

# 2024 U.S. STUDENT EVALUATION CASE COMPETITION: PRE-READ

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2024 Case Competition Theme:

# AMPLIFYING YOUTH CREATIVE VOICES

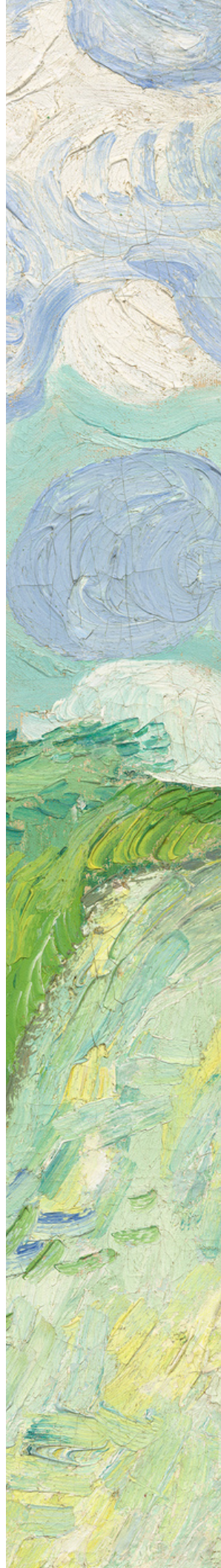
“TURNING SOMETHING FROM AN IDEA  
INTO A REALITY  
CAN MAKE IT SEEM SMALLER.  
IT CHANGES FROM UNEARTHLY TO EARTHLY.

THE IMAGINATION HAS NO LIMITS.  
THE PHYSICAL WORLD DOES.  
THE WORK EXISTS IN BOTH.”

— RICK RUBIN, *THE CREATIVE ACT: A WAY OF BEING*

Educational experiences in the arts are vital to youth development and can benefit a wide range of academic, social, and emotional **outcomes**. However, resources and opportunities for public arts education in the United States have **declined** over the past 30 years, perpetuating inequities in arts education **access** and **outcomes** based on race, income, grade level, and geographic location. Widely accessible arts education has the potential to **reduce these inequities**.

In response, a growing population of non-traditional arts organizations is working towards broader outcomes for youth beyond achievement in the arts or academics, through approaches that embrace **equity, inclusion, and racial justice, Creative Youth Development** (CYD), and **connected arts learning**. These nonprofits rely on evaluation to continuously improve programs and document their value for participating youth. **Creative** and **transformative** evaluation approaches that aim to **empower** and **center youth** show promise for aligning with their programs' **asset-based values** - celebrating youth as agents of change within their communities - and **holistic approach** focused on the whole young person.



The theme for this year’s competition is inspired by the American Evaluation Association’s (AEA) 2024 Annual Conference **theme** - “Amplifying and Empowering Voices in Evaluation,” with a particular focus on **youth** - and location in Portland, Oregon. This year’s case will focus on a nonprofit program that engages middle and high school youth in year-round arts education and **mentorship** while also emphasizing environmental education through **immersion in the natural world**. The nonprofit is based in Portland, Oregon, and focuses programming throughout the Portland Metro area and across rural Central Oregon.

The nonprofit engages youth from middle school into early adulthood through a layered support system of mentors, artists, environmentalists, and other community partners. The program provides opportunities for **connected arts learning** and creative practice within and outside of school, including through summer learning experiences, performances, and exhibitions. While the summer learning experiences introduce unique considerations for **programming** and **evaluation**, the nonprofit’s programming is meant to be delivered seamlessly across the year, consistent with the holistic approach of connected arts learning.

## PREVIEW OF YOUR TASK

On the **day of the competition**, your team will receive a **case summary** and **request for evaluation proposals (RFP)** containing full details on the identity, background, and evaluation needs of the **case organization and featured program**. You will be asked to develop a tailored evaluation proposal in response to the RFP to evaluate the program’s youth engagement and outcomes.

The nonprofit featured in this year’s case has expressed a **strong commitment to racial equity, inclusion** of historically marginalized and excluded voices, and **freedom of expression** in its governance and programming. As part of this commitment, they wish to engage in program evaluation through the **principles of data justice**, centering the experiences of **youth** who are **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)**, as well as those living in **underserved rural communities**.

# PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

To accomplish this task, your team will need to submit a **comprehensive evaluation proposal** that **explicitly addresses each of the six requirements listed below**. Together, they should cohesively support your overall evaluation proposal and meet the case organization's evaluation needs to be informed by their expressed values.

The **first five requirements** should be addressed in **specific sections** of the submitted proposal (regardless of your team's chosen format for the submission), while the **sixth section** looks **holistically** across the full submission. Each of these requirements will be **scored separately**.

Your submitted evaluation proposal should include:

**1. Introductory overview** of the **case organization and featured program**, the **context** in which the program is situated, and the case organization's **evaluation needs**. This overview should **go beyond restating** the information in the case document; rather, it should demonstrate your team's **thorough understanding of the assigned task**, including the most important aspects, principles, and values of the organization and program, as well as their context and expectations for evaluation. Addressing some of these components **may require additional research** beyond what is included in the case document.

**2. Partner analysis** that **identifies all relevant partners** your team plans to **engage in the evaluation process**. This can be presented in **narrative, table, and/or visual form**. The analysis should address **both primary and secondary intended users** of evaluation (depending on partners' different levels of prioritization and engagement in the evaluation), including **past and present program participants**. The analysis should address in detail **how you plan to engage and/or communicate** with each type of partner in the evaluation process, and how you believe each partner **may use evaluation findings**. The partner engagement process should be **inclusive and culturally responsive**, consistent with the case organization and its program's expressed values and evaluation needs.

This requirement is often referred to as a "stakeholder" analysis, although we refrain from using this term elsewhere due to its harmful connotations. See this [AEA365 blog post on avoiding the term stakeholder](#).





**3. Logic model table or diagram** for the program that **clearly illustrates the program’s activities** through which **specific outcomes** are expected to be achieved, along with their **suggested causal (“if/then”) relationship(s)**. Logic models can take a **variety of forms** and **include different elements**; we encourage your team to be **creative**, as long as the logic model **accurately** illustrates the program based on the information provided in the case document, identifies **key elements** of the program (such as activities and outcomes), and shows **relationships** between the logic model elements.

- a. Also provide a **narrative** briefly explaining the program logic model in prose. This narrative should not simply restate the logic model in words, but rather **tell a “story” of the program** by reference to your team’s logic model, and **explain the hypothesized connections** among key elements which you will **prioritize** for the purpose of your proposed evaluation.
- b. In the logic model and/or narrative, your submission should identify **at least one assumption** underlying the “logic” of the program, and **at least one external or contextual factor** that may influence program outcomes.

**4. Evaluation matrix** (often presented as a **table or diagram**) that provides a **framework** for the program’s **evaluation design or methodology** (e.g., mixed methods, survey research, case study, narrative approach), **tailored** to the program and its evaluation needs. The evaluation matrix should also convey the **planned evaluation approach** (such as the adopted evaluation theory/practice or guiding principles) as well as its **focus**, which should **connect directly to the logic model**. This section of the submission should include the following components:

- a. Between **three and five evaluation questions** (with the possibility of adding sub-questions as necessary), clearly **connected to the logic model and tailored** to the program and its evaluation needs.
- b. **Sources of data** (participants, documents, etc.) from which your team **plans to collect or compile data** for answering the evaluation questions, including details of **sampling strategies and/or selection processes**.

- c. **Quantitative and/or qualitative methods** comprising the **evaluation design**, which teams **intend to implement** to gather data from these sources and answer the evaluation questions. We encourage **creativity** in the selection of data collection methods, as long as they can allow you to **collect relevant data** and **generate credible results** (evidence), seem **reasonable** to implement, and **align** with the program's evaluation needs and values.
- d. The matrix (e.g., table or diagram) should be accompanied by a **brief narrative summary in prose** that **explains and justifies** the **overall theory or approach(es)** guiding the evaluation, **evaluation design or methodology**, and **rationale** for selecting sources of data and data collection methods to generate credible evidence in response to the evaluation questions. The narrative should convey **logical coherence** across the evaluation matrix.

**5. Description of anticipated challenges** to implementing key **aspect(s) of the evaluation** in **any of the requirements described above**, and **mitigation strategies or contingency plans** for how your team proposes to proactively deal with them. This section should be **clear and transparent** about the **potential limitations** of the evaluation and whether or not they can be addressed.

**6.** In addition to explicitly addressing each of the five requirements above in a specific section of your team's submitted evaluation proposal, please also be sure to **incorporate the following considerations throughout the submission** to demonstrate its **overall quality**:

- a. Demonstrates **cohesion and continuity across all sections**, especially in the **underlying values** guiding the evaluation approach and the potential to **satisfy the program's evaluation needs** through a **consistent and logical** evaluation process and design.
- b. Addresses **concerns for data justice** in an **integrated** manner **throughout** the evaluation, **centering youth participants and historically marginalized or excluded communities**, as prioritized by the case organization and program. The proposed evaluation should promote **equity**, respond to **cultural context**, incorporate **diverse ways of knowing**, and explicitly attend to **ethical considerations**.





- c. Proposes an evaluation process and design that promises to provide **value to the case organization**. This value may derive from the evaluation **findings** based on useful knowledge program staff may gain, as well as from **staff engagement** with evaluation activities and any resulting enhancements in their **evaluation knowledge, skills, and capacity**.
- d. We encourage **creativity and innovation!** As emerging evaluators, you represent the future of our field, and we want you to **push the field in new directions!**

## SUBMISSION FORMAT OPTIONS

Your team can submit your evaluation proposal as a **text report, slide deck, or video presentation**. These three formats are provided to give your team a choice in how you want to convey information to best suit your needs. The format your team chooses will have **no impact on judging** the merits of your submission.

All proposals must meet the following **technical specifications**, depending on the chosen format. Failure to adhere to the specifications may result in the disqualification of your team's submission.

- **Text report**
  - Maximum of **12 pages**, excluding the cover page (no cover letter or table of contents necessary), written in English;
  - Standard paper size (8.5" x 11");
  - 12-point minimum font size for text;
  - 1-inch margins on all sides;
  - For tables and figures, minimum font size is 10-point and margins may be less than 1".
- **Slide deck presentation ("SlideDoc" Report)**
  - No more than **25 slides**, in English;
  - Only what is shown on slides will be considered (i.e., notes in the slides will not be considered);
  - Font should be readable, similar to 12-point minimum font size in an 8.5"x11" page report.

- **Video presentation**

- Maximum of **15 minutes**;
- Slides and narration must be in English;
- We recommend submitting either an MP4 or WMV file or uploading your video to another service (e.g., YouTube) and submitting a link to it;
- We recommend no webcams during the video to limit identification of team members and minimize any potential bias during the judging process;
- Activate and include closed captioning (this can be an auto-transcription).

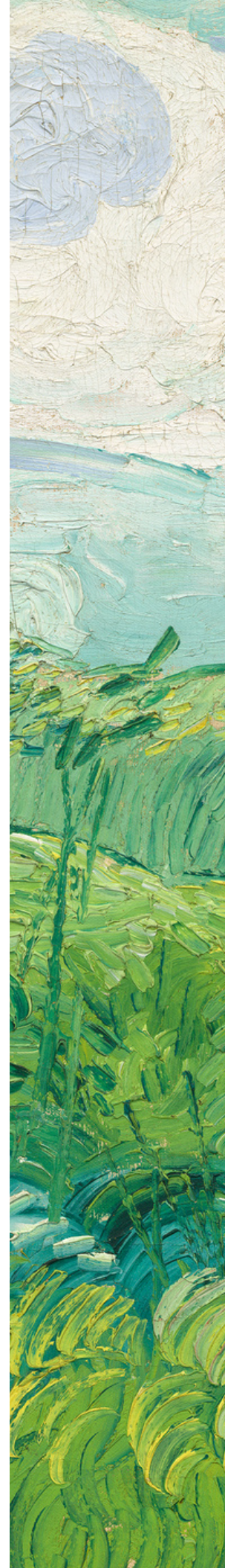
Regardless of the format, you must have **created and/or have permission to use all content**, including video, still imagery, words, music, etc. We recommend using Creative Commons licensed material to avoid copyright issues, and providing attribution as required. Top-ranking submissions may be **posted to the AEA SECC website page** and made publicly available.

Furthermore, to **avoid plagiarism**, each submission must **include citations and references** for any sources consulted outside of the case document. Citations **can be embedded as links** and do not necessarily require a full reference list. Evidence of plagiarism may be grounds for disqualification from the competition.

## JUDGING CRITERIA

Your proposal will be judged on the criteria listed in the table on the next page, based on the proposal requirements detailed above. Judging will occur in **two rounds**:

1. In the **first round**, a **randomized selection of three judges** will independently score each submission according to a rubric based on the submission's satisfaction of each criterion below.
2. In the **second round**, submissions with the **highest average scores** will undergo another round of review by **all judges** and **ranked**. Representative leaders from the **case organization** will simultaneously and independently score each submission as well. All of these rankings and scores will be **aggregated** through a **weighted point system** to select the winning team and runner-up.





Teams will be **notified** whether their submission has **advanced to the second round** of judging **by June 1**. The **winning team and runner-up** will be **announced by July 1**. After judging concludes, all teams will receive **written anonymous feedback** from the judges on their submission.

The SECC working group strives for a **rigorous, valid, fair, and confidential judging process**. We ask that student teams **do not contact any judges or case organization representatives**, and vice versa, at any point. Failure to adhere to these rules may result in the disqualification of your team’s submission.

<b>Criteria</b> (aligned with proposal requirements above)	<b>Weight</b>
<b>1. Overview</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>2. Partner analysis</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>3. Logic model (including narrative)</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>4. Evaluation matrix (including narrative)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>5. Anticipated challenges</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>6. Overall quality (looks holistically across the full proposal)</b>	<b>25%</b>

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING  
WHAT YOU CREATE ON  
COMPETITION DAY!**

# HYPERLINKS

This page contains all of the hyperlinks used above. They are listed in the order that they appear on each page.

Page 1:

- 1.outcomes - <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/new-evidence-of-the-benefits-of-arts-education/>
- 2.declined - <https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/2021-Art-for-Lifes-Sake.pdf>
- 3.access - [https://artseddata.org/national\\_report\\_2019/](https://artseddata.org/national_report_2019/)
- 4.outcomes - <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/to-elevate-the-role-of-arts-education-measure-it/>
- 5.reduce these inequities - <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>
- 6.equity, inclusion, and racial justice - <https://www.aecf.org/blog/racial-justice-definitions>
- 7.Creative Youth Development - <https://www.creativeyouthdevelopment.org/what-is-cyd/>
- 8.connected arts learning - <https://wallacefoundation.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/the-connected-arts-learning-framework.pdf>
- 9.creative - [https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/GOAL\\_ArtBasedEvaluation.pdf](https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/GOAL_ArtBasedEvaluation.pdf)
- 10.transformative - <https://slp4i.com/transformative-evaluation/>
- 11.empower - <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/empowerment-evaluation>
- 12.center youth - <https://youthrex.com/webinar/webinar-series-part-two-youth-centered-approaches-to-meaningful-engagement/>
- 13.asset-based values - [https://issuu.com/almaiflores/docs/ty\\_\\_rb\\_research\\_brief\\_final\\_versio](https://issuu.com/almaiflores/docs/ty__rb_research_brief_final_versio)
- 14.holistic approach - <https://adamfcfletcher.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/98b3c-asgthyd.pdf>

Page 2:

- 1.theme - <https://www.eval.org/Events/Evaluation-Conference/Conference-Theme>
- 2.youth - <https://comm.eval.org/youthfocusedevaluation/home>
- 3.mentorship - <https://www.aecf.org/blog/spotlight-on-youth-mentoring>
- 4.immersion in the natural world - <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/fall2021/take-it-outside>
- 5.connected arts learning - <https://wallacefoundation.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/the-connected-arts-learning-framework.pdf>
- 6.programming - <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1271548.pdf>
- 7.evaluation - <https://www.acacamps.org/article/camping-magazine/five-trends-camp-evaluation>
- 8.principles of data justice - <https://www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/-why-research-data-justice>

Page 4:

- 1.AEA365 Blog post on avoiding the term stakeholder - <https://aea365.org/blog/best-of-aea365-as-an-evaluator-do-i-use-words-e-g-stakeholder-that-can-be-harmful-to-others-by-goldie-macdonald-anita-mclees/>

Page 6:

- 1.data justice - <https://www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/-why-research-data-justice>