

IOWA CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICTS PROGRAM GUIDELINES



BACKGROUND

The Iowa Cultural and Entertainment District (CED) Certification program encourages the growth of communities through the development of areas within a city or county for public and private uses related to cultural and entertainment purposes. Pursuant to [Iowa Code section 15.438](#), a city or county may create and designate a cultural and entertainment district, subject to certification by the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). Two or more cities or counties may apply jointly for certification of a district that extends across a common boundary. Certification remains in effect for ten years following the date of certification.

Areas certified as CEDs are well-identified, walkable, mixed-use, compact areas of a city or county in which a high concentration of arts and cultural facilities serve as the anchor. CEDs attract a diverse and engaged workforce – a key incentive for new and relocating businesses. CEDs also attract residents and tourists who support adjacent businesses such as restaurants, lodging facilities, retail stores and entertainment venues, enhancing property values, the profitability of surrounding businesses and the tax base of the area.

The goals of the program are to distinguish those districts that have created unique cultural centers and prioritized visitor experiences, promote the districts and their supported activities, and provide technical assistance and professional development opportunities. The administrative rules for the program can be found at 261 Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 303. The Iowa Arts Council, which exists within IEDA, administers the CED program.

QUESTIONS

Potential applicants, especially first time applicants, are encouraged to review all published material, including the administrative rules and published guidelines, and contact Program Manager Jon Berg at jon.berg@iowaeda.com well in advance of application deadlines if they have any questions regarding the program.

ACCESSIBILITY

IEDA is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to eligible applicants. For application support, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator, Jennie Knoebel, at jennie.knoebel@iowaeda.com at least two weeks in advance of application deadlines.

TIMELINE

May 3, 2024 | Fiscal Year 2024 Application Deadline

The deadline to submit an online application for certification as a CED is 11:59 p.m. on May 3, 2024, for the period July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024.

June 2024 | Certification Notification

Applicants will be notified of certification decisions by June 30, 2024.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

Once certified, the State of Iowa, through IEDA, shall endeavor to promote projects and initiatives implemented by CEDs through established networks.

- Designated CEDs will be included in the Iowa Creative Places Network, which provides opportunities for connection through networking and learning opportunities with Creative Places across Iowa.
- Additionally, IEDA staff will provide technical assistance to CEDs, including communication on grant opportunities and professional development workshops.

CERTIFICATION

Iowa Cultural and Entertainment Districts Certification

To be certified, a CED must be an existing area where arts and cultural activities thrive. Certification by the state is an achievement, intended to formally recognize that a particular locale is an acknowledged cultural destination. The proposed CED must be an established district that is widely viewed and readily recognized as a hub of cultural activity. It is a gathering place, filled with cultural facilities, arts organizations, individual artists or arts-based businesses, as well as an array of other uses, such as office complexes, restaurants, retail spaces or residences. It has well-defined boundaries and people can sense when they have arrived at this unique place. We highly encourage cities and counties to access and apply for complementary incentives and programs that align with the designated area and provide details in their application. These incentives and programs should support existing and emerging cultural organizations and fit with your community.

Annual Report

Beginning one year after certification, CEDs are required to submit an annual report to IEDA due August 1 each year. The report will document the status of the CED, including an update on the number of new businesses, activities and promotional efforts within the past year.

Re-Certification

Per statute and rules, certification as a CED is for a ten-year period. CEDs that wish to continue to be certified must apply for re-certification in advance of the end of the certification period. The re-certification process will include updating information on the cultural district identity, operations and programming information, the CEDs assets, goals for the next ten years, accomplishments from the previous ten years and economic impact.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A single entity must be selected to serve as the primary applicant for certification, while incorporating collaboration among a consortium of partners. The selected entity must be an “eligible applicant” as set out at [261 Iowa Administrative Code 303.5](#). The applicant will be responsible for submitting the annual report and will be the entity legally obligated to the terms of the agreement between IEDA and the entity setting out the terms of the certification. Partners and collaborating entities are not subject to the eligibility requirements.

Eligible Applicants

All applicants for certification must represent a public-private partnership.

- Private element

- Nonprofit community organization – Federally tax exempt 501(c)3 nonprofit organization incorporated and physically located in Iowa; or
- Local for-profit community organization – Must be physically located in Iowa.
- Public element
 - Community – All cities and counties located in the State of Iowa are eligible to provide the public element, and two or more cities or counties may apply jointly if the district extends across a common boundary.

“Physically located” is defined as maintaining a current home office and registered agent address in Iowa as defined at Iowa Code section [490.501](#) and maintaining a primary staff presence physically located and working in Iowa.

Ineligible Applicants

Ineligible applicants include the following types of entities:

- Individuals
- Units of state or federal government
- Schools or institutions of higher education
- Religious organizations, labor unions, political parties or national service/professional organizations
- Entities that have received grants, loans or other incentives through the Iowa Arts Council or IEDA that are not in compliance with reporting or other requirements or that are listed on the IEDA’s funding moratorium list

APPLICATION REVIEW AND SCORING PROCESS

Application Submission

Applicants for certification of designated CEDs 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.

Certification Review Process

Application Review

IEDA staff will review completed applications to assess eligibility and adherence to published guidelines. IEDA may contact applicants if any additional information or clarification is required. New information or clarification submitted after a program deadline is not considered unless the information or clarification has been requested by IEDA. IEDA staff will also review an applicant’s record of compliance and good standing with IEDA and other State of Iowa agencies, including the Iowa Department of Revenue.

Staff will not move applications or applicants determined to be ineligible, incomplete or not in compliance with applicable law, rules and guidelines, to panel review. IEDA encourages applicants to refrain from contacting staff for application status updates. A determination of ineligibility, incompleteness or failure to comply with law, rules or guidelines is final agency action.

Panel Review

Applications by eligible applicants that are complete and that adhere to program requirements will be referred to a competitive review by a panel of professionals with appropriate expertise commensurate with the purpose of the program. Applications will be scored and ranked based on the published scoring rubric. Recommendations for consideration and approval are submitted to the director of the Iowa Arts Council and the IEDA Director.

Decision Notification

IEDA will notify each applicant’s authorized official whether the designated district has been certified by June 30, 2024. A determination of certification or denial of certification is final agency action.

APPLICATION

Application Questions and Scoring Rubric

The following scoring rubric will be used to evaluate applications. Each section has criteria and corresponding point values. The rubric is on a scale of 30 points. Application questions set out below are for reference only. Applicants must review and complete application requirements in the SlideRoom portal.

Name of Cultural and Entertainment District

Enter the name of the designated area seeking certification as a Cultural and Entertainment District.

Summary of Proposed Cultural & Entertainment District

Briefly provide a description and justification for certification of the Cultural and Entertainment District, including:

- District goals related to arts and culture including the presence of anchor arts and cultural attractions
- Walkability and public access
- Relationships with local artists and entrepreneurs
- Support for new cultural industries, organizations and artists

District Overview and Goals: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
District goals are clearly identified as they relate to arts, culture and tourism in the area. District has a strong sense of place defined by its unique artistic, cultural and historic character.	District goals are identified as they relate to arts, culture and tourism in the area. District has a sense of place defined by its unique character.	District goals are not identified as they relate to arts, culture and tourism in the area. District does not have a clear sense of place defined by its artistic, cultural and historic character.

District Demographics

Provide both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the proposed district region demographics and explain how the district addresses the unique needs of those demographics.

District Demographics: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
District has clearly identified area demographics and provides exceptional and diverse programming to meet the demographics' needs.	District has identified area demographics and provides programming to meet the demographics' needs.	District has not identified area demographics and provides minimal programming to meet the demographics' needs.

District Partners

List partners and organizations and describe how stakeholders are regularly engaged, including roles within the district. Must include at least one city or county official.

District Partners: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
District demonstrates a clear ability to engage multiple diverse stakeholders that reflects area demographics. Partner roles are well-defined and will enhance identified community goals.	District demonstrates ability to engage stakeholders that reflects area demographics. Partner roles are identified.	District does not demonstrate ability to engage stakeholders that reflects area demographics. Partner roles are not identified.

District Assets

Provide a general description and justification of the assets within the district boundaries, including but not limited to:

- General location of the cultural district within the community
- Historic standing structures, including whether the asset is listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Boundaries of historic districts that are listed on, or have been determined eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places (if any)
- Cultural, arts and tourism amenities
- Entertainment venues
- Retail, service and restaurant amenities
- Green/open space
- Primary pedestrian corridors in the cultural district

District Assets: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
District is well-supported by the presence of a wide variety of cultural amenities, arts venues and community programming.	District is supported by the presence of some cultural amenities, arts venues and community programming.	District is not supported by the presence of cultural amenities, arts venues and community programming.

Community Support Material

Attach documentation demonstrating the applicant has community support in obtaining certification of the designated Cultural and Entertainment District, which may include but are not limited to:

- Letter or resolution by the governing body (City, County or Joint resolution) supporting the cultural and entertainment district
- Letter or resolutions by other local development corporations and community organizations supporting the Cultural and Entertainment District
- Letters of support from each partner organization on the Cultural and Entertainment District Advisory Council
- Letters of support by businesses and organizations located within the designated district

All documents must be combined into a single file for upload.

Community Support Material: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Community support material is highly relevant to the district, of high quality and clearly supports the district’s certification.	Community support material is relevant to the district and of average quality.	Community support material is not relevant to the district, of poor quality or does not support the district’s certification.

Public Access

Describe public access to the district for which you are seeking certification and plans to improve upon those efforts in the next 10 years, including:

- Plans for public access
- Target audience to benefit from certification of the designated district
- Plan to market and disseminate information to target audience
- Existing and proposed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility features of the district

Public Access: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Target population for the district is well-defined. Public access to district is strong with clear and deliberate plans for increasing accessibility and promotion of the district to target population.	Target population for the district is identified. Public access to district is satisfactory with plans for accessibility and promotion.	Target population for the district is unclear. Public access to district is inadequate.

Local Incentives

Describe incentives the County, City or community partnering organization offers to cultural and entertainment enterprises and/or qualifying resident cultural workers. Be as specific as possible about the local incentives offered, including but not limited to:

- Special signage
- Publicity/marketing
- Local grants

- Property tax abatement
- Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement Districts (SSMID)
- Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIF)
- Rent buy-downs
- Low interest loans or zoning to encourage live/work space for artists
- Coordination with other economic or community development programs, e.g. Main Street Iowa, Certified Local Government, Historic Preservation Commission, Chamber of Commerce, local arts commission and/or local development corporation

Local Incentives: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Local incentives provide strong support to existing and emerging cultural organizations, businesses and individuals. Incentives will clearly encourage future growth of the district.	Local incentives provide some support to existing and emerging cultural organizations, businesses and individuals. Incentives will potentially encourage future growth of the district.	District does not provide local incentives to support existing and emerging cultural organizations, businesses and individuals.

Tourism Driven

Provide a weekend itinerary for a tourist new to your district, including but not limited to:

- Lodging
- Dining
- Recreation
- Performance venues
- Museums/galleries

Tourism Driven: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
District developed a robust weekend itinerary with a wide variety of activities to fully entertain tourists.	District developed a weekend itinerary with a variety of activities to entertain tourists.	District did not develop a weekend itinerary with enough activities to fully entertain tourists.

Support Material

Upload 3-5 media samples that represent the district and its commitment to arts and culture.

Support Material: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Support material is highly relevant to the district, of high quality and clearly supports the district's commitment to arts and culture.	Support material relates to the district, is of average quality, and alludes to the district's commitment to arts and culture.	Support material is not relevant to the district, of poor quality or does not support the district's commitment to arts and culture.

Overall Application

The following scoring criteria reference the quality of the application as a whole and not a particular question.

Overall Case for Certification: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Case for certification is exemplary and merits investment from the state.	Case for certification is adequate.	Case for certification is inadequate or does not merit state investment.

GLOSSARY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Applicants should refer to the [glossary](#) for clarification of program terms and definitions.