

UPSTREAM ARTS GRANT TEMPLATE – Transition Programs

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION:

The organizational mission of Upstream Arts is to enhance the lives of adults and youth with disabilities by fostering creative communication and social independence through the power of arts education. Upstream Arts' programs integrate individuals with mild to severe cognitive, developmental, and physical disabilities in interactive arts activities that nurture social and communication skills vital to success in school and everyday life. Its programs are led by local, professional artists—including actors, dancers, poets, musicians, creative writers and visual artists—who have been trained to provide programming to groups of individuals with a range of abilities. Upstream Arts fulfills its mission through school residencies in Special Education classrooms; Programming with metro area Transition programs; Adaptive workshops and camps with Parks and Recreation programs in multiple municipalities; and Arts programs and workshop series for disability-focused organizations like the Courage Center, Hammer Residencies and Lifeworks.

PROGRAM NAME:

Upstream Arts Residency with [Location/ Name.] Transition Program

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Young adults with disabilities ages 18 to 21 are often living independently for the first time or working their first jobs out in the community. They have to learn to navigate the nuances of contributing and participating in a workplace and of living with peers. They also have to be able to communicate effectively with their managers, to explain the nature of their disabilities, and to stand up for and express themselves to their coworkers and peers.

For all of us, success in life is dependant on our ability to express ourselves and communicate and interact with the people around us. Education requires that we communicate with teachers and fellow students; obtaining employment requires that we communicate with colleagues, superiors and clients. While many of us gain these skills during day-to-day life, individuals with disabilities have fewer opportunities to hone essential social skills, or to learn the subtleties of appropriate communication and interaction out in the community or amongst their peers in social settings. Some individual with disabilities, like those with Autism, have particular difficulty learning the nuances of human interaction, and need specific instruction in basic social skills that others may take for granted.

It is this need for social skills instruction that Upstream Arts addresses through programs for youth that use the expressive power of the arts to develop the social and communication skills. Once a week, [for 6 weeks, 12 weeks, 18 weeks], Upstream Arts artists will lead inclusive and interactive activities with the youth in our program. Local professional artists including actors, musicians, visual artists, poets and dancers lead arts activities that nurture self-expression, conversation, and group participation. Upstream Arts' curriculum in music, dance, theatre, visual arts and poetry was developed in

cooperation with Special Education personnel and deliberately addresses the specific skill set that many youth with disabilities lack. Participants explore and examine emotions and express themselves using paint, movement and poetry. They use theatre to role-play real life scenarios they encounter in their first jobs or in the community. They practice using body language, facial expressions and tone of voice to appropriately communicate their needs and wants. Acting out these scenes gives youth participants a chance to “rehearse” real life, and allows them an opportunity to imagine, envision and practice their response and actions in workplace and social situations.

In Upstream Arts program, youth with disabilities, for whom social interaction and communication are often a challenge, are given a safe forum to express themselves, build self confidence, act out real life situations, and develop communication skills that can benefit them in their everyday lives.

Many youth with disabilities have limited opportunities to attend performances or community arts events. In Upstream Arts’ program, the artists come to the students, giving them a front row seat to the wealth of our metropolitan arts community and the unique opportunity to interact directly with some of the Twin Cities’ most exciting and accomplished artists.

DEFINE SPECIFIC NEED & PURPOSE:

Explain who your students are, and why they specifically would benefit from an Upstream Arts residency in their classroom.

-Who are your students? Describe the make up of your classroom: age, range of ability, ethnicity and socio-economic background.

-What are some of the common and individual goals of your students and how does that tie in with Upstream Arts program? Do your students struggle with social interaction? Do they have limited access to arts classes or activities?

DEFINE YOUR GOAL OR THE EXPECTED OUTCOME:

-Given your students’ specific needs, what will this program provide to your students?

Will this give them opportunities for creative expression, a place to develop social skills, exposure to the fine arts that they would not otherwise have? Will it build self-confidence they need in school or other settings? Will it develop social and communication skills like listening, following directions, the ability to participate in a group?