

**Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 64**

**Is your organization a 501(c)3 nonprofit?**

Yes

**According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?**

Hartford

**Where will your project be performed or exhibited?**

Hartford

**Will this activity occur after August 1, 2023?**

Yes

**Are you a recent grantee?**

Yes

**Enter your Report Code**

169228-Roberts2020

**Organization Name**

Connecticut Historical Society

**Organization's IRS Tax ID #**

066026012

**Principal Contact Name**

Kate Schramm

**Title**

Director, CT Cultural Heritage Arts Program

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Hartford, Connecticut 06105  
United States  
[Map It](#)

**Website**

<http://chs.org>

## **Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 64**

### **Amount requested this application**

\$7,500.00

### **What is the organization's mission/vision statement?**

Our mission *Connecting you and the story of Connecticut* aims to cultivate a vibrant sense of place in communities statewide; to develop compelling content to expand knowledge of diverse people and history; and to engage everyone in the historical process to better understand our world.

### **Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.**

A private nonprofit established in 1825, the Connecticut Historical Society (CHS) is the state's official historical society and one of the oldest in the nation. The CHS collects and preserves books, documents, images, art, and artifacts of Connecticut social, cultural, and family history to foster public education onsite at its Hartford building, off-site at other locations, and online. Our work helps residents connect with each other, have conversations that shape our communities, and make informed decisions based on our past and present. CHS's public programs include permanent and temporary exhibitions, workshops and seminars, an outdoor folk music concert series, outreach presentations, collections tours, educational opportunities, family activities, and a rich roster of school programs. Activities in 2019 reached 42,933 people through all programming. The principle guiding all of our public service is that improving knowledge of the past anchors people and enhances their understanding of the present and their ability to meet future challenges. In 2015, the CHS adopted a new strategic plan that calls for expanding programming, outreach, and services to more of Connecticut's communities. We have a renewed focus on collaborating with local organizations large and small across the state, partnering with them to tell many more stories important to our state's living history. To further its new strategic plan, the CHS adopted the CT Cultural Heritage Arts Program (CCHAP) in June 2015. Developed by the Institute for Community Research in 1991, CCHAP strengthens traditional artists through a collaborative process of documentation, technical assistance, and public presentations bringing art and community stories to new audiences. CCHAP's deep partnerships with many artists and communities offer an exciting potential for new initiatives and new audiences to the CHS. Recent CCHAP activities include year 9 of a summer youth employment program that teaches Caribbean Carnival traditions to Hartford teens, an ongoing outdoor concert series featuring local musicians from diverse communities, a project bringing Hartford folk artists into schools, participation in Open Studio Weekend by refugee textile artists, and a long-running apprenticeship program for regional folk artists.

### **Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.**

In 2019, the CHS served 48,151 people (including repeat visitors) at our location in Hartford and around the state through school programs, group tours, public programs for adults and families, exhibits (including our History is All Around Us exhibit at the Old State House in downtown Hartford), special events, and outreach presentations. CHS calculates demographic estimates using staff observations of the onsite "free choice" audience and data from the State Department of Education "Strategic School Profiles" for the schools served through onsite and offsite programming. The breakdown is as follows: 8.5% African American/West Indian; 3.5% Asian/Pacific Islander; 78% Caucasian; 7.5% Latino/Hispanic; 1% Native American; 2% Other (race/ethnicity indeterminable).

### **Describe your organization's governance.**

The Connecticut Historical Society is governed by a board that meets five times per year. The percent that make personal financial contributions range from 88% to 100%. The CHS's last application to the Roberts Foundation was in 2017. Robert A. Kret became CEO of the Connecticut Historical Society in 2019.

### **Describe the diversity of your board.**

Total 19

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Female 6 (32%), Male 13 (68%)

African American/Black/Caribbean 3 (16%)

Caucasian 15 (79%)

Native American 1 (5%)

**What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?**

In 2019, 100% of those that were board members as of December 31, 2019, made personal financial contributions to the CHS.

**Project Name**

Dia de los Muertos Virtual Ofrenda Project

**Project Description**

Building on two successful years of cultural celebrations of Day of the Dead with Connecticut's Mexican community through a partnership with CHS's Connecticut Cultural Heritage Arts Program (CCHAP), this Día de los Muertos Celebration reimagines the public's participation in the act of memorializing and celebrating their departed loved ones. Due to the necessary safety restrictions put in place due to COVID-19, this participatory endeavor will combine a physical *ofrenda* created with the digital submissions from members of the public, which will also become part of a video tribute combining footage of the ofrenda, audio and video from the public, and musical performances by the Mariachi Academy of New England.

During the online video premiere on November 2, virtual visitors will be able to converse with one other. Visitors will also be able to visit the ofrenda in person Connecticut Historical Society from October 26-November 7.

**Total estimated project budget**

\$16,500.00

**Project start/opening**

09/01/2020

**Project end/closing**

11/08/2020

**Project venue**

Connecticut Historical Society

**Project town**

Hartford

**Admission fees, attendance, and activity details**

No fees will be charged to guests as part of this project. The past two years' attendance at our large events was over 400 each year. Due to the new nature of this program, we are hopeful for 350 participants total as contributors to the ofrenda, viewers at the virtual ofrenda event, and visitors to the physical ofrenda displayed at the CHS.

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### **How do you intend to promote/market this project?**

The CHS will plan the publicity campaign with our project partners and will prepare content and images for media announcements. General event promotion will include: press releases to media outlets; announcing on the CHS website, blog, social media, membership mailings, an article in the CHS quarterly magazine; ads on Facebook and in publications in English and Spanish at public spaces and publications such as *Identidad Latina*, *La Voz Hispana*, *Ctlatinonews.com*, and community newsletters.

### **How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?**

Roberts Foundation funding will be used to pay artists.

Artist Carlos Hernández Chávez will be paid to create the ofrenda. Some funding will also be allocated for supplies.

Musician and Mariachi Academy of New England Director Adam Romo will be paid for coordinating the numerous families of the academy and advising on cultural matters.

The Mariachi Academy of New England will be paid for their performance.

Defining Studios will be paid to create a professional video event.

### **How will Roberts support be recognized?**

Roberts Foundation support will be included in all promotional materials, media releases, and the credits on the virtual ofrenda video project.

### **What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?**

The CHS believes that art is a cultural production, worthy of study on its own merit as well as within the cultural and historical contexts where it is created. As part of broadening the concept of art beyond Western European-centric models of artistic excellence, the CHS adopted the state folk and traditional arts program (CCHAP) in 2015.

CCHAP's defines artistic excellence as arising not only from creating a recognizable art form, but also to cultural ideas that are associated with that form. Artistic excellence is determined by how an artist's skill is perceived by and linked to their cultural community. Without that cultural contextualization, many forms of art, the skill it takes to create them, and the deep underlying meanings that go into them can sometimes be opaque to the outside observer. In order to determine artistic excellence, CCHAP is not an arbiter but a listener, working with different cultural communities in Connecticut to determine what they value and recommend.

### **How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?**

This project advances the CHS mission of expanding knowledge of diverse peoples and cultures in the state of Connecticut, building up from the groundwork of listening to cultural values and people from cultural communities as they articulate the kind of events that they would like to see. This event and the artistic endeavors that are part of it would not exist without first the enthusiasm of the Mexican-American community in Connecticut whose suggestion it was. By partnering with diverse communities in the state, the CHS not only broadens its audiences, but gives its existing audiences the opportunity to deepen cross-cultural understanding. As part of the CHS's mission of helping to create a sense of place within the state, supporting the kinds of community art forms that make places thrive and benefit cultural and mental health makes perfect sense.

### **How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?**

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We hope that the main benefit of this project will be to increase and improve understanding of the cultural traditions of an important and vibrant community in Connecticut through inviting the public to engage in a meaningful way with that heritage. Together with the Mexican community, we believe that the event will build cultural understanding and encourage connection among a variety of audience members through their shared participation in a community art project.

The spiritual inspirations of Día de los Muertos—especially the care and love for departed ancestors, are universal human themes that can be shared across cultures. Especially now in the wake of COVID-19, we believe that people may find this a valuable outlet for remembering their own loved ones.

### **How will this project be evaluated?**

We will measure success by looking at opportunities people had for cross cultural engagement and the kind of audiences reached through the project. Quantitative methods: 1) Tracking number of participants; 2) Examining demographic information (assess spread); 3) User analytics for social media and email announcements (to assess outreach). Qualitative methods: 1) Post-event feedback session with artist/partners and participating community members to evaluate how well the event presented their culture and art forms; 2) Observation of audience interactions during the video presentations and ofrenda display to assess degree of audience engagement with the artistic traditions and performances by the artists; 3) Targeted question-based surveys/interviews with selected audience members and artists to understand what they learned/responded to/suggest (see also the demographics section for more on this); 4) Follow up meeting with MANE and participants to evaluate the event.

### **Cover letter**

- [CoverLetter letterhead final.pdf](#)

### **Board list**

- [CHS-Board-List.pdf](#)

### **IRS 501(c)3 determination letter**

- [CHS-501c3-Determination.pdf](#)

### **Financial statement**

- [CHS-Form-990.pdf](#)

### **Last year operational budget**

- [Financial-Report-2019-1.pdf](#)

### **Current year operational budget**

- [CHS-2020-budget-w\\_YTD-actual.pdf](#)

### **Balance sheet**

- [CHS-Balance-Sheet.pdf](#)

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### Project budget

- [CHS-project-budget.pdf](#)

### Does your organization produce an annual report?

Yes

### Annual report

- [Annual-Report-2020.pdf](#)

### Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

Yes

### Strategic plan

- [External-Strategic-Plan-FINAL.pdf](#)

### Grant Report

- [Connecticut-Historical-Society-Grantee-Reporting-Form- -Entry-61.pdf](#)

### Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?

Yes

### Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?

Yes

### Notes



#### Admin Notification (ID: 5e0a490a5c999)

added August 3, 2020 at 9:00 pm

WordPress successfully passed the notification email to the sending server.



#### Submission Confirmation (ID: 5e0f7526b33d3)

added August 3, 2020 at 9:00 pm

WordPress successfully passed the notification email to the sending server.