

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 128

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

171151-Roberts2020

Organization Name

Connecticut Historical Society

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

066026012

Principal Contact Name

Kate Schramm

Title

Director, CT Cultural Heritage Arts Program

Email

kate_schramm@chs.org

Phone

(860) 236-5621

Address

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

Website

<https://chs.org>

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Amount requested this application

\$3,100.00

What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

Our mission: We cultivate deep understanding of the history and culture of Connecticut, and its role in the United States and the world, through reflection of the past, active engagement with the present, and innovation for the future through our collections, research, educational programs, and exhibitions.

Our vision: Working with an inclusive audience to promote historical and cultural perspectives as essential tools to connect with others, shape communities, and make informed decisions.

Describe the diversity of your board.

The racial demographic breakdown of our board is as follows

14% African American

5% Latinx

5% South Asian

76% Caucasian

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

100% of our board makes personal financial contributions.

Detail any changes since your last application.

In 2020, the CHS Board approved a new strategic plan which was developed over the course of the year and reaffirms the core values that CHS be **Inclusive and Accessible, Educational, Authentic, A Strong Innovative Workplace, and Visitor Centered.**

Financially, the CHS experienced a decline of 61% in earned revenue for 2020. As the state resumes increasingly normal operations, the CHS has seen an ongoing reduction in visitor attendance compared to pre-pandemic levels, a 73% reduction in Q1 2021 compared to Q1 2020—and a related reduction in revenue. The CHS has worked hard to offset the effects of the pandemic, aggressively pursuing philanthropy and government pandemic funding, and developing an innovative range of virtual and in-person programs, activities, and exhibitions. Q2 has seen an increase of interest in onsite events and visitation. However, due to granting organizations diverting funds toward urgent COVID-19 needs, current funding for cultural events has become scarce. While we are supportive of these shifts in funding priorities, we also support the value of celebrations that affirm human creativity and cultural vitality in the wake of the pandemic.

Project Name

Día de los Muertos Community Celebration

Project Description

The Connecticut Cultural Heritage Arts Program at the CHS seeks funding to support Mexican music and dance performances at a free, day-long event celebrating Día de los Muertos at CHS on Saturday, October 30, 2021, with our partners, the Mariachi Academy of New England and artist Carlos Hernández Chávez. MANE provides cultural expertise and community support for this event, which fosters cultural continuity and cross-cultural exchange. This event is open to all ages, and the

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public can learn as well as participate in the holiday through the experience of arts, music, dance, conversation, food, hands-on activities, and interacting with traditional ofrendas. We anticipate an audience of 400 or more, representing both Spanish-speaking and Anglo members of the public. The performers are locally and regionally important, including student ensembles from MANE, the community dance group Ballet Folklórico Alma de México, and the state's premiere Mariachi ensemble, Mariachi México Antiguo.

Project start/opening

10/30/2021

Project end/closing

11/07/2021

Project venue

Connecticut Historical Society

Project town

Hartford

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

We expect a diverse audience of over 400 people equally attended by Spanish-speaking and Anglo visitors from all 5 Connecticut counties, as has matched previous years. Admission is free and includes access to activities and CHS exhibitions.

Free activities for the public include performances, contributing memories to a community ofrenda, decorating sugar skull cookies, making cut-paper banners, composing *Calaveras* satirical poetry, and coloring pages. A food truck will also be on site.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

General event promotion will include: press releases to media outlets (English and Spanish); online announcements on the CHS website, blog, social media, membership mailings to 9500+ email addresses and 2000+ member households. We will boost event posts on Facebook, and submit radio announcements on local stations (WWUH, WRTC, WHUS, etc). We will list activities on websites, such as ctvisit.com and online calendars including GHAC Events and NextDoor.com. We will design a flyer and yard signs.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

Funds will be used to pay cultural expert performers and will help underwrite event promotion. Any funds not used for promotion will help defray materials expenses for the large central ofrenda installation by artist Carlos Hernández Chávez.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

The Roberts Foundation will be recognized as a supporter on all press releases, flyers, and signage, with the Foundation's logo included on promotional materials. Official announcements during the course of the event will also thank funders by name.

What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?

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

The roots of this event at the CHS are in the Mexican community and their cultural expertise. In 2018, MANE Director Adam Romo and Hartford artist Carlos Hernández Chávez suggested that CHS hold this event as both a way to educate the public and provide a forum for cultural exchange and continuity around this important Mexican holiday. MANE has ties to Mariachi México Antiguo and Ballet Folklórico Alma de México, some of the local community's own recognized artists. This partnership explicitly aligns with our mission of cultivating understanding of history and culture with specific reliance on our institutional value of inclusivity, sharing authority and knowledge as equal partners. Key to the creation of the event is the cultural context that makes the deeply symbolic ofrendas, dances, and music so meaningful to the Mexican community, and it is the opportunity to participate in culture rather than just observe it that makes the event so popular with visitors.

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

The main goals of this event are twofold: to foster cultural continuity, and to promote intercultural understanding through arts experiences that include, represent, and engage all populations regardless of background. 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. We believe that attendees may find this a valuable outlet for remembering their own loved ones, and the event will increase understanding of the cultural traditions of the Mexican community in Connecticut, now the second largest and fastest-growing Latino group in the state. We believe that the event will build cultural understanding and encourage connection among a variety of audience and Mexican community members through their shared participation in the event, as well as provide a location where members of the Mexican community feel like they connect culturally and intergenerationally to their heritage.

How will this project be evaluated?

A successful event will demonstrate substantial new and diverse audience participation, stimulate community dialogue, present an important cultural tradition accurately and respectfully, enhance audiences' understanding, and generate new ideas for future inclusive programming. We will measure these outcomes through 2 methods:

Quantitative methods: 1) Attendance numbers based on entry headcount; 2) Examining demographic information obtained through voluntary survey completion to gauge audience diversity; 3) User analytics for social media and email announcements to assess outreach.

Qualitative methods: 1) Observation of audience interactions to assess degree of audience engagement; 2) Targeted question-based surveys with attendees to gauge learning; 3) Post-event feedback session with community volunteers to gauge their satisfaction; 4) Follow up meeting with MANE to evaluate the event and develop new ideas for programming and collaboration.

Cover letter

- [CEO-Cover-Letter.pdf](#)

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Current year operational budget

- [CHS-Budget-and-YTD-6 21.pdf](#)

Balance sheet

- [CHS-Balance-Sheet-6-30-21.pdf](#)

Project budget

- [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

- [CHS-Strategic-Plan-2020-Board-Approved.pdf](#)

Grant Report

- [Connecticut-Historical-Society-Grantee-Reporting-Form.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