

GUIDELINES

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Round 1: 2008

Intent to Apply Submission Deadline: **Friday, JUNE 20, 2008**

Application Postmark Deadline: **Thursday, JULY 31, 2008**

INTRODUCTION:

The NEA New Play Development Program (NPDP) is a new leadership initiative created by the National Endowment for the Arts and managed by Arena Stage. The program will support the process and production of new American plays. This is the first round of the new program, through which a total of seven projects will be selected, developed, and documented over the course of the next two and half years. The Program is open to nonprofit, professional theaters or a consortium of theaters who apply in collaboration with a playwright. The Program Director is David Dower, Associate Artistic Director at Arena Stage. The Program Coordinator is Arena Stage's Vijay Mathew. You can reach them at npdpinfo@arenastage.org or by calling 202.554.9066 x1215.

ABOUT ARENA STAGE:

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith, Arena Stage has become one of the largest theaters in the country dedicated to American plays and playwrights. Founded in 1950 by Zelda Fichandler, Thomas Fichandler and Edward Mangum, Arena Stage was one of the nation's original resident theaters, and has a distinguished record of leadership and innovation in the field. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 200,000. With the opening of the new Mead Center for the American Theater in 2010, Arena Stage will have emerged as a leading center for the production, presentation, development, and study of the American theater.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS:

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

Follow Along & Join the Conversation on the NPDP Blog – <http://npdp.arenastage.org>

OVERVIEW

In June of 2007 the National Endowment for the Arts issued a request for proposals looking for a "Cooperator" for a new Leadership Initiative for New Play Development. The goal of the New Play Development Program is:

"To advance the American nonprofit theater's ability to provide meaningful support for new work. This program will provide support to theater institutions for the development of new plays of substantial merit. ...This initiative will also identify, organize, and disseminate widely in the theater field information on effective collaborative models for the sustained development of outstanding new American plays."

Arena Stage was selected to partner with the NEA on the New Play Development Program as a result of a national competition.

In this establishing language of the NPDP, you can see that there are three primary areas of focus for this program:

- Providing financial support for the playwrights and institutions developing outstanding new American plays;
- Advancing the field's ability to provide meaningful support of the development process for new work, and;
- Disseminating information on effective models for developing outstanding new American plays.

The selection process for the seven plays supported in this round will be highly competitive and the successful applicants will be those that most directly address the Review Criteria which grow out of these goals. In deciding which project to submit for either opportunity, and in preparing your applications, be certain to address yourself fully to the Review Criteria below.

APPLICATION DEADLINES: An Intent to Apply must be received by Friday, June 20, 2008 using our online entry form at <http://www.arenastage.org/npdp>

Applications must be completed and postmarked by Thursday, July 31, 2008. Incomplete applications will not be considered. An application checklist is provided with the application itself. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their proposal by October 1, 2008

CATEGORIES: There are two categories of support available through the NPDP. Applicants will have to indicate which category they are applying for.

- Applicants for the **NEA OUTSTANDING NEW AMERICAN PLAY** selection will need to demonstrate that they are scheduled for a world premiere production within the project period. The successful applicants for this category are likely to be well along the development path for the play and will have a strong draft of the script for the play at the center of this application. There will be **two** selections in this category. Each will receive **\$10,000** for the playwright's participation in the proposed development process and **\$80,000** to support the expenses of finishing the development process and mounting the world premiere of the play.
- Applicants for the **NEA DISTINGUISHED NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT** selection will need to demonstrate that they anticipate the development activities of the proposed project to take place during the project period. There is not a requirement of a world premiere in that same timeframe and these projects will likely be earlier in their development journey than the recipients in the first category. There will be **five** selections in this category. Each will receive **\$10,000** for playwright's participation in the proposed development process and **\$10,000** to support other expenses of the proposed development path for the play.

A project can only be considered in one category. Lead Theaters can only submit once in each category. A playwright can be submitted only once in each category.

PROJECT PERIOD: The window for allowable expenses for this first round of the NPDP runs from October 1, 2008 to December 31, 2010. The applicant will be asked to specify their own project period as determined by the development path of the proposed project, but the activities for which support is requested will have to fall within that window: not starting before October 1, 2008 and completed by December 31, 2010.

ELIGIBILITY:

Playwrights: To be eligible for support, applicant playwrights must be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States at the time of application.

Organizations: Organizations applying to receive support through the NPDP must meet the Eligibility Requirements of the NEA: Nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), U.S. organizations; units of state or local government; or federally recognized tribal communities or tribes may apply.

Double Dipping: An application in response to this announcement does not preclude an organization from applying under other Arts Endowment funding opportunities including Grants for Arts Projects. In each case, the request must be for a distinctly different project. There also should be no overlapping project costs with other federally sponsored projects such as Access to Artistic Excellence projects or projects supported by the NEA/TCG Theater Residency Program for Playwrights.

SELECTION PROCESS: Proposals will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness by the NPDP Coordinator at Arena Stage. Applicants for the Outstanding New American Play Category will be required to submit a draft of the proposed play. Each script submitted in this category will be read by at least two experienced readers prior to reaching the panel. An independent panel put together with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and in full compliance with their panel criteria will make the selections in both categories. No Arena Stage staff or trustees will serve on that panel or as readers and Arena Stage will not be submitting an application for either category.

REVIEW CRITERIA: NEA and Arena have committed to fostering a selection process which evaluates the following set of criteria for each application:

Artistic Excellence

- **Artistic Quality**
Panelists will consider the quality of the artists, arts organizations, works of art, or services that the project will involve, as appropriate.
- **Artistic Significance**
Panelists will also be asked to evaluate the potential artistic significance of the project.

Artistic Merit

- **Evidence of an organic relationship between the proposed process and the proposed play**
Projects will be reviewed based on their ability to demonstrate a process for the play's development that is fully integrated with the desired outcome of the work. So you will want to be thinking about how the design of the development path effectively supports the working process of the playwright and is tailored to the specific project you are all at work on.
- **The capacity, within each organization, to design and produce a quality experience along the development path articulated in the application**
We take seriously the NEA's stated goal of documenting and promoting best practice in new play development through this initiative, and so a demonstrated history of effectiveness with the type of work proposed will be an important criteria for the panel. In other words, lead with your best foot here, and focus on what you do well. If, instead, you are applying for something you've never done before, you'll want to make the case for this as the right project, the right moment, and the right step for both the playwright and the institution.
- **Ability of the proposed project to demonstrate an organic relationship between the development process and the goals of audience engagement which are central to the Endowment's mission**
Just as you'll want to convey the intrinsic relationship between the play and its proposed development process, you'll want to be able to articulate the relationship of the audience to the development process of this particular artist and project. There are many different approaches to involving the audience in new play development and there is no 'right answer' to audience engagement. In some cases the proposed process will not include an audience at all. Make certain the approach you are planning is one designed to advance the effectiveness of the development process for the playwright and the project.
- **Potential of the proposed project to promote or expand the geographic, cultural, and aesthetic diversity of new play development nationally**
- **Effectiveness of the proposed models and processes**
Panelists will consider the potential of the proposed project to highlight the vibrancy and diversity of approaches to new play development at work in the country. Whatever the process you anticipate for the development life of the proposed work, be sure it is fully articulated in the application.

COMMITMENT TO PARTICIPATION: Projects selected for support through the NPDP will be asked to commit to participating in the effort to document the development process of each of these works and to enter the spirit of positive inquiry on behalf of the field. Participation in the NPDP blog and scheduled quarterly on-line chats will be expected of the recipient playwrights and institutions. The expectations, schedule and modes of participation will be co-created by the recipients and supported by Arena Stage's Program Coordinator. It is our intention to showcase each of the seven selected projects near the conclusion of the project period, in the Fall of 2010, in a festival of readings at Arena Stage in Washington, DC to celebrate and raise the visibility of the projects and models of the whole cohort in one place at one time.

ABOUT THE APPLICATION: DEFINING THE TERMS

This section follows the application in the order of the terms used. It should answer questions about how to formulate your responses in your proposal. If you have additional questions, you can e-mail us at npdpinfo@arenastage.org

COVER SHEET: (Page 1)

Proposal Category: Select the category in which you would like this application to be considered. If you are applying for late-stage support for a project on its way into production for its world premiere during the proposed project period, select the Outstanding New American Play category. If you are requesting support for start-up or continuing development activities on a project in the early stages of development, select the Distinguished New Play Development Projects category. A play may only be submitted in one category and may be named in only one application. (The same proposed play cannot be submitted by different lead theaters, in other words.) **Applications in the Outstanding New American Play Category must show a plan to produce at least one full production during the project period defined in their application.** That production must figure into the project narrative, schedule, and budget for this application.

Project: Title of the Play You may use a working title here if you have not yet decided on the title of the play you will be developing with the support of the program.

Playwright: We recognize that new plays are being created in a variety of processes and configurations of collaboration. For the purposes of this application, the name of the playwright, in cases of ensemble-created work and other collaborative processes, is the name of the ensemble or the names of the collaborators. However, the ensemble will have to designate one collaborator to serve as the signatory and the artists' representative of the project to the NPDP for the project period. A generative artist may only be participating in one project in each category, regardless of what configuration of collaboration is anticipated. An individual may, however, be named as a generative artist of a project seeking a Distinguished New Play Development selection *and* one seeking a selection for Outstanding New American Play.

Lead Theater: It is a stated goal of the New Play Development Program to support and document effective collaborative models in the development of new plays. While partnerships are not required, and it will not necessarily create a specific advantage in the selection process to propose a multi-institutional development path, it is important to understand the roles of all partners in the funded aspects of the proposed project and each must demonstrate their commitment to the proposed development path. One institution must be designated the Lead Theater, and an organization can only be the Lead Theater on one application in each Category.

Synopsis of Play: This answer should summarize the information contained in the section about the proposed play.

Synopsis of Process: This answer should summarize the information contained in the section about the Development Path for the proposed project. Since the New Play Development Program is focused on supporting the process of developing new plays, the discussion of the proposed process will be a significant evaluative component of the panel's deliberations in selecting the projects.

THE PROPOSED PLAY SECTION: (Page 2)

It is a stated goal of the New Play Development Program to reflect and support the diversity of aesthetic at work in the field of American theater. As such, there are no limiting criteria for what form the proposed play might take. Ensemble plays, solo plays, plays with music, plays with puppets, plays with movement, plays with multimedia—the theater in America is a 'big tent'. It will be incumbent on the Playwright and Lead Theater to tell an effective story about why the proposed project is suited to the goals of the NPDP, and how the NPDP will impact the project. The work samples should further help the panel understand what form the resulting play will take and the artistic merit of the proposal. See the section on **Work Samples** for more on this topic.

THE DEVELOPMENT PATH: (Page 3)

A critical evaluative component for these selections will be the proposed process for developing the play and how organic, thoughtful, and comprehensive the plan seems to be for the type of work at the center of the process. Does the plan for supporting the development of the play seem productive for this play? Does it appear to understand and address the needs of the project and of the playwright? Is the proposed path likely to lead to the desired outcomes? The primary criteria for the panel here will be the fit between path, project, and artist(s), not the uniqueness or elaborateness of the path. Remember in responding to this question that terminology is imprecise—one person's reading is another person's workshop—so be clear about the activities and milestones in the proposed process.

The Role of Other Collaborators: It is not required that there be other artistic collaborators envisioned for the development path of the proposed play. Does the proposed development path anticipate the involvement of any additional artistic collaborators needed to arrive at the stated outcomes of the process? In the case of plays that are ensemble-created, this would be the opportunity to describe the nature of that collaboration. Where the names are known, use them. Where they are not, describing the roles to be filled will suffice. As with all components of this section, the primary criteria will be the fit between the plan and the proposed play, rather than the elaborateness or extent of collaborations envisioned.

The Role of the Audience: An important evaluative criterion for these selections will be the role of the audience in the development process. Does the proposed role of the audience in this process seem organic to the project and suited to the artists involved? Is the expected impact of the audience on the outcome clearly articulated and shared between the organization and the artists? Remember in responding to this question that there is no right number of activities or participants—the question is whether the role of the audience in the development of this specific project, by these artists, and with this organization is fully thought through and constructed to serve the project's development. If the proposed process is entirely private from the audience, you will want to articulate how this is the appropriate role for the audience for this specific project.

The Expected Outcomes: Describe here what you expect to result from the path that you have described. In the case of the Outstanding New American Play category, one expected outcome will have to be the play's world premiere, and the plans for that premiere should be discussed here. Applications in this category should also consider whether there are outcomes beyond opening night—future production opportunities fostered by this support, audience access or engagement opportunities, organizational or professional advancement for the participants, etc. Distinguished Development category applicants can define their own outcomes of the proposed path. While the focus in this category will be on an effective process for the project, the ways in which you anticipate charting your progress along this path can help identify appropriate outcomes for this support. In both categories, the panel will be attempting to evaluate whether the expectations seem aligned to the path, the project, and the budget.

Define Success: This answer should reveal a shared sense between the artist(s) and the organization of how the participants will know the extent to which they've succeeded when it's over. Again, there will be no right answer. Try to demonstrate a shared clarity of how to measure success and evidence that the proposed path, combined with the support of the NPDP, has a solid sense of how to get to this point.

PLAYWRIGHT'S SECTION: (Page 4)

Professional History: Select the examples (no more than five) that best demonstrate your professional readiness for the project and development path proposed.

Playwright's Statement: While you may elect to respond as you see fit here, be certain that your answer is responsive to the questions asked.

LEAD THEATER'S SECTION: (Page 5)

Key Project Personnel: List the principal members of the Lead Theater's staff that will be most directly involved in this project's development. Remember that the Lead Theater will be responsible for documentation and dissemination of the development process as part of the program and be sure to include that person in this list.

PARTNERSHIP SECTION: (Page 6)

If the proposed development path for the project involves more than one institution, you will want to complete the Partnership section. Include in this list only *eligible* partners, as defined by the Eligibility section of this guidelines. Any non-eligible partners that are intrinsic to the success of the proposed project should be named in the Organizational Statement of the Lead Theater and their roles summarized.

PROJECT SCHEDULE AND BUDGET: (Page 7) This section is focused on the project budget for the period of support defined in this application.

You will also attach a one-page project budget, in the format you generally use in your organization. Please be sure to highlight with an asterisk (*) any lines in your expense budget that fall into the “Other” category on the Budget Summary page.

It is not necessary to develop a budget for activities beyond your project period, nor is it necessary to include the expense or income from activities that have taken place prior to the start of the project period defined in your application. If you are applying in the Outstanding New American Play category, include the budget for the premiere of the resulting play. **Include the award amount of NPDP support for the category you have chosen for this application in the project income on the appropriate line.**

DOCUMENTATION / WORK SAMPLES: (Page 9) The work samples will be the best opportunity you have to establish the artistic merit and combined capacity of the organization and the playwright to deliver on the proposed project. Every application that is forwarded to the panel for review will receive a maximum of five minutes in front of the full panel for reviewing work samples submitted by the applicants. Panelists will *also* read the reviews and letters of support submitted to document the artistic excellence of the playwright and the organization.

Types of work samples may include production photos, design renderings, text samples (e.g., book, lyrics, libretto, script), audio samples, curricula/study guides, printed material, or video samples. Send recent samples that relate as directly as possible to your project.

Clearly label each sample (and where relevant its container) with your organization's name and the letter that corresponds to its description on the “Work Sample Index / Notes on the Materials” section. Cue each work sample to a point that you feel best represents the organization's work and indicate the cue on the Work Sample Index. Please be aware that the entire sample (not just the selected segment) is considered part of the application package and may be reviewed.

We will accept samples in the following formats:

- Digital images on CD
Submit one copy of a CD (in MS Windows readable format) that contains up to 12 electronic images in JPEG. Do not submit TIFFs, PDFs, Word or Access files, or any other non-JPEG formats. Image size should be consistent; suggested size is 800 pixels x 600 pixels. Each image file should not exceed 2 MB. Digital images should be numbered; provide the following details, as relevant, for each image on your Work Sample Index:

Number of the image.
Title of work/image.
Names of key artists.
Date of work/activity.
A brief description of the work including how this image relates to the application.
- PowerPoint or PDF on CD
Submit one copy of up to 12 images in a PowerPoint or PDF file on a CD in MS Windows readable format. Submit images only, with no text.
- Text samples
Submit two copies of up to 15 pages from a book, lyrics, libretto, or script.

- Audio samples on CD
Submit one copy of up to 15 minutes on a CD. Place each selection on a separate track. Indicate the track number(s) that you want reviewed, in priority order.
- VHS video cassette, DVD-R, or DVD-ROM
Submit one copy of up to 15 minutes. For VHS, cue to the selection(s) that you want reviewed, in priority order. DVD-Rs or DVD-ROMs must be in one of the following formats: QuickTime (.mov), Real Player (.rm), Windows Media Player (.wmv), or .mpeg. Format each selection as a different chapter. Provide a title menu for ease in navigation during application review.
- Web Sites
List up to three pages to be shown.

Preview your samples before submitting them to ensure that there are no technical problems that might interfere with the panel's review of your work. Panelists will spend no more than five minutes on the work sample(s) for each application.

The Arts Endowment may copy or digitally convert work samples to facilitate panel review. By submitting a work sample, you are giving the Arts Endowment permission for reproduction and dissemination for this purpose.

Should We Submit a Draft of the Play?: Only applicants to the Outstanding New American Play Category are required to submit a full draft of the proposed play. All of these applicants will have two non-panel readers for the proposed play and the reports of these readers will become part of the materials under review. Each will also have at least a full read by a member of the panel. Applicants in the Distinguished Development Projects category may submit **up to 10 pages** of material that represent the current development status of the proposed project. It may be 10 pages from the current script, it may be ten pages of interviews or rehearsal journals or sketches or whatever materials are generated by the process in which you are working. Materials accompanying applications in this category will not be distributed to non-panel readers, but will instead become part of the panel's evaluation of the work samples along with the rest of the materials.

What is a "Full Draft"?: The selected projects are all going to be plays *in the process of becoming themselves*. It is, therefore, not our expectation that scripts submitted for review will be the final drafts, or 'production drafts' for any of the applicants. However, the competition for Outstanding New American Play Category selection in this process will be based on the artistic excellence and merit of the proposed play. It will be challenging to prevail in the selection process of this category if you are unable to submit a draft of the project that conveys the full shape, tone, context, and content of the play. Of course it will continue to develop, and may in some cases develop in very different directions, but applicants that are not confident that they are far enough along to submit a draft for evaluation in the Outstanding New American Play category may want to consider applying, instead, for the Distinguished Development Projects category.

What if the Script is One Component of a "Full Draft"? We understand that not all new plays are developed through a traditional scripted process. There are many new plays for which the printed text is very late arriving in the process of development. For applicants to the Outstanding New American Play Category, a complete draft of the proposed play **must include** a printed script. It can **also include** an audiovisual accompaniment (a CD of the music, for example, or a DVD of the visuals), or drawings that help fill out the page for the reader if you feel the text doesn't represent the project sufficiently for a smart, experienced reader to fully understand what's proposed. Applicants in the Distinguished Development Projects category can forgo the printed materials entirely if the ideas that underlie the proposed development process are better expressed in another form at this stage. If the best case for what you propose is made by musical selections or by video elements included in the play, send those materials and explain your choice in the "Work Sample Index / Notes on the Materials" section.