

Arts Education Funding: A Two-Year National Snapshot



Executive Summary

Arts education programs nationwide rely on a variety of funding sources to sustain and strengthen high-quality opportunities for students to participate in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts. To understand the reach, impact, and limitations of these resources, the [Arts Education Alliance](#) and the [NAMM SupportMusic Coalition](#) collaborated to analyze how K–12 districts across the country used federal and local funding streams to support arts education over two consecutive school years.

Across both the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years, survey findings reveal a complex picture. Federal funds play a meaningful and, in many cases, transformative role in sustaining arts education programs. At the same time, access to and awareness of those funds vary significantly by district. Many respondents reported minimal allocations, exclusion from district-level funding decisions, or uncertainty about how funds were distributed. Yet even amid these challenges, educators consistently described federal funding as essential to expanding access, maintaining instructional quality, and supporting equitable participation in the arts.

Key themes across both surveys included:

- **Modest funding levels** for many districts, often under \$5,000 annually per funding source
- **Strong reliance on district funds**, with federal funds serving as supplemental support
- **Clear evidence of impact**, particularly in advancing equity, access, and instructional quality
- **Persistent unmet needs**, especially related to equipment and supplies, facilities, and instructional materials

Together, these findings provide both a snapshot of recent funding realities and insight into opportunities for stronger inclusion of arts education in future federal funding priorities.

Methodology

Following the conclusion of the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years, the collaborating organizations developed and disseminated comprehensive digital surveys to arts educators and administrators nationwide. Both surveys included a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions, allowing respondents to provide both quantitative data and firsthand perspectives.

The 2023–24 survey garnered 827 responses, while the 2024–25 survey received 359 responses. Although participation levels differed between years, each survey drew responses from more than 45 states and U.S. territories, offering a broad national snapshot of arts education funding experiences.

Respondents

In 2023–24, respondents were primarily visual arts educators (47%) and music educators (26%). In 2024–25, participation shifted, with a higher proportion of music educators (34%), district arts leaders (21%), and dance educators (12%). Both surveys also collected responses from state arts coordinators, principals, federal program directors, superintendents, and media arts and theatre educators.

Representation of distinct types of districts was similarly balanced across both years. In 2023–24, 36% of respondents identified their districts as rural, 32% as suburban, and 29% as urban. In 2024–25, 35% identified their districts as urban, 32% as suburban, and 30% as rural. Overall, both surveys reflected a strong mix of district contexts.

Funding Sources Used

Understanding how arts programs are funded requires looking beyond a single revenue stream. Survey findings across both school years show that arts education is typically supported with a mix of federal, state, district, and school funding.

Federal Funding

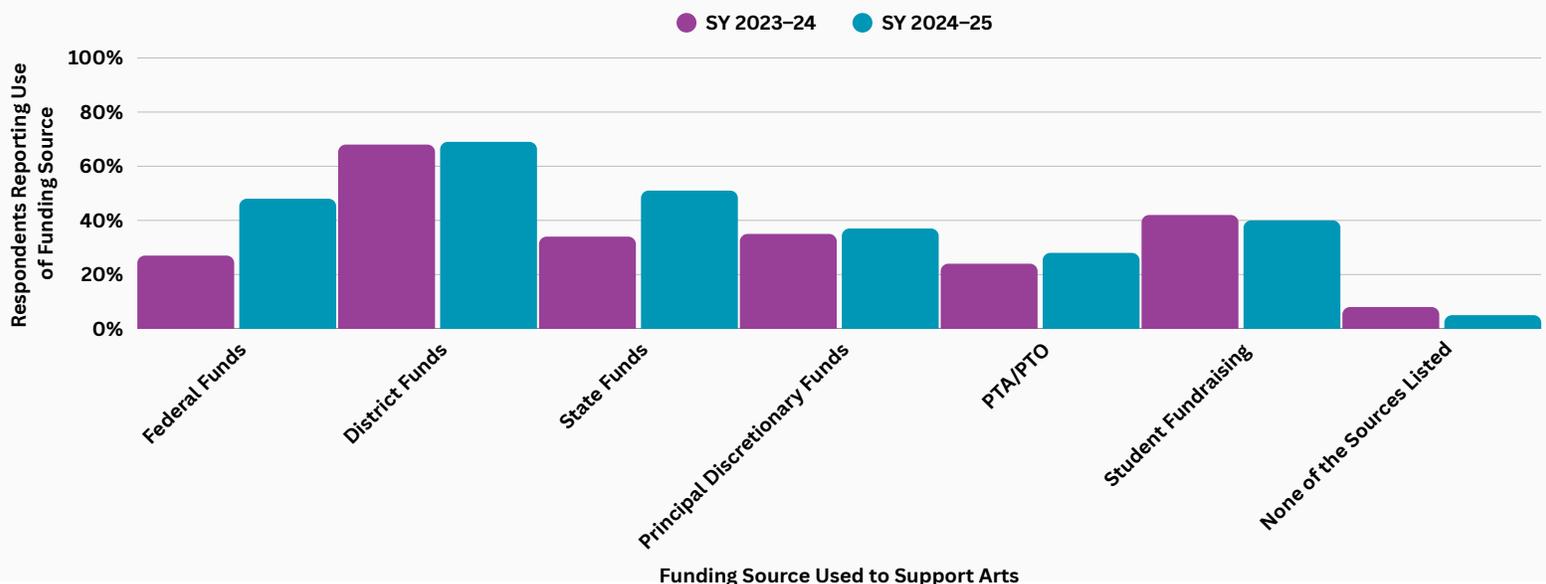
One of the central questions guiding both surveys was whether federal funds were being used to support arts instruction.

In 2023–24, only 27% of respondents reported receiving at least some federal funding for arts education. Thirty-two percent reported receiving none, and 42% were unsure whether federal funds supported their programs at all.

In 2024–25, reported use of federal funding for the arts increased to 55%, while 26% reported receiving none and just 19% remained unsure. The significant decline in uncertainty suggests improved awareness among respondents, likely due in part to increased participation from district arts leaders, federal program directors, and other administrators with greater insight into funding decisions.

However, open-ended responses from both years highlight persistent concerns. Respondents frequently cited uncertainty about whether federal funds were available to their programs, limited transparency, centralized decision-making without arts educator input, and prioritization of tested subjects such as reading and math. Several comments such as “Not sure—no one will tell me” regarding federal funding allocation reflected a broader issue: Even when funds exist, arts educators are often left out of funding conversations.

Types of Funding Sources Used to Support Arts Instruction in SY 2023–24 and SY 2024–25



Other Funding Sources

Beyond federal streams, the surveys examined additional funding sources used to support arts programs each school year. Across both years, district funds were the most frequently cited source of support—reported by 68% of respondents in 2023–24 and 69% in 2024–25. State funds and principal discretionary funds were each used by more than one-third of respondents each year.

Student fundraising also played a substantial role, reported by 42% of respondents in 2023–24 and 40% in 2024–25. PTA/PTO funding was less frequently cited, and fewer than 8% of respondents in either year reported receiving none of the listed funding sources.

These findings underscore a consistent pattern: District and local funding is critical for arts education budgets, while federal funds are used less frequently and often serve as supplemental but transformative resources. According to respondents, this sometimes leaves budget decisions “at the whim and personal opinions” of administrators, with student fundraising heavily relied on in some districts.

How Federal Funds Were Used

Across both school years, instructional materials—such as textbooks, digital resources, and supplemental materials—were the most frequently cited use of federal funds within arts programs. Of those who answered the question, 48% in 2023–24 and 39% in 2024–25 reported using federal funds for this purpose.

Musical instruments and equipment followed closely, cited by 37% and 36% of respondents, respectively. In both years, more than 20% of respondents also reported using federal funds to support professional learning, curriculum development, staffing, and facilities improvements.

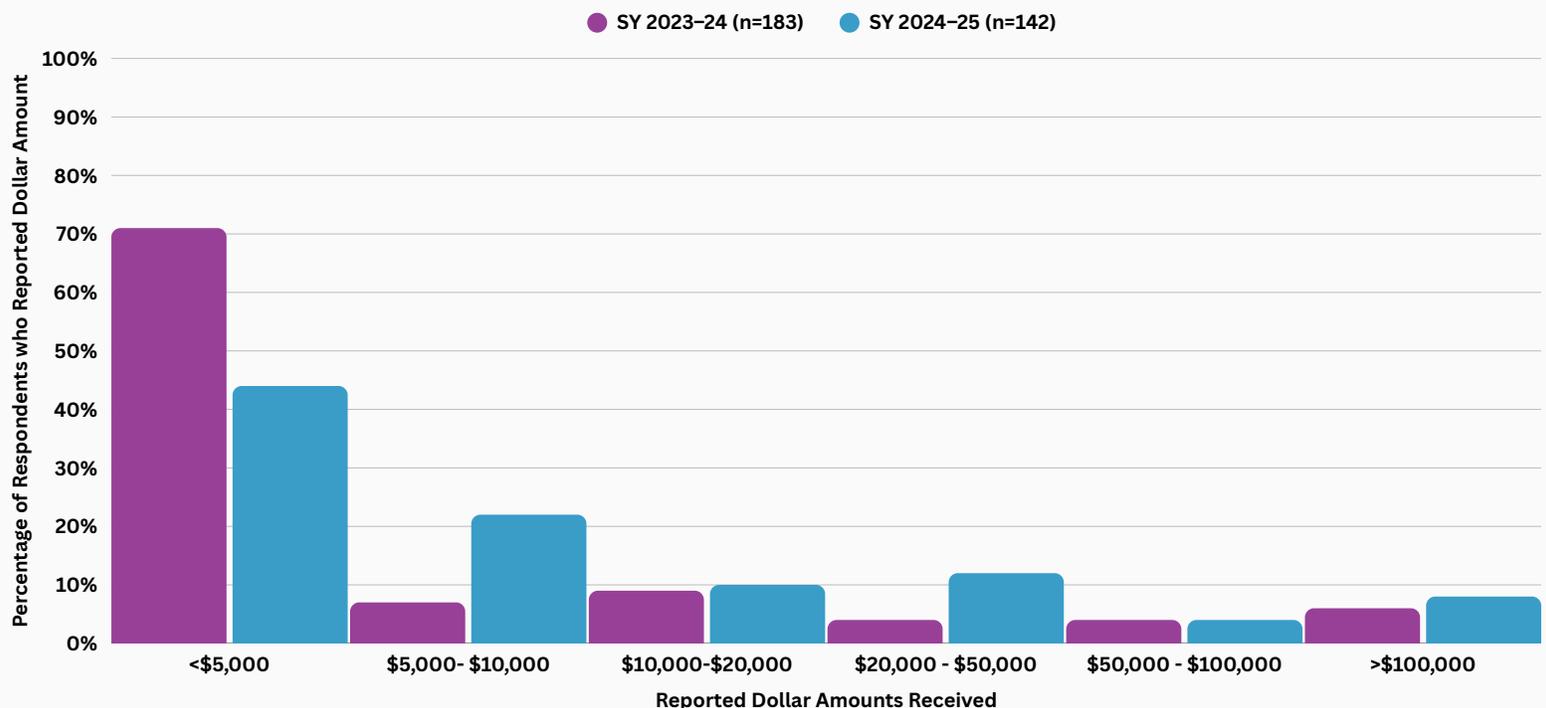
Title I

Title I provides supplemental financial assistance to schools and districts serving high percentages of students from low-income families, supporting equitable access to high-quality education. In both surveys, more than 63% of respondents reported that at least half of the students in their districts qualified for Title I support.

In 2023–24, 28% of all respondents reported receiving some Title I funding for arts programs, rising to 33% in 2024–25. While roughly one in three respondents each year reported access to Title I funds, most allocations were modest. Of those who provided a dollar amount, most indicated receiving less than \$5,000 in Title I funds over the course of the school year.

Open-ended responses indicated Title I funds were most often used to purchase art supplies, instruments, and classroom materials; support supplemental instruction; fund after-school programs; and provide staffing. Respondents emphasized that these funds allowed them to provide materials for students who "couldn't otherwise afford them," create programs where "all students, regardless of income, could fully participate," and develop skills that contribute to "overall academic experience."

Title I Funding Received in SY 2023–24 and SY 2024–25



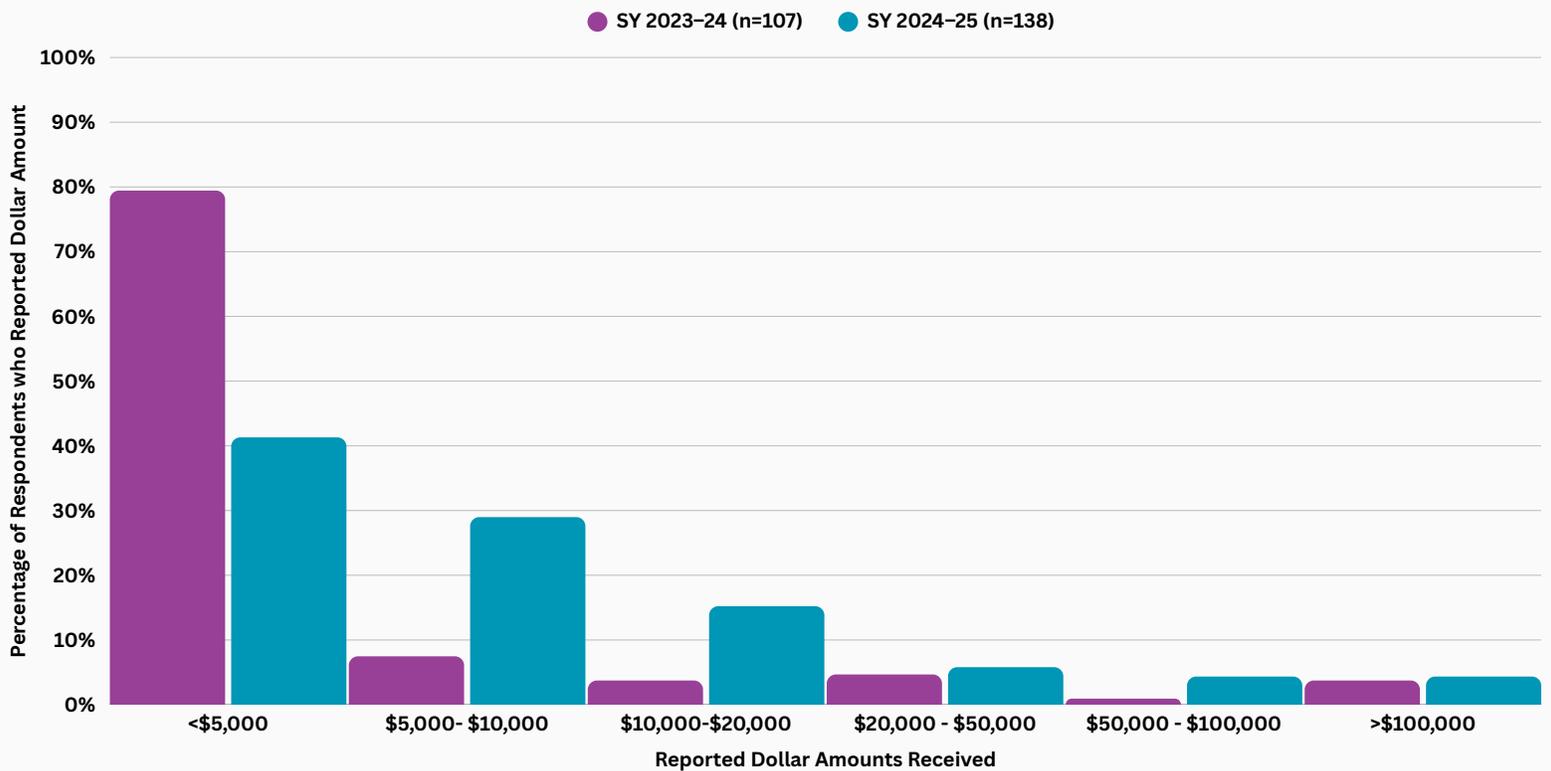
Title II

Title II funds support educator recruitment and retention, strengthen professional expertise, and increase the number of high-quality educators nationwide, including arts instructors.

Reported Title II use for arts education rose sharply from 5% in 2023–24 to 33% in 2024–25. While most allocations remained under \$5,000, there was a notable increase in mid-range funding between school years. Of those who provided a dollar amount, only 7% in 2023–24 reported receiving \$5,000–\$10,000, compared to 29% in 2024–25.

Open-ended responses showed that Title II funds were primarily used for professional development, state and national conference attendance, instructional coaching, curriculum development, and specialized training in arts pedagogy. Several respondents described a direct and positive classroom impact, linking strengthened teaching practices and increased collaboration among educators to improved student outcomes.

Title II Funding Received in SY 2023–24 and SY 2024–25



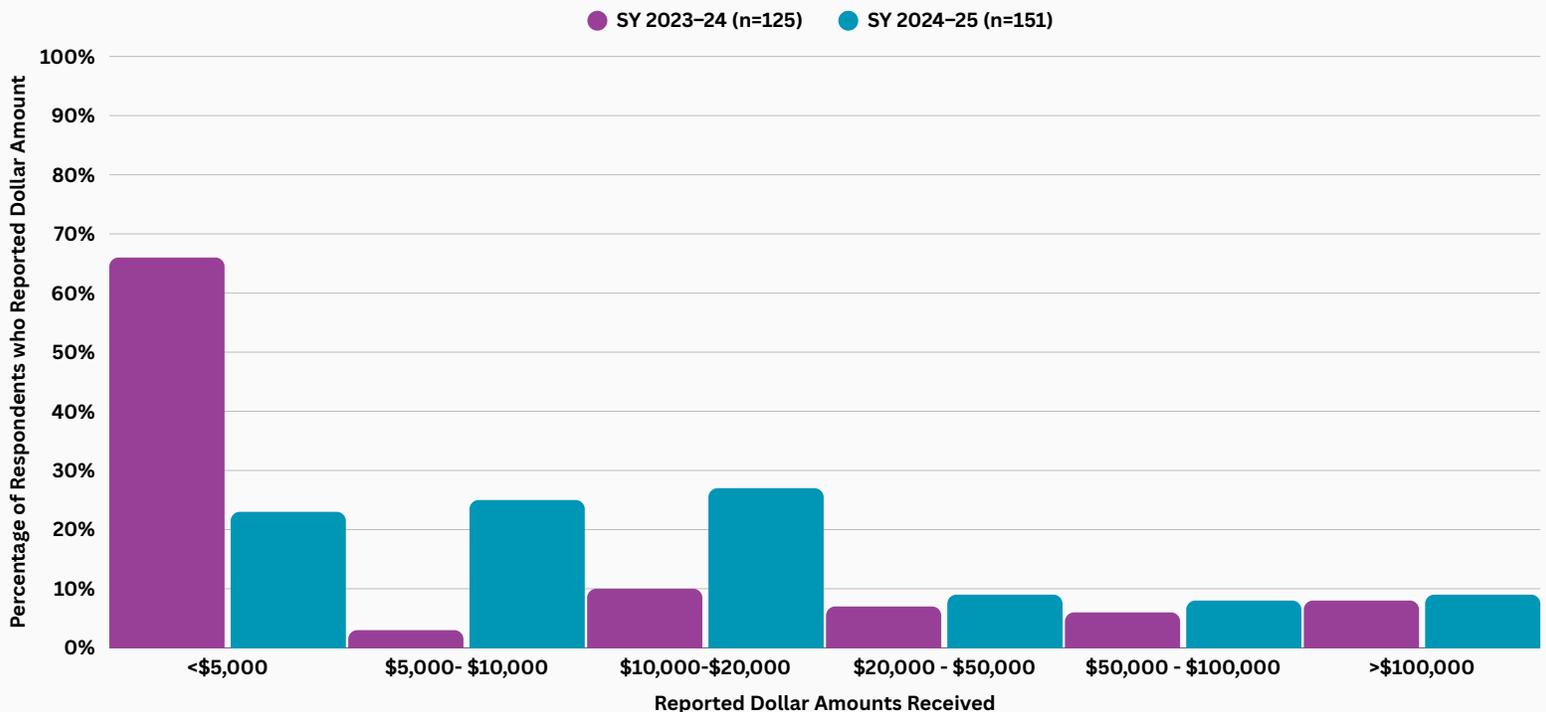
Title IV-A

Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants) provides flexible federal funding to support a well-rounded education, safe and healthy students, and the effective use of technology.

Reported Title IV-A use for arts education rose notably from 11% in 2023–24 to 39% in 2024–25. Funding levels also shifted. In 2023–24, 66% of those who provided a dollar amount reported receiving less than \$5,000. In 2024–25, reported allocations were more evenly distributed: 23% of those who provided a dollar amount reported less than \$5,000, 25% reported \$5,000–\$10,000, and 27% reported \$10,000–\$20,000.

Respondents frequently cited using Title IV-A funds for technology purchases, digital media equipment, instrument upgrades, arts integration initiatives, and safety or facilities improvements. Many described Title IV-A's flexibility as especially valuable in expanding access to a well-rounded education and modernizing arts instruction. One respondent shared that Title IV-A funds had the power of "aligning the creative side of the brain with the analytical to ignite excitement in students and teachers."

Title IV-A Funding Received in SY 2023–24 and SY 2024–25



Assistance for Arts Education

The Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) program supports professional development for arts educators, the creation of accessible instructional materials, and strengthened partnerships among schools, districts, and arts organizations.

In 2023–24, just 5% of respondents reported using AAE funds, increasing to 15% in 2024–25. Open-ended responses indicated that AAE funds supported professional development programs, partnerships with community arts organizations, curriculum development, districtwide arts planning, and efforts to expand equitable access to arts instruction. Respondents frequently described these funds as helping strengthen capacity and collaboration within and across districts.

"Assistance for Arts Education funds were used to enhance our band, drama, and visual arts programs by providing essential resources. We have enriched the curriculum, exposing students to diverse artistic techniques and career pathways in the arts, and gave them a unique opportunity to learn from industry professionals."

– 2023–24 Respondent

ESSER

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds were created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to support safe school reopening, accelerate student learning, and maintain access to a well-rounded education.

In 2023–24, 20% of all respondents reported using ESSER funds to support arts programs. Of the 160 respondents who provided dollar amounts, 92 indicated receiving less than \$5,000 during that school year. Open-ended responses show that ESSER funds were used to replace or upgrade instruments and equipment, purchase instructional materials, improve ventilation and safety in rehearsal spaces, expand summer or after-school arts programs, and address learning loss through increased arts engagement. Many respondents described ESSER funding as essential for maintaining or restoring programs during pandemic recovery.

Because ESSER funds were no longer available during the 2024–25 survey period, respondents were asked to reflect on prior reliance, with 58% of respondents reporting at least slight reliance on ESSER funds. In open-ended responses, educators expressed worries about maintaining expanded programming and preserving technology upgrades initiated with ESSER funds, with one respondent noting that, without continued funding, costs often fell "back on the schools."

The Value of Federal Funds

Justification

When asked how the use of federal funds for arts education was justified, more than half of 2023-24 respondents who answered the question reported referencing the importance of a well-rounded education. Other commonly cited rationales included diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (47%) and standards-based instruction (43%).

In 2024–25, open-ended responses emphasized a well-rounded education, equity for underserved students, academic achievement, social-emotional learning, and college and career readiness.

Respondents frequently described the arts as supporting “the whole child,” increasing engagement and attendance, and building transferable skills such as self-confidence, collaboration, and creative problem-solving.

"Our district justified the use of federal funds for music and the arts based on their documented impact on equitable access, student engagement, and whole-child development. Music and arts instruction support measurable learning outcomes in collaboration, communication, creativity, and perseverance, while also reinforcing academic skills such as literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking."

– 2024–25 Respondent

Student Impact

When prompted to describe how students benefit from the use of federal funds for arts education, the most common answers in 2023–24 and 2024–25 were increased access; student engagement in school; social and emotional wellness; and artistic skills, knowledge, and technique. Many respondents also cited problem solving, career and college preparation, and community engagement as benefits to students. In open-ended responses, educators highlighted students feeling “seen and valued through creative expression” and building confidence through expanded arts opportunities.

"If you treat students and the arts as if it is a hobby, or as an unrealistic goal, students will view and treat it as such, leaving talented young artists with unmet potential due to a lack of resourcing. It is important for all students to have access in order to have a future."

– 2024–25 Respondent

Impact on Arts Educators

More than 60% of respondents in both years reported that federal funds contributed to positive school cultures, well-being, and personalized professional learning. Educators described reduced burnout, stronger collaboration, and improved instructional quality as outcomes of federal support that allowed them to focus on teaching instead of "begging, scraping, or self-funding." One educator shared, "So much of my time was spent worrying about where the money would come from . . . this hurts creativity and takes away from actual teaching time."

Unmet Needs

While federal funds had clear positive impacts, many respondents identified persistent unmet needs that additional funding could help address.

In 2023–24, more than 62% of respondents shared that federal support could be used for instructional resources, facilities improvements, and visual art tools and equipment, among other areas. Open-ended responses highlighted outdated instruments, shortages of supplies, inadequate storage, and poor acoustics. Other pressing needs included technology upgrades, additional staffing, transportation for performances, equipment repair and maintenance, expanded course offerings, and planning time. Educators frequently noted that when funding fell short, they often paid out-of-pocket to ensure students had access to high-quality learning opportunities.

"We are preparing students for a 21st century creative economy with 20th century tools."

– 2024–25 Respondent

In 2024–25, similar themes emerged. More than 63% of respondents identified musical instruments and equipment, facilities improvements, and instructional materials as unmet needs that federal funds could help address. Open-ended responses again highlighted outdated equipment, limited rehearsal or storage space, technology gaps, and staffing constraints. Inflation and growing enrollment further strained resources, and educators again reported covering costs personally to maintain program quality. These findings underscore the gap between current funding and the real costs required to provide equitable, high-quality arts education.

Conclusion

Across both school years, survey findings point to both encouraging progress and ongoing challenges in federal support for arts education. Reported use of several key funding streams increased in 2024–25, and fewer respondents indicated uncertainty about whether federal funds supported their programs—suggesting improved awareness and engagement in some districts. However, allocations often remained modest, and many educators continued to report limited transparency and exclusion from funding decisions.

When available, federal funds play a powerful role in expanding access, strengthening instructional quality, modernizing resources, and supporting educator development. At the same time, persistent gaps—particularly in equipment, facilities, staffing, and long-term sustainability—highlight the distance between current funding levels and program needs.

Ultimately, the findings reinforce a clear takeaway: Investment in arts education is both impactful and necessary. Ensuring greater awareness, transparency, and intentional inclusion of arts programs in federal funding decisions will be critical to providing students nationwide with access to high-quality, well-rounded learning opportunities. As federal budget discussions begin for the upcoming fiscal year, the data in this report underscore the need not just to sustain, but to strengthen, this commitment.

When arts education is deliberately prioritized within funding streams such as Titles I, II, and IV-A, students and educators benefit in measurable ways. Arts education advocates are encouraged to share these findings with their elected officials and urge continued, robust support for federal programs that expand equitable access to the arts. [Learn more](#) about how sustained advocacy today could help ensure long-term, stable growth for arts education nationwide.

This resource is provided courtesy of the [Arts Education Alliance](#) and the [NAMM SupportMusic Coalition](#). The Arts Education Alliance is a partnership between the [Educational Theatre Association](#) (EdTA), the [National Art Education Association](#) (NAEA), the [National Association for Media Arts Education](#) (NAMAE), the [National Association for Music Education](#) (NAfME), and the [National Dance Education Organization](#) (NDEO).

