

IOWA SCREENWRITERS GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES



IOWA SCREENWRITERS GRANT Fiscal Year 2026

BACKGROUND

Through the Iowa Screenwriters Grant, the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) provides support to Iowa's screenwriters to undertake activities that advance their artistic practices and elevate the creative screenwriting industry in Iowa. It is a career advancement grant for Iowa screenwriters and focuses on providing professional development tied to an active screenplay on which the applicant is currently working.

The grant is administered by the Iowa Arts Council, which exists within IEDA. Funding is made possible by a sponsorship from the Iowa Scriptwriters Alliance and the Iowa Motion Picture Association. Applicants must adhere to the 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 IEDA.

QUESTIONS

Potential applicants, especially first-time applicants, are encouraged to review all published materials, including these guidelines, and contact Produce Iowa Program Manager EJ Philby Burton at ej.philbyburton@iowaeda.com well in advance of application deadlines with any questions regarding the program.

ACCESSIBILITY

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 elizabeth.ferreira@iowaeda.com at least two weeks in advance of the application deadline.

TIMELINE

April 22, 2025 | Fiscal Year 2026 Application Deadline

The deadline to submit an online application is 11:59 p.m. on April 22, 2025, for the funding period July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026.

Funding Notification

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

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026 | Eligible Funding Period

The eligible funding period is July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026. All expenses must be incurred and project activities must be completed 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

Applicants may request funding for eligible one-time project expenses that are incurred and expended within the eligible funding period.

- Minimum grant request: \$500
- Maximum grant request: \$2,500

Grant funds will be disbursed directly to the grant recipient in one lump sum at the start of the eligible funding period. Each grant recipient will be required to submit a final report in a form provided by IEDA in which the recipient demonstrates that all grant funds and matching funds were incurred and expended during the eligible funding period by providing documentation of expenditures and proofs of purchase and disclosing any other expenses and in-kind donations to the project. IEDA may request additional documentation. The grant recipient is responsible for securing any additional funds needed to cash flow the project appropriately.

IEDA may require the grant recipient to repay grant funds if the recipient fails to demonstrate to the satisfaction of IEDA that the grant recipient has completed the project and expended grant funds to pay eligible expenses during the eligible funding period. Any unspent grant funds will need to be returned to the IEDA within 30 days after the final report deadline.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must meet all the following requirements. Individuals who do not meet all the requirements are not eligible for funding.

- Individual [screenwriter](#)
- 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 [701 Iowa Administrative Code 38.17](#).
- 18 years of age or older
- An application must support a project that is initiated, produced and/or managed by the individual screenwriter, not another entity or organization
- Maintain current registration in the [Produce Iowa Production Directory](#)

Ineligible Applicants

Ineligible applicants include the following:

- Individuals enrolled in any type of undergraduate degree granting program at the time of application
- Artist groups, collaboratives and collectives
- For-profit business
- Individuals that have an active Greenlight Grant contract
- IEDA grantees that are not in compliance with reporting or other requirements, or who have been placed on IEDA’s funding moratorium list

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Projects

An eligible project consists of professional development activities related to the screenwriter’s active screenplay. Grant funds must be used for expenses related to the screenwriter’s project that advance

the screenwriter's professional capacity or career, enhance their artistic practice or allow them to learn new or more advanced techniques in screenwriting. Applicants must be actively working on a screenplay at the time of application and throughout the funding period. Applicants must show progress on their screenplay but are not required to complete it by the end of the eligible funding period.

Types of eligible activities include:

- Participating in professional development opportunities for screenwriting (e.g. online or in-person conference or workshop registration fees).
- Expanding capacity for creative screenwriting work (e.g. purchasing or subscribing to screenwriting software, books).
- Learning new or advanced techniques in screenwriting (e.g. online or in-person classes, courses, apprenticeships).
- Receiving professional screenwriting mentorship (e.g. one-on-one or group coaching, professional feedback, peer reviews on current screenplay).

The following types of screenplays are eligible:

- Feature, including sequels
- Short
- Web series
- Episodic, including pilot episodes or new seasons
- Proof-of-concept
- Adaptations from other works

Ineligible Projects

Projects that fall outside of the identified types of eligible projects will not receive funding through this grant program. Grant funds may not be used to support routine, ongoing activities or expenses. Applicants must demonstrate how the funding will enable them to achieve a particular skill or advancement in their screenwriting career as it relates to the screenplay on which they are actively working.

Ineligible projects include, but are not limited to, the following types of activities and projects:

- Advertisements
- Award shows, sweepstakes or contests
- Capital projects
- Commercials
- Domestic travel-dominant projects that primarily benefit applicant
- Projects that involve domestic travel outside of Iowa must clearly demonstrate how the activities benefit Iowans and the arts community in Iowa
- Infomercials
- Trailers or sizzle reels
- Screenplays primarily consisting of news, talk shows, religious, political, instructional, corporate or obscene content
- Projects-for-hire
- Project 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
- Projects that result in course credit or degree for the applicant

- Phases of a project if the applicant has received a grant from the Iowa Arts Council or IEDA for a prior phase of the project
- Sequels or new seasons of episodic productions are considered eligible, distinct projects.

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Grant Request Expenses

Iowa Screenwriters Grants support expenses that are essential to the completion of an eligible project. The grant request must be dedicated to eligible one-time, direct expenses that are legitimate parts of the proposed project. Costs must be incurred and expended within the eligible funding period. Expenses identified in the grant request should be based on competitive, current market pricing.

Eligible grant request expenses include direct project costs, such as:

- Professional development (e.g. course fees, instructor fees, excluding programs where academic credit is earned)
- Screenwriting software (for the duration of the funding period and necessary for professional development)
- Screenwriting resources (e.g. books, textbooks, peer reviews)
- Domestic travel (e.g. mileage, per diem, and accommodation following the State of Iowa [in-state](#) or [out-of-state](#) employee travel rates, as necessary for participation in professional development)

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 may be considered ineligible.

Costs and expenses that are not eligible for funding, nor can they be used as match expenses, include:

- Alcoholic beverages or events where alcohol is served (social activities)
- Capital expenditures
- Commercial (for-profit) enterprises or activities, including concessions, food, t-shirts, artwork or other items for resale (this includes online or virtual sales/shops)
- Donations or contributions to other organizations
- Equipment purchases
- Expenses incurred prior to or after the eligible funding period
- Fines and penalties, bad debt costs, or deficit reduction
- Foreign travel
- Fundraising or benefit activity expenses
- General miscellaneous, contingency, or “other” unidentified costs
- Gifts and prizes, including cash prizes, gift certificates/gift cards, or any other cash equivalents with monetary value
- Hospitality costs and costs related to social functions such as receptions, parties, and galas, as well as food/meals that conclude a program or event.
- Home studio/office costs or expenses, including utilities and mortgage payments
- Lobbying activity
- Membership/dues that are not specifically dedicated to the professional development
- Ongoing or operating expenses including utilities, rent/lease, office supplies, personnel time that is not specifically dedicated to the project

- Purchase of a vehicle
- Tuition, fees or project activity that results in undergraduate or graduate course credit or degree for the applicant
- Visa costs paid to the U.S. government

Match Requirement

Applicants are required to demonstrate investment in the project by providing one to one matching funds to the total grant amount requested from the IEDA. For example, an applicant that requests \$500 in grant funds needs at least \$500 in matching funds for a minimum total grant project budget of \$1,000.

The required matching funds must be dedicated to one-time project expenses that are legitimate parts of the proposed project. Matching funds may be all cash or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. Applicants will need to include any in-kind contributions as direct costs in the project budget to balance the budget. The applicant is not required to secure the matching funds at the time of application but must secure them by the end of the eligible funding period and identify them in the final report due August 1, 2026.

- Cash match is actual cash, like cash donations, grants, applicant's time participating in the professional development, and revenues that are received for the project.
- In-kind match is non-cash goods or services provided at no charge to the project by a third party. The use and value of third-party contributions must be properly documented. All third-party contributions must be necessary and reasonable for the project.
- Expenses used for matching funds must adhere to the same expense eligibility requirements as detailed in the budget requirements section of these guidelines.
- State or federal funds cannot be used to meet the match requirement.
- Funds provided by units of county or local government may be used to meet the match requirement.

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 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, 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 grant program. Applications will be scored and ranked based on the published scoring rubric. Recommendations for consideration and approval are submitted to the IEDA Director.

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

Application Questions and Scoring Rubric

The Screenwriters Grant scoring rubric will be used to evaluate applications. Each section has criteria and corresponding point values to ensure an unbiased review process. The rubric is on a scale of 50 points. The following application questions are provided for reference only. Applicants must review and complete application requirements in the SlideRoom portal.

Applicant Profile

Describe applicant’s career as an Iowa screenwriter, including:

- The type and quality of productions and/or screenplays.
- Notable achievements in screenwriting career or practice.
- How the proposed production will advance applicant’s career and work as an Iowa screenwriter.

Career Information

Upload a 1-2 page document that details applicant’s activity as an Iowa artist, such as an artist résumé, curriculum vitae or list of career achievements with dates.

Applicant Profile: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Applicant demonstrates and supports an active screenwriting career with strong capabilities in concept and form. Applicant demonstrates a strong record of progress in their screenwriting career through relevant notable achievements.	Applicant describes a screenwriting career, concept and form of work. Relevant notable achievements are identified.	Career activity, concept and form of work is unclear or inadequate. Relevant notable achievements are unclear or not identified.

Applicant Screenwriting Career Goal

Detail the screenwriting career goal(s) the grant funds will help applicant achieve, including:

- How reaching the screenwriting career goal(s) will advance applicant’s professional capacity, enhance their artistic practice or expand the audience or market for their work.
- Why now is a pivotal time in applicant’s career.

Applicant Screenwriting Career Goal: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
The identified goal will clearly advance applicant's artistic practice and is the logical next step for their career.	The identified goal might advance applicant's artistic practice and might be the logical next step in their career.	A goal was not identified or it is unclear how the goal will advance applicant's artistic practice at this time.

Project Description

Describe applicant's current screenplay project and the related professional development or other activities that will enable applicant to achieve their stated screenwriting career goal, including:

- The active screenplay project that would be aided by this grant.
- The professional development or other activities that will help applicant's screenwriting career.
- Why the identified professional development or other activities were selected.
- How the identified professional development or other activities will advance the screenplay.
- If participating in a professional development opportunity that is competitive and participation in the opportunity is currently undetermined:
 - Indicate whether applicant has been accepted into the program and/or when such information will be made available.
 - Provide details of a second-choice professional development opportunity that is non-competitive, to be used in the instance that applicant is not accepted into the competitive program.

Project Description: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Project description is clear. Project activity is highly relevant to achieving the identified screenwriting career goal.	Project description is average. It is questionable if the project activity will help achieve the identified screenwriting career goal.	Project description is inadequate. Project activity is not relevant to achieving the identified screenwriting career goal.

Schedule of Key Project Dates

Provide a timeline of when activities in the project description will take place. Be sure to include when key artistic decisions will be made, project phases and events, as applicable. If you include activities that occur outside of the funding period for context, indicate that by adding an asterisk (*). Project activity dates may be estimated by month, i.e. February 2025, if a specific date is not yet determined.

Schedule of Key Project Dates: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Confident project will successfully happen through a clear, detailed schedule.	Project might be achievable through the identified schedule.	Multiple concerns about project achievability. Schedule provided is insufficient.

Project Budget

Direct Project Expenses

Itemize the eligible direct grant project expenses covered by both the requested Iowa Arts Council funds and the Matching Funds in the table below. These are costs that are expended specifically for the project

during the period of performance. Review the list of eligible and ineligible expenses found in the grant program guidelines. Do not include expenses that will be incurred outside the eligible funding period. Include a brief description of each expense and place the numeric dollar amount for that expense in the next column. Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include dollar signs, decimals or commas.

Total Project Costs/Expenses

Enter the total direct costs and indirect costs (if applicable) outlined in the tables above. Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include dollar signs, decimals or commas.

Enter the Amount Requested from the Iowa Arts Council

Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include dollar signs, decimals or commas.

Matching Funds - Cash

Itemize each source of funding for the cash match, the amount from each source, and whether the funds have been secured. The funding source is where the cash match is coming from. This may include sources like private foundations; corporate or individual donors; ticket sales; or self-funded. Be as specific as possible in listing the source. If you are using your time working on the project as part of your match, list it under "Direct Project Expenses" and include the amount here as "Applicant Time on Project."

Matching Funds – In-Kind

Itemize third-party contributions to the project. These are non-cash goods and services that are necessary and reasonable for the project. Do not include goods, facilities, or services contributed by you as these are considered part of your cash cost share/match. The in-kind contributions must also be included as direct costs in the Direct Costs form above to balance the budget.

Total Project Revenue

Enter the total of the amount requested from the Iowa Arts Council and the matching funding outlined above. This amount should be equal to the Total Project Costs/Expenses. Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include dollar signs, decimals or commas.

Additional Project Budget Notes

Provide information to clarify any line item included in the project budget, or to provide further details on the scope of your project budget.

Budget Narrative

Describe the expenses that the grant funds and cash match will support within the eligible funding period, including:

- Why the good, service or opportunity was selected.
- Credentials of any collaborators or service providers involved.
- If participating in a professional development opportunity that is competitive:
 - Indicate whether applicant has been accepted into the program.
 - Provide details of a second-choice professional development opportunity that is non-competitive, to be used in the instance that applicant is not accepted into the competitive program.

Budget: 5 points possible		
5	3	1

Intended use of funds is clear and appropriate, and the proposed project would provide applicant with a high quality opportunity to advance their artistic practice.	Intended use of funds is identified and the proposed project might provide applicant with a quality opportunity to advance their artistic practice.	Intended use of funds is inadequate and whether the proposed project will provide applicant with a quality opportunity to advance their artistic practice is unclear.
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Artistic Work Samples

Submit 3-5 artistic work samples that are as relevant to the proposed art project as possible. Artistic work samples should demonstrate the quality of the artistic work highlighted in the proposed project or the quality of the applicant’s past work as it relates to the proposed project. Artistic work samples should be recent, high quality, and must represent an artistic work or performance. It can also include images or videos of past events or classes. 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 five pages each.
- Panelists will not be required to view more than five pages of a document 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
- Relevance of the work sample to the proposed project
- If an audio or video sample is longer than three minutes, indicate the three-minute segment the panel should view.

Artistic Work Samples: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Artistic work samples are of high quality, relevant to the proposed project and clearly demonstrate exceptional capabilities in artistic concept and form.	Artistic work samples are of average quality and demonstrate capabilities in concept and form.	Artistic work samples are of poor quality or demonstrate inadequate capabilities in concept and form.

Overall Application

The following scoring criteria takes into consideration the quality of the proposal and application as a whole and not a specific facet of the proposal and application.

OVERALL ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Artistic quality demonstrated in the application is exceptional.	Artistic quality demonstrated in the application is average.	Artistic quality demonstrated in the application is not strong.

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OVERALL ARTISTIC MERIT: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Project will advance applicant's screenwriting skills.	Project might advance applicant's screenwriting skills	Project does not advance applicant's screenwriting skills

Case for Support: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Proposal clearly meets the goals for the grant program, case for support is exemplary and the project 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 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

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