

TIIAP FY 1999
Project Narrative

California Institute of the Arts

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Education, Culture, and Lifelong Learning
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**California Institute of the Arts Community Arts Partnership
Proposal to the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance
Program**

Introduction and Project Description

The California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) respectfully requests \$560,000 over a period of two years from the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP) to support the Community Arts Partnership (CAP) Digital Arts Network (DAN). This innovative undertaking will link 9 community-based arts organizations and CalArts via the Internet and computer video teleconferencing systems in order to provide communication technologies and arts training programs to Los Angeles youth. Using two-way video telecommunications stations, high school students from severely underserved areas of Los Angeles County who, because of distance, cultural and racial separation and the local micro-politics of geographic boundaries, would not ordinarily know each other, will be able to meet and discuss issues which are important to them, share their experiences by collaboratively creating visual art, music and writing, and plan and undertake cooperative projects. They will learn a variety of computer-based skills which will facilitate the realization of their future educational and career goals.

This project addresses two interrelated issues: The first concerns the isolation among high school-aged youth which results from growing up in an urban environment fragmented along racial and economic lines, together with sheer geographic distance (it is nearly 45 miles between our two most distant community partners); the second is a crippling lack of access to local art and technology educational resources (art education, for example, has been virtually eliminated from Los Angeles public schools). The DAN project will address these two problems by accomplishing the following:

- 1) By establishing telecommunications links between our widely separated partner organizations (including CalArts), youth from communities in South Central Los Angeles, East and downtown Los Angeles, the San Fernando Valley, Pasadena and the Santa Clarita Valley will work with each other, communicate together about key issues in their lives, and learn firsthand about others with whom they will grow to share metropolitan Los Angeles.
- 2) Multimedia workshops held at each community partner site and at CalArts teaching computer and communications technology applications to the visual and performing arts will provide program participants with arts, communication and digital technology skills which are beyond the scope of public school education and typical after-school offerings.
- 3) Finally, and most importantly, the emphasis on collaborative work will mean that youth participants work together, producing art, CD ROMS, performances, videos, music

and writing. Since its inception, CAP has stressed cooperation and collaboration, and the DAN project will give us a concrete means to make this happen. Young people from these underserved areas will form constructive working relationships and friendships while at the same time learning skills which will help to prepare them for higher education and employment (since 1990, over 500 CAP students have enrolled in colleges and universities, including 55 at CalArts). We believe that this project will expand, enrich and enlarge participants' views of their world.

Participants will learn computer skills, how to navigate the World Wide Web and how to create web pages to display art works, performances, writing, and a tutorial for CD ROM production. They will be introduced to the Internet both as a learning resource and as a system of communication with the power to overcome spatial and cultural boundaries. Our experience suggests that computer, communication and arts skills learned by participants will have a positive effect on school performance, enhancing opportunities for higher education as well as possible future careers in the arts, technology and entertainment industries. Three 10-week sessions (meeting once weekly) would be held at each of the ten sites on an annual basis. The requested funds would be used to purchase teleconferencing workstations for each partner organization (one per site for a total of 10), purchase Macintosh network stations for each site (five per site for a total of 50), purchase necessary software, and to hire instructors for the digital arts workshops. The instructors chosen would have working experience in digital arts technology, would assist in the recruitment of youth from local arts organizations, youth agencies, churches, community centers and public schools, and would assist with the design and implementation of the digital arts curriculum. Funding from TIIAP would allow 10-20 students at each site to access the network, and provide them with e-mail and with the many educational resources available through the World Wide Web. Over 200 teenagers would be trained during each 10-week session, enabling approximately 600 youth to participate each year.

Evaluation

CalArts and CAP recognize the importance of documenting and assessing CAP programs in order to maintain and improve their quality. From its inception, CAP has monitored its activities using qualitative and quantitative measures to assure that its goals and those of its partners are being met. Annual evaluations are performed by CZ Associates, an independent consulting firm, and are designed to measure the effectiveness of the programs and their impact on community participants, CalArts student instructors, and community partners. The consultants collect their information through interviews, review written comments from staff, faculty, students, parents, and youth participants, conduct focus groups, make site visits to observe classes and events, and meet with staff and faculty. Additionally, CAP is in the midst of a longitudinal study tracking 130 community participants and CalArts students through CAP programs and afterward to evaluate the effects of taking part in CAP on future educational and career goals and

achievements, including teaching. The study is funded by a generous grant from the Nathan Cummings Foundation. Throughout the nine years of the CAP program, CalArts and CAP have produced yearly evaluative reports as well as an impact study and the aforementioned longitudinal study.

The DAN project will be evaluated according to CAP standards. CZ Associates will collect both qualitative data (interview data with community partner staffs, program participants and their parents and CalArts student instructors and faculty members involved in the project) and quantitative data (including measures of satisfaction and achievement). A report will be produced evaluating the Network's and the associated workshops' effectiveness at teaching communication and arts skills, and recommendations for future improvements will be made. A copy of the evaluation will be supplied to all funders and will be available to the public (please see appendix pages A 1-9 for the executive summary from the current CAP evaluation).

Significance of the Digital Arts Network

Many Los Angeles County youth in the CAP service areas grow up in unenviable circumstances with respect to education resources. An economically disadvantaged position, combined with difficulties in moving across geographical and racial boundaries result in an insularity experienced by many teenagers in the neighborhoods we serve. Although the city of Los Angeles and its surrounding communities can boast impressive educational and cultural resources, only a small percentage of the county's inhabitants are able to regularly make use of them. Nowhere is this more true than in the availability of information technology.

Even as the Web and Internet grow as important educational and communicative resources, children and teenagers from underserved communities continue to have disproportionately low access to these technologies. This lack of access to resources enjoyed by others is endemic in the CAP service areas. The DAN project is innovative in that it promises to make a real difference for a significant number of Los Angeles youth by providing college-level training in computer and software use, and computer applications in the visual arts (including graphic design and photography), the performing arts, and communications technology. Key features of the DAN workshops will include small student-to-teacher ratios (usually four-to-one or fewer) and extended time for community students to hone their skills on the equipment. Additionally, we have found that the four-hour format allows participants to really focus on the tasks at hand and get involved with the class and individual projects.

In contemporary job markets there is a need for youth to be technically proficient with state-of-the-art computers and equipment. The training participants receive in this CAP program helps to address the lack of access to arts education, higher education, new technologies and job skills training in students' communities. Additionally, the design of

this project makes it an ideal model for interactive networking between both urban and rural communities, and we look forward to sharing our experiences concerning DAN with other organizations wishing to establish similar networks. The CAP program itself has served as a model for nationwide replication by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, and our animation workshops have been replicated by the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department. The matching funds which TIIAP can provide to assist us in building the Digital Arts Network and implementing Network programming would make a tremendous difference in CAP participants' lives.

DAN Project Feasibility

CalArts and CAP

The California Institute of the Arts is a private, nonprofit, fully accredited arts school dedicated to teaching six arts disciplines under one roof on its 60-acre campus. *U.S. News & World Report* ranked CalArts 5th in fine arts among colleges nationally in 1997 (the last year such rankings were compiled). At the Institute, more than 1,100 student artists per year are encouraged to explore and experiment in an artistically and academically challenging environment. BFA and MFA degrees are granted in the following fields: visual arts, music, dance, theater, film/video and critical studies. The Institute has an impressive record for graduating students who have gone on to play key roles as fine artists, actors, producers, directors, designers, musicians, etc.

In 1990 the Community Arts Partnership (CAP) was created as a collaboration and partnership between CalArts and community arts centers to address a marked decrease in the availability of arts programming in the Los Angeles area public schools, to link CalArts faculty and students to artists and organizations throughout Los Angeles, and to give CalArts students hands-on teaching experiences and real-world engagement in a variety of diverse communities. Since then, CalArts and CAP have proven that our model of collaboration with strong community partners is an excellent way to provide arts training to children and youth from underserved neighborhoods.

Through CAP, more than 220 CalArts students supervised by 52 faculty members spend at least one afternoon or evening a week and weekends providing comprehensive and imaginative arts training to more than 2,000 inner-city elementary, junior high and high school students at eleven community arts centers each year. In the nine years since its inception the Partnership has provided arts education to an estimated 60,000 students (over 7,500 students received in-depth training), and mounted more than 750 performances and exhibitions of student work at more than 175 venues in Los Angeles County, before a collective audience of over 150,000 people (please see appended CAP/community arts organization partner materials).

Our Partner Organizations (Community Involvement)

The Los Angeles region in which CalArts is located is home to some of the largest concentrations of ethnically diverse populations in the country, and CalArts is committed to developing and maintaining productive ties with all of these communities. CAP is founded on the premise that this engagement is both invaluable to those otherwise underserved communities, and equally important for our own students and faculty, whose art making and teaching are deeply enriched by these experiences. Because of this mutual benefit, CalArts and the communities which participate in CAP see it as a genuine partnership, with returns going far beyond the usually one-sided nature of outreach programs.

CalArts and CAP currently collaborate with 9 CAP partner organizations in order to provide a wide variety of arts education programming to children, youth and young adults in underserved areas of Los Angeles County: KAOS Network in Leimert Park in South Central Los Angeles was established in 1984 and has been a CAP partner since 1996. It is a community art center dedicated to providing training in digital arts and multimedia to more than 150 youth each week. Students participate in classes and workshops in video, animation, digital arts, artist development and drop-in performance/open mic programs. KAOS Network will be our primary partner in structuring and implementing the Digital Arts Network, and KAOS and its director, Ben Caldwell, bring a wealth of experience in the applications of digital technology to art and music to our project (please see the appended letter of support from Mr. Caldwell). Plaza de la Raza, located in Lincoln Park in East Los Angeles, is CAP's oldest partner. It has provided educational and cultural programs in the arts for more than 28 years, and provides professional training for children and teens in five major disciplines: theater arts, dance, music, visual arts and communication arts. Inner-City Arts (ICA) was established in 1989 as a non-profit art center providing ethnically diverse youth from the skid-row area of downtown Los Angeles with positive experiences through the arts. By working in conjunction with Los Angeles Unified School District, ICA is able to bring elementary and middle school-aged children into an art studio environment during the regular school day. The Watts Towers Arts Center (WTAC) has been a CAP partner since 1990, and with CAP offers workshops in animation, graphic design, jazz and world music.

Other CAP partner organizations which will be connected in the network include: The Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, a well-established community organization which provides visual and performing arts training, and offers our letterpress program (printing and writing), photography and video production workshops; the Inner City Cultural Center at the Los Angeles Theater Center (ICCC), which produces and presents live theater performances and other media and is the home of the CAP/ICCC Theater Production Program; the Los Angeles Center for Photographic Studies (LACPS), an organization founded in 1974 and dedicated to the exploration of photographic and multi-media art (CAP and LACPS, together with the Eagles Academy and My Friend's Place provide creative writing and photography/public art programming to homeless and

runaway youth); The Santa Clarita Valley Boys and Girls Club in North Los Angeles County provides a variety of positive opportunities to local youth, including workshops in Modern Dance, Photography and Printmaking/Public Art in partnership with CAP; and Self-Help Graphics, the final partner organization participating in the DAN, was founded in 1970 in East Los Angeles and has become an example for other community-based arts organizations across the nation. Self-Help Graphics has furnished the resources necessary to allow more than 200 artists (primarily Chicano) to produce and exhibit their artwork. With CAP they present two workshops each year in printmaking for teenagers.

With our access to CalArts faculty and students, and our position as an Institute department, CAP, together with our partner organizations, has the experience, and the human and other necessary resources to implement and sustain the DAN project granted that funding is provided by the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program and other organizations. Following is an in-depth description of the Digital Arts Network project.

Digital Arts Network: 1999/2001

The CAP Digital Arts Network programs will utilize a computer network and video teleconferencing system to allow teenagers who are geographically isolated from one another in sub-culturally distinct neighborhoods to "meet" in cyberspace and discuss their lives, cultures, aspirations, and their artwork. The content of these interactions is student-driven, which adds to its powerful attraction. It is a chance for these young people to talk about what is important in their worlds.

The first stage of the DAN project will see the installation of the video teleconferencing stations made by LA-Tel (these include a host computer, video camera, keyboard, monitor, modem and necessary software). Each site will have one station and five Macintosh network computers, allowing 10-20 students to use the network cooperatively. Following the installation of the network hardware, CAP, together with its community arts organization partners, will begin to integrate the network digital arts workshops into the CAP curriculum. Each partner site will offer classes in computer and software use, including teaching ways in which digital technology may be combined with traditional arts to create innovative approaches to visual, recorded and performing art disciplines.

The program will offer three 10-week sessions per year at each of the CAP partner sites linked by the network, with culminating public events at year's end. The students will learn to use the Internet, to create web pages and CD-ROMS, will learn how to video teleconference, and will be able to speak with and create art with fellow students from throughout Los Angeles County using computers and video equipment. Students' digitally-produced art works will be exhibited on the World Wide Web and at CalArts. The potential for the program to have a very positive impact on the lives of participants

is seen when viewing the 1997 collaborative video project, *People to People* (see description in appended copy of the CalArts *Current*), the product of the Multimedia Digital Arts program's Digital Playground workshops, which utilized an experimental network linkage between KAOS Network in South Central Los Angeles and Plaza de la Raza in East Los Angeles. Students who might not have met otherwise discussed their heroes and interests, and planned collaborative digital artworks.

The Digital Arts Network workshops will begin in October, 1999 and continue through September, 2001. During the first 10-week sequential session approximately 200 high school-aged participants will learn basic computer skills, web page design, and the use of the real-time video teleconferencing link. During the second and third 10-week sessions in Winter and Spring, 2000 the communications link will be established and on-line agendas set by the program participants, working with the CalArts student instructors. Participants will then begin talking to one another, sharing ideas, interests, art works and writings, and making personal connections which transcend geographic and cultural barriers. Each workshop at each site will be taught by advanced CalArts students who are proficient in computer use, web page design, and have considerable and demonstrated experience in producing art, performances and music for computer and Internet exhibition, and who have completed special CalArts arts pedagogy and digital arts classes preparing them to work in the program. Artwork from the sessions will be shown at CalArts and at all partner sites, and will be displayed on the CAP web pages (currently under construction).

Sustaining the Project

CAP is a priority at CalArts, and its significant financial needs are met through concerted fundraising efforts. Current funders include, among others, The Thelma Pearl Howard Foundation, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, the W.M. Keck Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, the Weingart Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, The Capital Group, the California Arts Council, the Surdna Foundation, the Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation, the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, the Joseph Drown Foundation, the City of Los Angeles Division of Youth Arts Services, AT&T Foundation, The Franklin Mint Foundation, The City of Santa Clarita, The Getty Grant Program, The Maurer Family Foundation, The Mattel Foundation, U.S. Borax, Inc., and the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department. Contributions from CAP funders grow every year through CalArts' and CAP's prioritization of broadening the CAP Program donor base to include more government, foundation, corporate and individual sources. These efforts are partnered with new cultivation by CalArts for individual major gifts. The Digital Arts Network will be a key part of the educational resources offered by CAP and its community arts organization partners in the next century. Its continuation is of the highest priority.

Reducing Disparities

The populations served by CAP programs span the economic and cultural diversity of the greater Los Angeles area, but the vast majority of our participants live in neighborhoods where funding for comprehensive education in the arts and innovative uses of technology is minimal or non-existent. The demography of CAP participants' cultural backgrounds includes approximately 45% Latino, 32% African-American, 12% Euro-American, 9% Asian-American and 2% Native American. That more than 90% of the students in these districts qualify for free or reduced price lunches (and that in some areas the figure is as high as 98%) indicates their economic character. Not surprisingly, the availability of computers at home is rare, and parents often have limited experience with computer use. Computer access is available at public libraries and some public schools, but this is very limited in nature. A grant from TIIAP to establish a network and related workshops whereby communication can be built between youth who have so much in common but who may rarely meet will greatly help to address these deficits.

Documentation and Dissemination

Progress with the Digital Arts Network project and associated classes will be documented both internally and externally. Internal documentation for the initial network installation will be carried out by the DAN project director Ben Caldwell together with our partner organization project coordinators. Documentation of the associated digital arts workshops will be completed by each session's head instructor. Workshop documentation will include a record of the curriculum plan, including all activities and guest artists, evaluation of students' work and learning, and suggestions about how classes could be improved.

External documentation will be carried out as part of the ongoing CAP evaluation. CZ Associates evaluates each and every CAP class through qualitative and quantitative data collection, including entrance and exit interviews with student participants and CalArts student instructors, as well as reviews of CAP students' portfolios. The DAN project workshops would be included in this process. The DAN and associated classes will also be included in the aforementioned longitudinal study funded by the Nathan Cummings Foundation. This study will evaluate CAP successes over time and is designed to be a tool for the program's replication. CD ROMS, videos, evaluations and other written materials will be available to over 8,500 community arts organizations nationwide who wish to build their own programs.

Information about CAP and the workshops is also made available through CAP and the CalArts Office of Public Affairs in the form of neighborhood flyers, other community outreach publications (primarily for end-of-session shows and performances), and materials provided to local press. All local publications are produced collaboratively with our individual community partners. Finally, CalArts is currently preparing a video highlighting CAP, in which the DAN project will figure prominently should we receive

the necessary funding to begin. When completed, the video will be used both to publicize CAP and to cultivate new funders for the Partnership.

To our knowledge no other community digital arts network exists in Los Angeles, and certainly not on the scale which we are proposing. The Digital Arts Network and its associated programs represent a critical step forward for both CAP and its partners and for Los Angeles youth because the technical linkage opens the door to communication between young adults of dissimilar cultural backgrounds and neighborhoods, inspiring profound learning experiences, as well as breaking down barriers across the many boundaries of Los Angeles.