

Dates & Details on Upcoming  
January 2025 Grant Cycles plus  
Exciting Cullen Staff Updates



Cullen Foundation is excited to announce multiple grant cycles, supporting our Education and Performing Arts focus areas, opening **January 1, 2025**.

Please review the details on deadlines carefully as they differ per process and per focus area. In particular, we've made a few changes to our grant processes for Supplemental Academic Programs so as to better serve applicants. The largest change is there's now a separate application for **Summer only** Supplemental Academic Programs which has earlier deadlines and is a one-stage process (i.e. no LOI). This change is made to ensure our Summer programs have confirmation of and access to funds earlier.

If you have questions about the changes, deadlines, or which application your organization should be completing, reach out to a Cullen staff member for clarification and/or assistance. **We are here to help!**



## Education Grant Opportunities

### Supplemental Academic Program Responsive Grant Cycle

#### Education - Supplemental Academic Program Funding: (School Year and School Year plus Summer Programs)

**January 1, 2025:** Letter of Intent (LOI) stage opens. LOI's are accepted on a rolling basis between January 1st and January 31st.

**January 1, 2025- January 24, 2025:** All applicants must schedule a phone call with Cullen staff prior to submitting an LOI.

**January 31, 2025:** LOI phase closes at 5:00pm Eastern Time. Applicants will be notified within 1 week whether they advance to the Full Application phase.

**March 7, 2025:** Deadline for Full Applications at 5:00pm Eastern Time. Early submissions are strongly encouraged.

**April/May 2025:** Application Review Session with Cullen Foundation and applicant.

**May 2025:** Cullen Foundation will notify applicants of grant decisions.

**June 2025:** Payment will be distributed to grantees.

#### Education - Supplemental Academic Program Funding: (new cycle/process for Summer Only Programs)

**January 1, 2025:** Application stage opens.

**January 1, 2025- January 17, 2025:** All applicants must schedule a phone call with Cullen staff prior to submitting an Application.

**February 14, 2025:** Deadline for Full Applications at 5:00pm Eastern Time. Early submissions are strongly encouraged.

**February/March 2025:** Application Review Session with Cullen Foundation and applicant.

**March 2025:** Cullen Foundation will notify applicants of grant decisions.

**June 2025:** Payment will be distributed to grantees.

Staff Lead | Mary Lou Rubé  
MLRubé@thecullenfoundation.org



Please note changes to our SAP cycle process and differing deadlines per cycle



## Performing Arts Grant Opportunities

### Performing Arts Responsive Grant Cycle

#### Performing Arts Responsive Grant:

**January 1, 2025:** Application for the Winter 2025 cycle opens. Interested applicants must complete the Eligibility Form to access the application.

**January 1, 2025 – January 31, 2025:** All applicants must schedule a phone call with Cullen staff prior to submitting an Application.

**March 7, 2025:** Deadline for full Applications is 5:00 pm Eastern Time. Early submissions are strongly encouraged.

**March/April 2025:** Application Review Session with Cullen Foundation and applicant.

**April 2025:** Cullen Foundation will notify applicants of grant decisions.

**June 1, 2025:** Payment will be distributed to grantees.

Staff Lead | Nick Schifano  
nschifano@thecullenfoundation.org



Please note changes to our Performing Arts cycle process- this is now a one-stage process with an Eligibility Form in place of an LOI



## Cullen Scholars Scholarship Award for incoming 6th Graders in School Year 2025-2026

#### Cullen Scholars Scholarship

**January 1, 2025:** Application opens

**March 7, 2025:** Application closes

**April 2025:** Scholarship Decisions made

Staff Lead | Nick Schifano  
nschifano@thecullenfoundation.org



# STAFF UPDATES!



**Mary Lou Rubé**  
Program Officer for Education

We are delighted to welcome Mary Lou Rubé as the Cullen Foundation's new Program Officer for Education. A proud Buffalo native, Mary Lou brings over 20 years of experience in educational leadership. She holds a B.S. in Elementary Education from the University of Dayton and an M.S. in Reading Education from Canisius University. Additionally, she earned a Library Media Endorsement from the University of Virginia and holds certifications in Elementary Education and Reading. Mary Lou served as a reading specialist, literacy coach, and elementary librarian in Arlington Public Schools, Arlington, VA, dedicating her career to advancing educational equity in Title 1 schools and creating programs that support English learners and economically disadvantaged students.

Mary Lou's journey began in Buffalo, where she taught preschool and 3rd grade and worked as a substitute teacher. In Arlington, she spearheaded innovative initiatives such as the nationally recognized Summer Book Mobile, which served over 2,500 families and promoted literacy and community engagement. She also developed and led Family Literacy Nights, fostering stronger school-community connections.

A frequent presenter at international and state-level conferences, Mary Lou has shared her expertise on literacy initiatives and effective teaching strategies throughout her career. With strengths in literacy development, data-driven instruction, grant writing, and stakeholder collaboration, she is uniquely equipped to help advance the Foundation's mission.

Outside of work, Mary Lou's enthusiasm and energy extend to playing pickleball, exploring new places, and planning her next trip to see Bruce Springsteen live in concert.



**Nick Schifano**  
Program Officer for Performing Arts

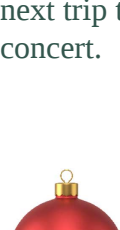
We are pleased to announce the promotion of Nick Schifano to Program Officer for Performing Arts. Nick began his career with the Cullen Foundation nearly eight years ago and is a dedicated advocate and strong voice for nonprofit partners.

Originally from Cooperstown, NY, Nick moved to Buffalo in 2009 after graduating with a B.S. in History and Secondary Education from Hartwick College. He served two full-time terms as Buffalo AmeriCorps. While in AmeriCorps, Nick served students in the Buffalo Public Schools through the Cradle Beach Project S.O.A.R. Program. In 2011, Nick was appointed Director of the Project S.O.A.R. Program and the Cradle Beach AmeriCorps Program.

Nick was responsible for developing and implementing the program across five Buffalo Public Schools as well as overseeing 40+ AmeriCorps members who served 300 students and families. Nick was selected as a 2015 Leadership Buffalo Rising Leader.

In 2017, Nick joined the Cullen Foundation as a Grants Analyst before transitioning into a Grants Manager role in 2019. In June 2024, Nick was appointed Program Officer, responsible for managing the portfolio of Performing Arts grants while also overseeing the grant application process, research, evaluation and reporting on behalf of the Foundation.

Nick oversees both the Cullen Scholars scholarship program and the Cullen Fellows performing arts fellowship. Nick lives in Kenmore with his wife and one-year old son. He enjoys traveling with his family, attending live music, and is a passionate Buffalo Bills fan.



Please join us in welcoming Mary Lou back to Buffalo to work with our education community members and in congratulating Nick as he continues his dedication to providing our nonprofit partners with exceptional support and care.

