

## **VIESER GRANT SAMPLE APPLICATION: WORLD ARTS PROJECT**

### **Narrative 1 - Project Description**

Local Arts Organization is requesting funds to support the inaugural World Arts project, a free weekly after-school program for New American children ages 5-17. Participants will have the opportunity to learn from New American artists, celebrate and share their unique cultures, and thrive in an environment that champions inclusion and cultural diversity.

Local Arts Organization will launch the project for 16 weeks in the Spring. World Arts project will hire talent from Erie Arts & Culture's roster of New American artists, sharing traditions such as Bosnian and Nepali balladry, West African clothing design, and South Sudan henna and hair traditions. Instructors will provide a brief background about their creative practice and its cultural relevance before facilitating an interactive workshop for students to participate in.

Since 2009, Erie has been a field office for the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. 20% of the City of Erie's population is New Americans, who represent 85+ countries of origin. Of K-12 students in Erie County during the 2019-20 school year, 6.5 percent were the children of immigrants and 2.8 percent were born abroad.

These children are facing a massive adjustment, and maintaining their birth language and culture is key to every child's identity. According to the Intercultural Development Research Association, a positive self-concept, which stems from the maintenance of one's home culture and language, is crucial when adapting to a new language and culture. A growing body of research shows that for integration to be successful, host cultures must embrace the languages and culture of those who immigrate there.

Rather than encouraging Erie's young refugee population to assimilate, which frequently leads to isolation, the World Arts program encourages integration. Assimilating differs from integrating because it implies losing one's identity, which risks becoming absorbed in the system. Integration makes room for a person's individual cultural values, practices, and identity. It acknowledges the mutual relationship and impacts that refugees, immigrants, and individuals in the host culture have on each other.

### **Narrative 2 - Project Impact**

The World Arts project fills a specific need in Erie County, by providing opportunities for New American children to interact with each other, share their cultures, and integrate rather than assimilate. Dafmark Dance Theater runs an after school multidisciplinary art program for children ages 6-18 who reside in the John E Horan Garden Apartments. Some of these children have New American parents, but the Dafmark program has artistic goals, whereas the World Arts project uses the arts as a mechanism to facilitate cultural integration.

If this pilot project is successful and there is demand for additional programming, Local Arts Organization will continue to administer World Arts on a semester-by-semester basis. The

classes will remain free and accessible to the students it serves. The cost of running this program exceeds the amount of the Vieser Grant, but with additional support from the Erie Community Foundation, Erie Insurance Giving Network, and our generous donors, the program will have the funds necessary to administer this pilot program. Already, Local Arts Organization has secured 45% of the funds necessary for the next 16-week semester.

The World Arts program follows the state of Ohio's social-emotional learning standards, which champion five core competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making. A document detailing this framework is attached to the application.

At the end of the program, elementary age participants will be able to discuss differences, similarities, and positive qualities across all cultures and groups. They will also demonstrate behaviors associated with inclusiveness in a variety of relationships.

Middle and high school aged participants will take this concept a step further, and identify unique contributions and perspectives of various groups, and how the experience may change personal perspective. They will also develop techniques to empower, encourage and affirm oneself and others, maintaining positive, healthy relationships.

### Narrative 3 - Stakeholders

The classes will be facilitated by Miss Mary Ross, who has 12 years of experience as a City of Erie K-8 language arts teacher. In 2017, she earned a certificate in Social Emotional Learning from Rutgers University, and has successfully integrated SEL strategies and standards into her day-to-day classroom operations.

The project will be managed by Casey Corritore, Local Arts Organization's community programs officer. She has a BA in Arts Administration and 3 years of experience administering existing and new public programs in the Erie County area.

The rotating guest artists will have differing levels of experience teaching young students, but will all have the skills necessary to share their artistic practices. Before the semester begins, all guest artists will attend a training session to learn and practice classroom management strategies.

World Arts is for young New American students ages 5-17. Local Arts Organization spent the last 8 months engaging with Erie's New American population through staff representation at cultural events, a round table discussion in January, and regular outreach for our regularly scheduled programs. We'll encourage all guest artists to share the project with their networks and continue to conduct our own outreach, which has proven to be

effective: 20% of our external stakeholders are New Americans or have self-identified as foreign born. We expect a core group of 12-20 participants each week.