Gig Harbor Arts Commission

2026 Creative Endeavor Grant Application

- Please submit the completed application as an attachment to an email and send to cityclerk@gigharborwa.gov.
- Applications must be received by **March 2, 2026**.
- Funding recommendations will be announced at the Arts Commission meeting on March 17, 2026.

Date of Application	3/1/26		
Organization or Individual's Name	Harbor History Museum	**Non-Profit?** ■ Yes ☐ No	
Name of Contact	Stephanie Lile		
If applicant is under the age of 18, please provide the name of an adult willing sign an agreement with the city on the applicant's behalf.			
Address	PO Box 744, Gig Harbor, WA 98335		
Phone Number	253-858-6722	**Email**	director@harborhistorymuseum.og
Project Title	Midway School Experience		
Date(s) of Project *Final project report and invoice must be received by **December 7, 2026**.*	April 15, 2026 through December 31, 2026		
Amount Requested	$3500		
Total Budget *Attach detailed budget*	$7000		
Admission Charged	$5-10		
Donations Accepted		■ Yes ☐ No	
Is there at least one free or "pay what you wish" performance?		■ Yes ☐ No	
Has the applicant/project received grant funding in the past?		■ Yes ☐ No	
If funding was received before, was the project successful?		■ Yes ☐ No	
Please list other sponsoring agencies to whom you have applied.	Harbor History Museum has received funding for past projects, but not for the Midway School Experience. We cover basic program costs with a small fee (reduced for low-income schools).		

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Please limit responses to 500 words or less, per question.

1. Provide a summary of the project for which you are requesting financial support.

Harbor History Museum respectfully requests funding from the Gig Harbor Arts Commission to support professional live actors for our living history Midway School Experience field trip program at the historic Midway Schoolhouse.

This immersive arts and history-based educational experience transports elementary students back to the year 1915 through fully scripted, first-person theatrical interpretation. Students spend a school day inside the restored one-room Midway Schoolhouse, where trained "School Marms" and "School Masters" portray teachers of the time and guide age-specific lessons in reading, penmanship, reciting, arithmetic, music, and civic conduct using period-appropriate language, materials, and classroom discipline. Through performance, storytelling, and interactive role-play, students learn history as a lived and shared experience, rather than a static subject.

This school year alone, more than 1,100 students from Gig Harbor and surrounding communities will participate. The program serves public, private, and homeschool students and operates outside peak tourist season, ensuring consistent year-round cultural engagement.

For several years, volunteer actors have sustained this beloved program. However, our volunteer base is aging out, and without funding to secure and train history interpreters, this immersive theatrical experience is at risk. Arts Commission funding will directly support personnel costs for professional or stipend-supported actors to perform scripted roles and deliver historically grounded classroom programming. These funds will not support overhead, but rather the direct artistic execution of the program.

This project increases public access to the arts by bringing live performance directly to children, many of whom have limited exposure to theater. The Midway School Experience program blends history, performing arts, material culture, and participatory storytelling in an accessible daytime format designed specifically for youth audiences. Program fees are kept intentionally low to ensure students are not excluded based on financial ability and discounts are available for Low-Income schools.

Without Creative Endeavor Grant funding, the scale and quality of live interpretation would be significantly reduced, potentially shifting the program away from immersive theatrical delivery. With funding, we will maintain and strengthen the artistic integrity of the experience, recruit and train a new generation of local history-loving performers, and ensure continuity of this signature cultural offering.

All promotional materials, printed scripts, and digital outreach will acknowledge support from the City of Gig Harbor.

The Midway School Experience field trip program transforms a historic building into a living artifact, preserves local heritage through performance, and provides over 1,100 young community members each year with direct, meaningful access to both history and the performing arts. Support from the Gig Harbor Arts Commission will ensure this vibrant, educational theatrical tradition continues to serve our community.

2. Describe the benefit to the community (see Funding Guidelines) and explain how this project will directly engage the audience and/or participants.

The Midway School Experience field trip program at the Midway Schoolhouse provides significant public benefit by increasing access to live history and performing arts for children throughout Gig Harbor and adjacent communities. Through scripted, historically accurate, first-person theatrical interpretation, professional actors transform a preserved 1893 one-room schoolhouse into an immersive stage where history is experienced rather than observed.

This project directly supports the Arts Commission's goal of increasing public access to the arts. For many participating students, this program represents their first exposure to live performance in an intimate, participatory format. Rather than sitting as passive audience members, students become active participants in a fully immersive theatrical environment. They assume period-appropriate identities, engage in call-and-response recitations, practice historic penmanship, participate in songs and storytelling, and respond to the authority and personality of a costumed School Marm or School Master. The actor remains in character throughout the day, creating a sustained dramatic narrative that invites students to inhabit another era.

The benefit to the community extends beyond the classroom. The program fosters historical literacy, empathy, and civic awareness by connecting young learners to Gig Harbor's early rural history. It stimulates their curiosity and helps them make connections with the past. Students leave with a deeper understanding of how education, community values, and daily life have evolved. Teachers consistently report high levels of engagement, improved retention of historical concepts, and meaningful post-visit discussion.

The program serves over 1,100 students annually from public, private, and homeschool communities across the Gig Harbor Peninsula and surrounding areas. Programs are offered throughout the school year, including fall, winter, and early spring months outside peak tourist season, ensuring steady cultural programming year-round. Because field trips are scheduled during school hours, access is equitable and not dependent on family transportation or extracurricular availability.

Financial accessibility is central to the program's design. Fees are intentionally kept low to ensure broad participation. We also offer discounts to Low-Income schools. By underwriting the artistic personnel costs, this grant directly supports affordable access to high-quality live performance.

Audience engagement is immediate, personal, and sustained. Students are called upon individually during lessons, participate in interactive recitations, perform arithmetic on a slate, sing historic songs, and experience a disciplined period classroom. This level of immersion transforms the historic building into a living performance space and positions each child as both audience member and participant.

By funding professional interpreters, the Creative Endeavor Grant will ensure the continued artistic excellence, authenticity, and accessibility of this signature community program—preserving not only a historic structure, but the living art of storytelling and performance within it.

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3. Explain how the city's funding will support this project. If the project can still be done without city funding, show how the requested funds will improve the project, even if only partially funded.

Funding from the Gig Harbor Arts Commission will directly support the personnel costs required to sustain and strengthen the artistic execution of our Midway School Experience program at the Midway Schoolhouse. Specifically, grant funds will be used to compensate live actors who portray the School Marm and School Master roles in full-day, scripted historical performances.

For many years, the program has relied almost entirely on dedicated volunteers. While their commitment has been invaluable, our volunteer base is aging out, and the availability of consistent performers in Gig Harbor has declined. Without city funding, the program could continue only in a reduced capacity—fewer field trip dates, shortened programming, or a shift away from fully immersive theatrical interpretation toward a more traditional guided tour model.

Creative Endeavor Grant funding will allow us to:

- Recruit and retain skilled history interpreters and teaching artists.
- Provide stipends for actor training and performance days.
- Ensure consistency and reliability for participating schools.
- Maintain the full-day immersive script and interactive lesson format.

If partially funded, grant dollars will still significantly enhance the program by underwriting a portion of actor stipends, allowing us to reduce dependence on last-minute volunteer coverage and preserve the quality of performance. Even partial support will increase the number of guaranteed program dates we can offer and reduce potential cancellations that disrupt school planning.

City funding directly strengthens the artistic integrity of the experience. The Midway School Experience is not a static exhibit or lecture; it is sustained character performance requiring preparation, rehearsal, vocal stamina, improvisational skill, classroom management, and historical knowledge. Supporting performers ensures the authenticity, depth, and professionalism of the historical-theatrical presentation remain high.

Importantly, grant funds will be applied exclusively to direct project costs—specifically personnel expenses associated with planning, rehearsal, and live performance delivery. No funds will be used for overhead, permanent equipment, hospitality, or administrative salaries.

By investing in the performing artists who bring the Midway Schoolhouse to life, the City of Gig Harbor ensures that this historic structure remains an active stage rather than a silent artifact. The requested funding will stabilize and elevate a program that currently serves over 1,100 students annually and continues to grow in demand.

In short, while the program may continue in limited form without city funding, Creative Endeavor Grant support ensures it continues as a vibrant, immersive, and artistically robust live performance experience for Gig Harbor's youth.

4. Explain how the project will target Gig Harbor residents or, if the event is designed to bring in visitors from outside the area, how you will advertise to potential visitors.

The Midway School Experience is intentionally designed to serve Gig Harbor residents and students from the greater Gig Harbor Peninsula and adjacent communities. Our primary audience is elementary-aged students attending public, private, and homeschool programs within Peninsula School District and neighboring districts. The majority of participating students reside in Gig Harbor and surrounding Pierce County communities.
We conduct direct outreach to local schools through established educator networks, district curriculum coordinators, homeschool groups, email and mail. Program registration opens annually and consistently fills with returning Gig Harbor-area schools, several of which have attended the program for more than ten years, demonstrating sustained local demand. Because the program operates during the academic year—including fall, winter, and early spring months—it provides cultural enrichment outside peak tourist season and serves residents rather than seasonal visitors.
In addition to school-based participation, the Midway Schoolhouse itself is accessible to the general public during museum hours at the Harbor History Museum campus. Families who experience the program through their children often return for public events, increasing broader community engagement with the arts and local history.
While the primary focus remains local students, the program also attracts schools from neighboring communities such as Tacoma, Key Peninsula, Port Orchard, and other parts of Pierce and Kitsap counties. To reach these audiences, we utilize:

- Targeted email outreach to regional educators
- Harbor History Museum e-newsletters
- Social media promotion
- Brochures mailed to schools
- Educator word-of-mouth

Marketing materials clearly communicate the immersive theatrical nature of the experience, highlighting live performance, historical role-play, and hands-on participation. All promotional materials will include acknowledgment of support from the Gig Harbor Arts Commission, as required.

The programs affordability ensures broad access for Gig Harbor families. By keeping fees intentionally low, we reduce financial barriers that might otherwise prevent participation.

Ultimately, this project strengthens cultural life within Gig Harbor by providing residents—particularly young people—with direct access to live performance rooted in local history. By centering our outreach on area schools and maintaining strong partnerships within the Peninsula community, the Midway School Experience program remains deeply connected to the residents it serves while also welcoming neighboring communities to experience Gig Harbor ' s artistic and historical resources.

To date, we have scheduled ten Gig Harbor schools, totalling about 600 students. This represents eight of the10 local elementary schools. We have capacity to book more classes before the end of the school year.

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Venue Accessibility Information

If this project involves a venue – is the venue ADA accessible*?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If you answered no, what considerations for accessibility have been made?	
**Accessible means that anyone in a wheelchair, scooter, walker, or on crutches or cane(s) can gain access and entry to and enjoy/participate in the event being held as can anyone who is temporarily able-bodied. This includes access to parking, building entry, and restroom/toilet facilities.*	

Please direct questions about the application or application process to cityclerk@gigharborwa.gov.

HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

2026 MIDWAY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE
Creative Endeavors Grant Budget

PROGRAM	RATE EACH	RATE/TOTAL
Midway School Experience (2 actors)		
Actor Training Stipend	$100	$200
Actor Performances (4 hours each x 20)	$25 ph	$2,000
Contingent program hours	$25 ph	$800
Costuming	$250	$500
Discount for low-income students	$5	$1,500
Staff and facility costs	$25 ph	$2,000
TOTAL PROGRAM HARD COSTS		**$7,000**

Program Income & Sponsorship		
School Program Fees	$3,000	
Discounted low-income schools	$1,500	
TOTAL Sponsorship & Income	**$4,500**	**$4,500**
TOTAL Project Budget		**$7,000**
TOTAL GRANT FUNDS REQUESTED		**$3,500**