



INSPIRE IOWA CULTURAL TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES



BACKGROUND

The Inspire Iowa Cultural Tourism Grant program will support a limited number of highly visible and high-impact arts, culture and heritage events, performances, productions or exhibitions. Projects will attract new visitors to Iowa communities and showcase our state as a cultural tourism destination.

This funding opportunity recognizes Iowa's arts, cultural and heritage venues as significant tourism attractions that anchor growing communities. Iowa's creative sector generates more than \$4.5 billion of economic impact annually, while stimulating local spending, supporting the broader hospitality industry, and attracting millions of visitors to our state.

The goals of the program include to:

- Create enhanced visitor appeal to Iowa communities and elevate the perception of Iowa as a cultural destination.
- Promote out-of-county and out-of-state visits and extended stays, which in turn can generate additional local spending and support economic growth.
- Encourage Iowa's creative sector to develop new and unique experiences, events, and attractions that appeal to tourists.
- Collaborate with recreation, hospitality, travel, and entertainment partners to amplify the impact of arts, cultural and heritage experiences, events, and attractions.

Awardees will be required to meet with an Iowa Tourism Office liaison at the outset of their project to discuss various tourism marketing resources. Awardees must also maintain an active facility [listing](#) on the Travel Iowa website and must be represented on the [Iowa Events Calendar](#) throughout the duration of the award period.

The Art Project Grants for Artists program is jointly administered by the Iowa Tourism Office and the Iowa Arts Council, which exist within the Iowa Economic Development Authority (the IEDA). Operating and grant policies and definitions set out at 261 Iowa Administrative Code Chapter [305](#) and rules pertaining to organization and operation of the Iowa Arts Council found at 261 Iowa Administrative Code Chapter [304](#) apply to the program. Additional eligibility requirements and priorities are set out in these guidelines published by the IEDA.

QUESTIONS

Potential applicants, especially first-time applicants, are encouraged to review all published material, including the administrative rules and published guidelines, and contact Arts Council Director David Schmitz at david.schmitz@iowaeda.com well in advance of application deadlines if they have any questions regarding the program.

ACCESSIBILITY

The IEDA is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to eligible applicants. For technical support submitting the online application, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator, Elizabeth Ferreira, at 515-348-6325 or elizabeth.ferreira@iowaeda.com, at least two weeks in advance of the application deadline.

TIMELINE

June 30, 2025 | Rolling Application Deadline

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. The latest date to submit an online application is 11:59 PM on June 30, 2025 for the funding period July 1, 2024 – December 31, 2026.

August 2025 | Funding Decision Notification

Typically, applicants are notified of funding decisions within six weeks after the application deadline.

July 1, 2024 – December 31, 2026 | Eligible Funding Period

The Eligible Funding Period is July 1, 2024 – December 31, 2026. All grant project expenses must be incurred and activities must be completed within the eligible funding period.

Final Report Deadline

Grant recipients must complete a final report within 60 days of the project's completion or by no later than January 1, 2027.

GRANT AMOUNTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

Program Funding and Award Range

A total of \$250,000 in program funding is available through a Statewide Tourism Marketing Services & Efforts allocation to the Iowa Economic Development Authority for fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025). The period of performance for using awarded funds is July 1, 2024- December 31, 2026.

Individual awards are expected to range from \$25,000 to \$50,000, though higher individual awards may be considered for especially impactful projects. The maximum award amount is \$100,000.

Grant funds will be awarded on a reimbursement basis only.

Project Eligibility

Projects must focus on the presentation of a significant arts or cultural performance, production or special exhibition and include a specific tourism marketing strategy to attract visitors. A visitor is defined as anyone traveling 50 miles or more to visit the attraction.

Projects should relate to one the following categories:

- Visual Arts: Art Centers, Museums, Local and Community Arts Organizations
- Performing Arts: Live Music, Opera, Dance or Theatrical Productions
- History and Heritage: Historical Societies and Sites, Historical Museums, Heritage Sites
- Science and Nature: Zoos, Aquariums, Science and Nature Interpretation Centers

Eligible projects may include the following types of projects:

- Major Traveling and Special Exhibitions
 - Traveling and special exhibitions must present highly unique artistic, cultural, scientific, or heritage content and/or artifacts that are new to or infrequently seen in Iowa, broadly relevant to target audiences, and of significant visitor appeal.
 - Exhibitions drawn primarily from local or regional collections and/or from a museum's permanent collections are ineligible for funding consideration.
- Major Touring Productions and Performances
 - Touring productions and performances must be unique within an organization's ongoing programmatic offerings, have significant visitor appeal, and increase tourism to an arts, cultural, or heritage attraction and the surrounding community and/or region.
 - Annual series, seasons, and engagements consisting of multiple productions or performances are ineligible for funding consideration.

Eligible Applicants

All applicants must meet these requirements. Entities who do not meet these requirements are not eligible to apply.

- Must operate a facility open to the public for regular hours and provide programming of interest to a tourist for a minimum of 4 months per year.
- Organization must maintain a cash operating expense budget, exclusive of other IEDA grant support, of no less than \$250,000 per year.
- Identify as either an Arts Organization, Cultural or Humanities Organization.
 - Arts Organizations are defined as an organization whose primary mission and purpose is focused on the arts.
 - Cultural Organizations are defined as organizations whose primary mission and purpose is culturally focused or meets the definition of the interpretive sciences.
 - Humanities Organizations are defined as an organization whose primary mission and purpose is focused on the humanities.

Eligible applicants must also be one of the following types of entities and meet all the related requirements:

- **Nonprofits:** Federally tax exempt 501(c)3 nonprofit organization incorporated and physically located in Iowa. An organization will be considered physically located in Iowa if the organization maintains a current home office and primary staff presence in Iowa.
 - Organizations that are partly located in, or serve residents of, a border state in addition to Iowa may be considered eligible. An eligible border state organization must demonstrate that the funding request significantly impacts cultural tourism in Iowa and predominately serves Iowans.
 - An organization whose primary purpose is to channel resources (financial, human, or other) to an affiliated organization may only apply if the affiliated organization does not submit its own application. This prohibition applies even if each organization has its own

501(c)3 status. For example, the "Friends of ABC Museum" may not apply if the ABC Museum applies.

- **Communities:** Unit of local, county or federally recognized tribal government physically located in Iowa

Eligible Expenses

This program supports one-time costs associated with securing, presenting, and/or marketing a special arts or cultural event, performance, production or exhibition. In addition to soft costs (e.g., advertising expenses, rental fees), the grant request may include hard costs related to hosting or staging the event. Grant funds will be awarded on a reimbursement basis only.

Allowable Expenses for Reimbursement include:

- Marketing and promotional expenses including email marketing campaigns, magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, internet, direct mail, PR/media kits, and billboards, etc.
- Outside professional services specific to artist fees directly related to the funded program, including travel
- Outside professional services specific to marketing and/or public relations directly related to the funded program
- Outside professional services specific to production and technical expenses directly related to the funded program
- Marketing and advertising costs directly used on out-of-county marketing related to the funded program
- Space rental directly related to the funded program
- Project specific capital expenditures, including the purchase of tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of less than one year and a per-unit cost that is less than \$5,000.
- Pre-payments made prior to the grant period may be eligible expenses under limited circumstances. The applicant must demonstrate that such expenditures were essential to the project's effectiveness, such as a required deposit for goods/services or expenditure that resulted in significant savings. An example of an eligible pre-payment would include booking fees or a deposit necessary to secure a significant production or exhibition.

Ineligible Grant Request Expenses

Expenses that fall outside of the identified eligible expenses for the project may not be included as part of the grant request. Applicants that include ineligible expenses in the grant request will be considered ineligible.

Ineligible grant request expenses include:

- Acquisition/purchase of artwork
- Budget shortfalls

- Capital expenditures, including the purchase of tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit cost that is equal to or greater than \$5,000 or that are not intended for project-specific use.
- Collection maintenance or restoration expenses
- Concessions, food, T-shirts, artwork, or other items for resale. This includes online or virtual sales/shops.
- Costs for the creation of new organizations
- Deficit or debt reduction
- Donations or contributions to other organizations
- Expenses incurred prior to or after the funding period, except as described above
- Food, beverage, and alcohol
- Foreign travel
- Funding cash reserve or endowment accounts or instruments
- Fundraising or benefit activity expenses
- General miscellaneous or contingency costs
- Home studio/office costs or expenses, including utilities and mortgage payments
- Lobbying activity
- Ongoing or operating expenses, including utilities, rent/lease, office supplies, and personnel time that is not dedicated to the project. These expenses can be included as part of indirect costs.
- Personnel benefits
- Prizes and awards
- Project costs supported by any other state or federal funding
- Property maintenance, restoration or renovation expenses
- Purchase and/or use of gift cards and gift certificates to support project costs
- Purchase of a vehicle
- Social activities such as receptions, parties, galas, community dinners, picnics, and potlucks
- Unrealized ticket or event revenue (providing free tickets or scholarships to attend an event.

Request Amount

Organizations may request a maximum of 10% of their organization's total operating budget. The request may not exceed \$100,000.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate the ability to execute their project without depending on the continued financial assistance from these funds. The organization should intend for the project to be self-sustaining.

Matching Funds

Applicants are required to demonstrate investment in a project by providing cash matching funds in an amount that is equal to the total grant amount requested. For example, an applicant that requests \$25,000 in grant funds must have at least \$25,000 in cash match, for a minimum project budget of

\$50,000.

The required cash match must be dedicated to one-time project expenses that are directly related to the proposed project. Expenses identified in the match should be based on competitive, current market pricing. Applicants will be required to identify all anticipated cash match expenses and

in-kind contributions beyond the grant request in the project budget as well as the anticipated sources of funds that will cover them. The cash match does not have to be secured at the time of application but must be secured and identified in the final report at the end of the funding period.

- Cash match is actual cash contributed to direct project expenses by the applicant or other funding sources
- In-kind match is donated goods or services contributed to the project by the applicant or other sources
- Other funding from the state government cannot be used to meet the match requirement
- Funding from the federal government cannot be used to meet the match requirement

Review and Award Process

Eligibility Review

Submitted applications are reviewed by staff for completion, eligibility and adherence to published funding priorities and guidelines. Applications are reviewed as submitted. New application information or subsequent application clarification submitted after a program deadline is not considered unless requested by a program manager. Staff will also review an applicant's record of compliance and good standing with the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). Applications or applicants determined by staff to be ineligible or incomplete will not be forwarded for panel review.

Competitive Panel Review

Eligible applications will be referred to a competitive review by a panel of professionals with appropriate expertise commensurate to the purpose of the grant program. Applications will be scored and ranked based on the published scoring rubric. Recommendations are submitted to the Director of the IEDA for consideration and funding approval. Applications will be awarded funding based on the ranked list, funding priorities, and available funding. All funding decisions are final.

Decision Notification

Applicants will be notified of funding decisions in writing. Applicants are notified of the status of their application whether they are or are not selected to receive funding. Applicants will be contacted if any additional information is required and are encouraged to refrain from contacting staff for application status updates until funding decisions are announced.

Agreement

IEDA will issue an agreement, which will be between the Recipient and the Authority, with a standard term of two years. The Recipient(s) must return the agreement to the Authority within 45 days of the transmittal of the agreement from the Authority. Failure to return the agreement may be cause for the Authority to terminate the award.

Disbursement of Funds/Claims

Disbursements will be made on a reimbursement basis. No advance disbursements will be allowed. All claims must be made through Slideroom, and up to four disbursements can be requested per calendar year. If no funds will be requested until the end of the project, the recipient will still file an annual report. Additional instructions will be provided to recipients.

Online Application Submission

Applicants must submit applications via the Iowa Arts Council's SlideRoom, an online application portal. Applications will not be accepted in any other format. Late, incomplete or ineligible applications will not be accepted. Applicants can access the current online application requirements at iowaartscouncil.slideroom.com. Applicants must create a login to view the full application requirements for the program. Applicants can visit help.liaisonedu.com for assistance related to the online submission.

Application Questions & Scoring Rubric

The scoring rubric will be used by the panel to evaluate grant applications. Application questions are provided for reference only. Applicants must review and complete application requirements in the application. Each section has criteria and corresponding point values to ensure a fair review process. The rubric is on a scale of 21 points.

Project Significance and Appeal

Briefly describe the event for which you are seeking support. How was the event, performance, production, or exhibition chosen or developed? What is the artistic or cultural significance of the event, performance, production or exhibition, and how does it appeal to the broader public to enable a cultural tourism marketing opportunity? Include estimated in-state and out-of-state attendance figures, if known, and an explanation of how estimates were developed.

PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Project is highly significant and demonstrates broad appeal to the public as a cultural tourism opportunity and a draw for out-of-state visitors.	Project has some significance and demonstrates average appeal to the public as a cultural tourism opportunity. May or may not draw out-of-state visitors.	Project lacks significance and does not demonstrate appeal to the public as a cultural tourism opportunity. Primarily a draw for local residents.

Applicant Readiness/Capacity

Has your organization previously hosted events, performances, exhibitions or productions of a similar size and caliber? If so, how have these experiences prepared you for this project, and what past learning will you apply to make it even better? How will your organization leverage outside expertise and

strategic partnerships to address any gaps in your knowledge or capacity and to make the project a success?

APPLICANT READINESS/CAPACITY: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Applicant has extensive experience hosting or presenting significant arts and cultural projects and demonstrates their readiness to host this project by leveraging outside expertise and strategic partnerships.	Applicant has some experience hosting or presenting significant arts and cultural events and demonstrates adequate readiness to host this project.	Applicant lacks experience hosting or presenting significant arts and cultural events. Concerns exist around their readiness to host this project.

Marketing Strategy

How will you market the event, performance, or exhibition to cultural tourists? Who is the defined target audience for the event, performance, or exhibition, and does it represent or include a new segment of visitors? What specific strategies are in place to reach and attract the defined audience or segment, and how were those strategies developed?

MARKETING STRATEGY: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Plans for marketing the event to cultural visitors are excellent. The applicant has clear and detailed strategies in place to reach a defined audience / market segment and aligns with the Iowa Tourism Office marketing strategy.	Plans for marketing the event to cultural tourists are of average quality. The applicant has some strategies in place to reach a defined audience / market segment.	Plans for marketing the event to cultural tourists are below average. The applicant does not identify strategies to reach a defined audience / market segment.

Measurement and Evaluation

How will you measure visitation and evaluate the success of the event, performance, production or exhibition? Describe the plans, processes and personnel in place to carry out this work.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Plans for measuring visitation and evaluating the success of the project are excellent. Goals are measurable and strategic.	Plans for measuring visitation and evaluating the success of the project are of average quality.	Plans for measuring visitation and evaluating the success of the project are below average.

Partnership and Collaboration

What partners are currently involved in the planning and/or implementation of the event, performance, production or exhibition? Specifically, how are recreation, hospitality, travel, and entertainment partners involved to amplify the success of the event, performance, production or exhibition?

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Project involves multiple partners and collaborators including the recreation, hospitality, travel, and entertainment industries. Confident that the partnerships in place will amplify the success of the project.	Project involves limited partners and collaboration with recreation, hospitality, travel, and entertainment industries. Uncertain if the partnerships in place will amplify the success of the project.	Project involves no partners or collaboration with recreation, hospitality, travel, and entertainment industries.

Support Materials

Submit up to five media samples that provide additional context for the project. Media samples may include promotional material, work samples, letters of support or other material that enhances the case for support. Do not submit additional narrative or lists of web links. The title must identify the media support material.

SUPPORT MATERIALS: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Support material is highly relevant to the application and demonstrates organizational	Support material relates to the application and is of average quality.	Support material is not relevant to the application and/or is of poor quality.

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Case for Support

CASE FOR SUPPORT: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Case for support is exemplary and merits investment from the State.	Case for support is adequate.	Case for support is inadequate or does not merit state investment.