merge items 2-4 listed from the Application Requirements section into a single PDF file no larger than 25 MB in size, using the following file format: “Organization Name.pdf.”
2. Go to The Trust’s Grantseeker Portal and click on the “Apply” button next to the Van Lier Pre-Professional Fellowships RFP submission opportunity.
3. Complete the Proposal Coversheet and upload your single PDF file.

Proposals must be submitted online by 4:00 pm on May 8, 2026. Applications that are incomplete or submitted after the due date will not be considered for funding. Grants will be announced in October 2026.

Please direct questions about the RFP to Leigh Ross, Program Director for Gender Equity, Early Childhood, and Arts Education, at lross@theytrust.org. Please direct questions regarding the use of the Grantseeker Portal (e.g., completing the cover sheet, uploading the proposal) to Marc Schell, Program Department Manager, at mschell@theytrust.org.

Finally, please note that The Trust's communications about the result of your submission will be by email, whether notification of a decline or grant. Please add noreply@nycommunitytrust.org to your address book to ensure you receive these communications.