

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 450**Are you a 501(c)3 organization in good standing with the IRS?**

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, 2025?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

No

Organization Name

ActUp Theater, Inc

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

811065321

Principal Contact Name

Faithlyn Johnson

Title

Executive Director

Emailfaithlyn@actuptheater.org**Phone**

(860) 453-0600

Address

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

Website<https://actuptheater.org>**Amount requested this application**

\$25,000.00

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What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

ActUp Theater, Inc, is a 501(c)(3) community performing arts organization founded in 2015 with a mission to mobilize the power of the arts in our community. ActUp provides theatrical productions and educational programming, presented by predominantly African American / Black performers, production staff, and teaching artists, that reaches more than 4,500 community members who are traditionally underserved by cultural activities in Hartford.

Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

While the Hartford region has numerous performing arts organizations, ActUp Theater provides a uniquely diverse and immersive experience for the next generation of storytellers. Our work is important, contributing to the region's vitality by increasing arts equity and providing opportunities for diverse community members to experience performances as both participants and audience members. Our shows allow youth and community members of color to witness and enjoy representation on the stage; 95% of cast and crew members identify as people of color, which is rare in the Hartford Region. ActUp Theater's key program areas include:

- **MAIN STAGE PRODUCTIONS:** Professionally-produced theatrical productions that include youth performers and production staff as well as others from the community. ActUp presents exciting, Broadway-style stories highlighting talent from the community. Twice a year, we hold open auditions for all ages to be a part of our main stage productions and bring family affair performances of classic and original plays – featuring unique costumes, set design, music, and dance – to the stage. Previous ActUp productions have included Dreamgirls, Ebony Annie, The Wiz, Hairspray, Cinderella, STAND, Raisin in the Sun, and The Lion King.
- **High-quality arts instruction and training** via our ACTUP THEATER ARTS ACADEMY (ATAA), an intensive art learning opportunity for youth to sharpen their skills to develop their talent and explore their creativity. ATAA focuses on music, storytelling, dance, singing, creative writing, and acting. The program also includes paid fellowship opportunities for teens.
- **ACTIVATE** interactive leadership and empowerment workshops that provide participants with the opportunity to learn more about themselves, who they are, and the impact they want to make in the world.
- **POPUP WITH A PURPOSE**, mini-performances at community sites and events that present song, spoken word, and dance with messages focused around social justice activism.

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

ActUp Theater serves all members of the Hartford community, but predominantly African American/Black and Hispanic / Latino participants and audience members. Based upon surveys of attendees, those we reach are about 50% African American/Black, 35% Hispanic / Latino, 15% White, 5% Multi-Ethnic, and 3% Asian.

Describe your organization's governance.

ActUp Theater's eight-member Board of Directors meets quarterly and attendance is typically more than 75%. There haven't been notable recent changes to our Board of Directors or ActUp Theater's core staff.

Please describe the diversity of your board by gender and ethnicity/race. Use percentages.

Our board and core staff are reflective of the community we serve. Board members are 75% Black / African American, 12.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 12.5% White. The board is 87.5% female and 12.5% male. Along core ActUp staff members, 100% are Black / African American and female.

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

100% of board members make personal financial contributions to ActUp Theater.

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 450**Project Name**

ActUp Theater – Professional Teaching Artists Engagement Program

Is this project related to the Visual Arts?

No

Project Description

ActUp Theater engages Professional Teaching Artists through our arts education programming. Our robust arts education services provides high-quality arts instruction, training, and participatory experiences for young people and adults in Hartford. Central to our education programming is the engagement of artists who work with young people through our ActUp Theater Arts Academy (ATAA) program, as well as through masterclasses for the wider community (youth and adults). The artists provide unique opportunities for participants to learn and become more experienced with acting, singing, dance, and other disciplines that can inspire them to be among the next generation of artists and storytellers. This is particularly important for those that ActUp reaches – community members of color in Hartford – as it provides unique opportunities to engage with professional artists in education sessions that would not otherwise take place in our community.

Total estimated project budget

\$105,746.00

Project start/opening

09/01/2025

Project end/closing

08/30/2026

Project venue

Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts

Project town

Hartford

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

We anticipate that more than 100 young people and 20 adults will participate in at least 50 arts education sessions provided by teaching artists in the 2025-26 program year. The cost of participating in our four-week summer program (for 50 youth) is \$125 per week (for five days of instruction); some participants receive discounts based upon need. After school sessions (for 25+ students) are provided at no charge. Masterclass (for 25+ young people and 20+ adults) fees are typically \$100.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

We work with Hartford Public Schools to conduct outreach to youth served by our program and recruit participants. We also use our website, social media channels, email messages to our mailing list, and printed programs and materials distributed to our community members, audiences, and program participants to engage those we serve, make audiences aware of our activities, and enroll participants in our programs.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

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We will dedicate the Roberts Foundation's funding to the direct costs of engaging professional teaching artists, including artists' fees and dedicated program staff time to provide the program.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

ActUp Theater will recognize the Roberts Foundation's support of this project and its results on our website, social media accounts, and printed programs. We would be happy to work with you to recognize your support in other ways, such as a check award presentation.

What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?

ActUp Theater works to foster an environment where young people and adult community members can learn from the professional teaching artists, discover their own potential, and contribute something meaningful to the vibrant tapestry of our community's artistic life.

We define excellence as participants demonstrating a genuine curiosity and dedication to learning the fundamental skills and techniques of art forms. This includes active listening during workshops with professionals, thoughtful practice, and a desire to understand the context of their creative expression.

While we emphasize skills acquisition, our program is also about the spark that ignites when community members connect authentically with the arts and with working artists. In particular, we value young people finding their unique voice and using artistic mediums to communicate their own ideas, feelings, and perspectives in a sincere and compelling way - as thoughtful, engaged, and expressive individuals.

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

Our Professional Teaching Artists Engagement Program directly aligns with our mission to "mobilize the power of the arts in our community." It pairs professional artists with young people and adults, exposing, educating, and engaging them in artistic and creative expression and understanding opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable in the community.

Furthermore, the program underscores our commitment to equity and diversity in the arts by engaging predominantly Black and Latino artists to serve a predominantly Black and Latino community.

Our programs broaden access to and engagement in the arts, helping to cultivate a new generation of diverse storytellers who better reflect the Hartford community.

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

ActUp Theater's program will provide increased access to high-quality arts education and promote diversity and inclusion in the arts.

Young people and adults in the Hartford community, who are traditionally underserved by cultural activities, will have the opportunity to learn from professional artists. They will benefit by being exposed to various art forms, enhancing their artistic skills, being provided with a platform for creative expression, and engaging in valuable learning experiences that might otherwise be unavailable to them.

The program will also contribute to the cultural richness and vitality of the Hartford region by increasing arts equity and cultivating a new generation of diverse storytellers who better reflect the community.

How will this project be evaluated?

We evaluate the program and measure outcomes through instructor observations and pre- and post-surveys for participants. These surveys assess engagement, stage knowledge, acting and performance techniques, and the use of technology in learning art and stage direction.

We track outcomes that include the following:

- 100% of participants enrolled will learn the basics of stage direction, acting, song, dance, and / or improvisational

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performance.

- 100% of participants will increase self-expression abilities.
- 95% of youth participants will demonstrate improvement in and apply discipline, teamwork, and problem-solving in creative expression.
- 85% of youth participants will return as cast or crew members for future productions.

ActUp Theater has a 99% retention rate for young people in our programs, demonstrating their desire to return.

Cover letter

- [1-ActUp-Cover-Letter.pdf](#)

Board list

- [2-ActUp-Theater-Board-of-Directors-2025.pdf](#)

IRS 501(c)3 determination letter

- [3-ActUp-Theater-501c3-Letter.pdf](#)

Financial statement

- [4-ActUp-Theater-990-Form-2023.pdf](#)

Last year operational budget

- [5-ActUp-Theater-Organization-Budget-2024-with-actuals.pdf](#)

Current year operational budget

- [6-ActUp-Theater-Organization-Budget-2025.pdf](#)

Balance sheet

- [7-ActUp-Theater-Statement-of-Financial-Position-1st-Qtr-as-of-3-31-25.pdf](#)

Project budget

- [8-ActUp-Theater-Program-Budget-2025.pdf](#)

Does your organization produce an annual report?

No

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

No

Other materials?

- [10-ActUp-Theater-Masterclass-Flyers-and-Screenshots.pdf](#)

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- [9-ActUp-Theater-Teaching-Artists-Examples.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