

IOWA ARTIST CAREER DEVELOPMENT ACCELERATOR
PROGRAM GUIDELINES

IOWA Economic Development

IOWA ARTIST CAREER ACCELERATOR
Fiscal Year 2026

BACKGROUND

The Iowa Artist Career Accelerator program is administered by the Iowa Arts Council, which exists within the Iowa Economic Development Authority (the IEDA). Through the program, the IEDA provides grant funding, peer learning and mentorship opportunities, and business development resources to artists of all disciplines to catalyze momentum in their artistic practices and increase their professional skills and capacity.

The program is funded through an appropriation by the Iowa Legislature to the IEDA and a grant by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Applicants must comply with federal requirements, including but not limited to 2 CFR Part 200.

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 Grants and Operations Manager Elizabeth Ferreira at elizabeth.ferreira@iowaeda.com well in advance of application deadlines if they have any questions regarding the program.

ACCESSIBILIITY

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 515-348-6324 or elizabeth.ferreira@iowaeda.com at least two weeks in advance of the application deadline.

TIMELINE

August 26, 2025 | Fiscal Year 2026 Application Deadline
The deadline to submit an online application is 11:59 PM on August 26, 2025 for the funding period October 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

September 2025 | Funding Decision Notification
Typically, applicants are notified of funding decisions within eight weeks after the application deadline.

October 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026 | Eligible Funding Period
The Eligible Funding Period is October 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026. All expenses must be incurred within the Eligible Funding Period.

August 1, 2026 | Final Report Deadline
Grant recipients are required to complete a final report by August 1, 2026.

GRANT AMOUNTS AND DISBURSEMENT
Grant recipients will be awarded up to $3,000 in grant funds.

Grant Payment and Reimbursement
Grant recipients will receive up to $2,500 upon full execution of the grant agreement. Recipients will need to complete a final report at the end of the eligible funding period outlining how the grant funds were spent accompanied by documentation of expenditures and proof of purchase on forms provided by IEDA. Any unspent grant funds will need to be returned to IEDA within 30 days after the final report deadline.

Up to $500 will be disbursed after recipient attends a two-day Artist Career Development Retreat as reimbursement for expenses directly incurred in connection to participating in the retreat. Recipients will be required to provide documentation of expenditures and proof of purchase on forms provided by IEDA.

- Artists who have participated in professional or career development retreats offered by the Iowa Arts Council since July 1, 2023 are ineligible to participate in the retreat and receive a $500 grant payment.

PROGRAM BENEFITS
Applicants will receive peer learning, mentorship, and career development resources.

- **Artist Career Development Retreat:** Eligible artists will attend a facilitated two-day retreat focused on core business, marketing and financial skills and developing a strategic plan for their practice.
    - The retreat will be held in Marshalltown, Iowa on October 17-18, 2025.

- **Small group peer support**: Artists will take part in virtual peer group sessions, facilitated by an experienced Artist Peer Facilitator. Utilizing a dynamic small peer group process, artists will engage in learning and receive peer-based support.
- **One-to-one mentoring/coaching sessions:** Artists will be paired with an experienced Peer Artist Mentor for one-on-one mentoring sessions where they can explore specific practice-related questions and receive feedback and support.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS
Eligible Applicants
Eligible applicants must meet the following criteria:
- Individual artist, including visual/performing artist, filmmaker, musician, or creative writer.
- U.S. citizen or possessing a Permanent Resident Card (i.e. “Green Card”) or in the process of obtaining a Permanent Resident Card, who is a full-time Iowa resident domiciled in Iowa or maintaining a permanent place of abode in Iowa. For purposes of these Guidelines, the terms

"domiciled" and "permanent place of abode" are defined in Iowa Administrative Code 701.300.17 (422).

- 18 years of age or older.
- Applicants who represent an artist collective, artist team or band must apply as an individual on behalf of the group and clearly state their individual role in the project proposal as the individual legally obligated to comply with the terms of the grant agreement.
- Applicants with access to similar regional artist career development resources are eligible to participate, but preference will be given to applicants without access to similar regional resources.

Ineligible Applicants

Ineligible applicants include the following:

- Individuals that have received a fiscal year 2026 Iowa Artist Fellowship, Art Project Grant for Artists, Iowa Screenwriters Grant, Iowa Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Grant, or have an active Greenlight Grant contract.
- Individuals that have received grants, loans or other incentives through the Iowa Arts Council or other program administered by the IEDA that are not in compliance with reporting or other requirements or that are listed on the IEDA's funding moratorium list.
- Organizations, including for-profit corporation or business, political party or national service/professional organization.

Eligible Activities

Grant funds must be used for activities and expenses that advance an artist's professional capacity, enhance their artistic practice, or expand the audience or market for their work. Eligible activities should enable the applicant to achieve a particular goal that advances their artistic practice or creative business in Iowa. Grant activities may represent a phase of a larger activity with a longer timeline. However, all grant activities must have a clear beginning and end date during the eligible funding period. Types of eligible activities include:

- Acquiring business services (e.g. contract preparation, business incorporation, accounting systems)
- Attending professional development opportunities (e.g. conference or workshop registration fees)
- Documenting work (e.g. professional photography, video, audio recording)
- Expanding capacity for creative work (e.g. space rental, equipment or material purchases)
- Learning new or advanced techniques in an art form (e.g. classes or apprenticeships)
- Upgrading marketing and promotion material (e.g. branding, website design, e-commerce).

Ineligible Activities

Activities that fall outside of the identified types of eligible activities will not receive funding through this program. Ineligible activities include, but are not limited to, the following types of activities:

- Grant activities that begin or end prior to or after the eligible funding period (grant activities may represent a phase of a larger activity with a longer timeline)
- Phases of an activity the applicant has received a grant from the Iowa Arts Council or IEDA for previously
- Capital Infrastructure, construction, renovation or maintenance

- Ongoing projects or programming
- Social activities such as receptions, parties, galas, community dinners, picnics and potlucks
- Costs for planning, staffing and supplying social activities as described above
- Activities that result in an applicant's course credit, degree or certification
- Fundraiser or benefit activities
- Lobbying activities
- Activity that is initiated, managed by, or that benefits an entity or organization with which the individual applicant has a formal affiliation such as employment or volunteer service
- Religious activities

Accessibility - Americans with Disabilities Act

Applicant must demonstrate that the project is in compliance or actively working to be in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. These laws prohibit discrimination against individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities. Both programmatic and structural accessibility must be addressed in the application.

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Grant Request Expenses

Grant funds support expenses essential to the completion of the proposed activities. The grant request must be dedicated to eligible one-time, direct expenses, that are legitimate parts of the proposed activities, and must be incurred and expended within the Eligible Funding Period. Expenses identified in the grant request should be based on competitive, current market pricing. Applicants must demonstrate how the funding will enable them to achieve a particular goal related to their artistic career or practice.

Types of eligible expenses include:

- Education Fees (e.g. course, instructor fees, materials), excluding programs where academic credit is earned.
- Artist fees (e.g. creation, preparation, performance time)
- Domestic travel (e.g. mileage, accommodation, per diem)
- Marketing (e.g. print material, ad buys, design fees)
- Materials (e.g. paint, costumes, props)
- Professional Services (e.g. printer, graphic designer, accountant, lawyer, editor)
- Rentals (e.g. stages, studio space, lighting/sound, scissor lift)
- Supplies the cost of which is less than $10,000 per unit (e.g. camera, computers/software, kiln)
- Access accommodations (e.g., audio description, sign-language interpretation, closed or open captioning, large-print brochures/labeling)

Ineligible Grant Request Expenses

Expenses that fall outside of the identified eligible expenses for the grant activities may not be included as part of the grant request.

Ineligible grant request expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Acquisition/purchase of artwork
- Budget shortfalls

- Capital expenditures, including the purchase of fixed assets or 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 $10,000
- Collection maintenance or restoration expenses
- Costs of goods for resale, including concessions or promotional merchandise such as clothing or items purchased for sale
- Costs for the creation of new organizations
- Deficit or debt reduction
- Donations or contributions to other organizations
- Expenses incurred prior to or after the eligible funding period
- Food, beverage and alcohol. Food and beverage may be included if they have a clear programmatic purpose.
- Foreign travel
- Funding cash reserve or endowment accounts or instruments
- Fundraising or benefit activity expenses
- General miscellaneous or contingency costs
- Lobbying activity
- Ongoing or operating expenses including utilities, rent/lease, office supplies, personnel time that is not specifically dedicated to the grant activities
- Personnel benefits
- Prizes and awards
- Expenses supported by any other federal or state funding
- Property maintenance, restoration or renovation expenses
- Purchase and/or use of gift cards and gift certificates to support grant activities
- Purchase of a vehicle
- Tuition, fees or activity that results in an applicant's undergraduate or graduate course credit, degree or certification
- Unallowable expenses for federal awards as defined in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E - Cost Principles
- Unrealized ticket or event revenue, i.e., providing free tickets or scholarships to attend an event
- Visa costs paid to the federal government

REVIEW PROCESS

Eligibility Review

Submitted applications are reviewed by staff for completion, eligibility, and adherence to published guidelines. Applications are reviewed as submitted, provided that the IEDA may contact applicants if any additional information is required. New application information or subsequent application clarification submitted after a program deadline is not considered unless requested by an IEDA program manager. Staff will also review an applicant’s record of compliance and good standing with the Iowa Arts Council, the IEDA, other state agencies, including but not limited to the Iowa Department of Revenue, and federal government agencies or departments. Applications or applicants determined by staff to be ineligible or incomplete will not move forward to panel review. A determination as to eligibility or completeness is final agency action.

Competitive Panel Review

Applications by eligible applicants that are complete and adhere to program requirements will be referred for a competitive review by a panel of professionals with expertise related to 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 IEDA.

Decision Notification
Applicants are typically notified of funding decisions, including decisions to decline to fund applications, within eight weeks after the application deadline. Applicants are encouraged to refrain from contacting staff for application status updates during the funding decision process.

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 Iowa Artist Career Accelerator program scoring rubric will be used by the review panel to evaluate grant applications. The following application questions are provided for reference only. Applicants must review and complete application requirements in the SlideRoom portal. Each section has criteria and corresponding point values to ensure an unbiased review process. The rubric is on a scale of 30 points.

Applicant Profile
Describe the applicant's artistic practice and career, including:

- Type of artwork(s) created including concepts and medium(s) used.
- Notable achievements in artistic career or practice.
- How the artwork or practice is typically presented to the public.

Applicant Profile: 5 points possible		
5	**3**	**1**
Applicant demonstrates an active practice with strong capabilities in concept and form, and deliberate efforts to make work accessible to the public. Career progress is demonstrated through a record of relevant, notable achievements.	Applicant describes practice, concept, form of work and career progress with some public access identified and some relevant notable achievements.	Career activity, concept and form of work are unclear or inadequate. Public does not have regular access to work. Applicant does not identify career progress through relevant notable achievements.

Activity Description and Career Goal
Detail the activity the applicant will undertake with the grant funds and the career goal they will help the applicant to achieve, including:

- A description of the activities that will be undertaken with the grant funds.

- How the activities will advance the artist's professional capacity, enhance their artistic practice, or expand the audience or market for their work.
- How the activity is relevant to achieving the identified career goal.

Activity Description and Career Goal: 5 points possible		
5	**3**	**1**
The identified goal will clearly advance the applicant's artistic practice or creative business in Iowa. The activities are highly relevant to achieving the identified career goal.	The identified goal may advance the applicant's artistic practice or creative business in Iowa. The activities may help the applicant achieve the identified career goal.	It is unclear how the goal will advance the applicant's artistic practice or creative business in Iowa. The activities are not relevant to the identified career goal.

Readiness to Engage

Briefly describe why now is the right time to engage in peer learning, mentorship, and career development opportunities offered with the grant funding and what you hope to learn. If applicable, please briefly describe your interest in and commitment to attending the Artist Career Development Retreat.

Readiness to Engage: 5 points possible		
5	**3**	**1**
Applicant demonstrates a clear readiness to engage in peer learning, mentorship and career development opportunities during the funding period.	Applicant demonstrates an interest in peer learning, mentorship and career development opportunities.	Applicant does not demonstrate a readiness to engage in peer learning, mentorship and career development opportunities.

Budget

Grant Request Expenses

Itemize up to $2,500 in eligible expenses that will be funded by the grant request in the table below. Do not include expenses related to attending the in-person Artist Career Development Retreat. Include a brief description of each expense and the numeric dollar amount for that expense. Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include dollar signs, decimals or commas.

Expense Description	**Grant Request Amount ($)**

Total Project Costs/Expenses

Enter the total grant request expenses outlined in the table above. Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include dollar signs, decimals or commas.

Artist Career Development Retreat

Will you be attending the Artist Career Development Retreat? (Y/N)

Budget Narrative

Describe the expenses that the grant funds will support within the Eligible Funding Period, including why the good, service, or opportunity was selected. If you intend to purchase any equipment, provide justification for this expenditure and how it relates to the grant activities.

Provide information to clarify any line item included in the grant request budget or provide further details on the scope of the grant request budget.

Budget: 5 points possible		
5	**3**	**1**
Intended use of funds is clear and appropriate, and the proposed activities are very likely to advance the applicant's artistic practice or creative business in Iowa.	Intended use of funds is identified, and the proposed activities may advance the applicant's artistic practice or creative business in Iowa.	Intended use of requested funds or quality of activities is unclear or inadequate.

Work Samples

Upload 3-5 media samples that demonstrate the quality of the applicant's artistic work. Artistic work samples must represent an artistic work or performance. Artistic work samples do not include bios, testimonials, news articles or marketing material such as brochures, fliers or posters.

- Provide 3-5 items.
- Video and audio files should not exceed three minutes each.
- PDF files should not exceed three pages each.
- Each PDF should only represent one work sample (i.e. one poem would be considered one work sample).
- Panelists will not be required to view more than three pages of a work sample or more than three minutes of an audio or video file.

Include a description with each sample, including:

- Title of the sample
- Date of the work or activity
- Names of artist(s) featured if applicable
- If an audio or video sample is longer than three minutes, indicate the segment the panel should view.
- If a visual art sample, note the artistic medium being presented in the sample and the dimensions of the actual piece.

Work Samples: 5 points possible		
5	**3**	**1**
Work samples are of high quality and clearly demonstrate exceptional capabilities in artistic concept and form.	Work samples are of average quality and demonstrate some capabilities in artistic concept and form.	Work samples are of poor quality or demonstrate inadequate capabilities in concept and form.

Overall Application

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

Case for Support: 5 points possible		
5	**3**	**1**
Proposal clearly meets the goals for the grant program, case for support is exemplary and merits investment from the state.	Proposal meets the goals for the grant program and case for support is average.	Proposal does not meet the goals for the grant program, case for support is below average or does not merit state investment.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Applicants should refer to the glossary for clarification of program terms and definitions.