



Request For Research Proposals
Advancing Well-Being in the Arts
Arts and Economic Mobility

Letters Of Interest Due: [May 12, 2026](#)
Invitations To Apply Sent: [June 15, 2026](#)
Proposals Due: [August 31, 2026](#)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a part of its [Advancing Well-Being in the Arts](#) initiative's Field Studies program, Wallace is interested in funding a small set of research studies that investigate aspects of how community-based arts organizations contribute to the economic mobility of their communities. "Communities" may include organizational staff, artists, audiences, program participants, local constituents served, and/or others as defined in proposals.

For this RFP, we broadly define and understand economic mobility, and pathways to economic mobility, as emerging through access to training and preparation, expanded social and professional networks, high quality jobs, as well as to basic needs such as safe neighborhoods, housing, health care, and food. However, we are eager to learn, through the studies to be funded, how arts organizations themselves conceptualize, define, and support economic mobility in their communities.

To that end, we invite letters of interest for studies related to the arts and economic mobility that would be of use and benefit to community-based arts organizations by, for example:

- Producing compelling new evidence, including quantitative indicators, of impact on the economic mobility of particular community groups (e.g., working artists, local families, staff, et al.);
- Generating new tools that can measure impact of arts organizations on economic mobility, including those that use quantitative approaches and methods;
- Developing testable theories of the relationship between arts organizations and economic mobility;
- Other ideas, to be proposed by the field.

2.0 PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposed studies must be co-led by experienced researchers and arts organization leaders and

- Meet a clear need in practice, address a research gap, and promise to be of broad use to the sector.
- Be conducted in multiple settings (not one city or community) and, ideally, among multiple organizational types (e.g., performing and visual arts, or multiple performing artforms).
- Center the voice of arts organizations and others who are expected to benefit from and use the results.
- To the extent possible and relevant, use existing administrative or large data sets, in order to alleviate data collection burdens on the individuals and organizations participating in the research.

We specifically are not interested in program or organizational evaluations. Research results should advance field understanding, fill knowledge gaps, build the evidence base, and be of benefit to the broader arts sector or sub-sector and not to any one organization or community. The rigor of the research, along with the need and potential use of the results, will be the most important criteria in the selection process. We are agnostic

about methodologies and methods but they should be clearly aligned to answering the research questions. We are particularly, but not exclusively, interested in studies related to meaningful quantitative impact measures, which many arts organizations involved in our arts initiative have described as a need and a knowledge gap.

Studies should be 2-3 years in duration. Depending on the scope, studies can range in size from \$150,000 for more conceptual work to up to \$1,200,000 (e.g., for a validated measurement tool). We expect to fund between one and three studies.

Final invited proposals will be expected to include a scholarly discussion of the gap in the knowledge base; a detailed research plan; a discussion of how the results of the research will serve the purposes of the field writ large, or a sub-sector; the experience and qualifications of the research team; and a budget that is aligned to project scope and potential impact, and reflects an inclusive research approach. Details of the proposal requirements will be informed by the letters of intent and provided to those invited to submit proposals.

3.0 ABOUT THE WALLACE FOUNDATION

Based in New York City, The Wallace Foundation is the philanthropic legacy of DeWitt and Lila Wallace, founders of the Reader's Digest. Wallace is one of the nation's 60 largest independent, charitable foundations. We are a national research foundation, supporting work across the United States without a focus on any one community or region. We do not fund internationally.

The Wallace Foundation's mission is to help all communities build a more vibrant and just future by fostering advances in the arts, education leadership, and youth development. Our current \$100+ million, five-year arts initiative, *Advancing Well-being in the Arts*, seeks to better understand how arts organizations rooted in communities of color can advance their own well-being and that of their communities. The initiative has three components: (1) Support and studies of 18 large arts organizations; (2) A regranting program, via networks of arts service organizations, to smaller arts organizations; and (3) Open calls for research proposals from the field. You can read about the open-call research studies we have funded to date [here](#).

4.0 LETTERS OF INTEREST

To be invited to submit a full proposal, you must submit a 3-4 page letter of interest that contains:

- The problem in practice and the gap in the evidence base the study is meant to address.
- A description of how you are defining economic mobility.
- Clear research questions.
- A high level description of how you intend to answer the questions (e.g., methods, participants).
- A description of intended research deliverables, and how they will be used and by whom.
- Relevant qualifications and roles of the research team leads.
- Anticipated funding request and timeline (start/stop dates, any major milestones).
- Bibliographic references, which do not count against the page limit.
- ~2-page resumes of senior research team leads (no c.v.s), which do not count against the page limit.

Wallace will review letters of interest in mid-May and expects to invite three to five proposals by mid-June.

Questions about this RFP can be sent to ArtsResearch@wallacefoundation.org