Iowa Certified Film Festivals Grant
Fiscal Year 2026 Grant Guidelines

The Iowa Certified Film Festivals Grant program (Program) is administered by the Iowa Arts Council and Produce Iowa - the State Office of Film and Media, both of which exist within the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA).

A film festival that is currently certified by the IEDA as a Certified Film Festival (CFF) through the Iowa Certified Film Festival Program may apply for a grant through this Program. Through the Program, the IEDA provides financial incentives to CFFs to support and elevate their film festival programming and to contribute to a more robust, diverse and sustainable creative ecosystem in Iowa.

Funding is made possible by an annual appropriation by the Iowa Legislature. Operating and grant policies and definitions set out at 261 *IAC* Chapter 305 and rules pertaining to organization and operation of the IAC found at 261 *IAC* 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 Produce Iowa Program Manager EJ Philby Burton at ej.philbyburton@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
April 22, 2025 | Fiscal Year 2026 Application Deadline
The deadline to submit an online application is 11:59 PM on April 22, 2025, for the funding period July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

June 2025 | Funding Decision 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 grant project expenses must be incurred and 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 REIMBURSEMENT

One-Time Project Expenses

Applicants may request funding for flexible programmatic support of film festival expenses that are incurred and expended during the eligible funding period. Grant funding amounts are predetermined based on the tier of the CFF, as determined during certification.

- Picture Palace Tier: $5,000
- Electric Theater Tier: $2,500
- Movie House Tier: $1,500

Grant Payment

Grant recipients will receive the full grant amount award upon full execution of the grant agreement. Recipients will need to complete a final report by August 1, 2026 outlining how the grant funds and matching funds were spent. Any unspent grant funds will need to be returned to the IEDA within 30 days after the final report deadline.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be a CFF and a federally tax exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to be eligible to apply. Being certified is not a guarantee that a CFF will receive funding through this grant.

Accessibility - Americans with Disabilities Act

Applicant must demonstrate that it 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.

Ineligible Applicants

Ineligible applicants include the following types of entities.

- Entities that are not Certified Film Festivals (CFFs).
- Organization that has 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.

FILM FESTIVAL REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities must be directly related to the CFF's primary film-related event during the funding period. Types of eligible activities include networking events, screenings, panels or workshops that occur as part of the film festival. Grant activities may represent a phase of a larger event with a longer timeline. However, all grant activities must have a clear beginning and end date during the eligible funding period.

Applicants must demonstrate how the event or series is unique or new to the eligible funding period and worthy of support. The CFF must show some form of growth from year to year.

Ineligible Activities

Event 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:
- Activities not directly related to the CFF's primary film-related event
- Activities outside of Iowa
- Capital Infrastructure, construction, renovation or maintenance
- Grant projects that begin or end prior to or after the eligible funding period (grant projects may represent a phase of a larger project with a longer timeline)

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS
Eligible Grant Request Expenses
Certified Film Festival Grants support event expenses that are essential to the completion of the CFF's primary film-related event (e.g. a film festival) that occurs during the funding period. The grant request must be dedicated to eligible one-time, direct event expenses, and legitimate parts of the film festival 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.

Expenses eligible for reimbursement include direct event costs such as:
- Access accommodations (e.g., audio description, sign-language interpretation, closed or open captioning, large-print brochures/labeling)
- Artist or speaker fees (e.g. creation, preparation, presentation time)
- Domestic travel (e.g. mileage, accommodation, per diem)
- Marketing (e.g. print material, ad buys, design fees)
- Overhead and Administrative Costs that are directly allocable to the project (e.g. a percentage of space/facility costs, the percentage of staff time for the administrative support of a project)*
- Personnel time dedicated to the project** (e.g. planning, execution, evaluation time)
- Portion of Space/Facilities costs such as mortgage principal, rent, and utilities, as allocable to the project
- Professional services (e.g. printer, graphic designer, security)
- Rentals (e.g. lighting/sound, portable restrooms, venues)
- Shipping costs (e.g. to transport artwork, instruments)
- Supplies the cost of which is less than $10,000 per unit (e.g. computers/software, projector, screen)

Overhead and Administrative Costs must be reasonable and consistent with best practices in financial management. It should not simply be a percentage of the project budget. Applicants must be able to calculate the actual costs included in the line item.
**Applicant must demonstrate how personnel time is specifically dedicated to the film festival. Personnel benefits, such as health insurance and paid time off, are not eligible for reimbursement. State of Iowa agencies cannot include personnel costs in the grant request, but such expenses may be included as part of the cash match requirement.*

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.

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
- Facilities costs and staffing expenses except overhead and administration and personnel costs dedicated to the project as described above
- 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
- Home studio/office costs or expenses, including utilities and mortgage payments
- Lobbying activity
- Personnel benefits
- Prizes and awards
- Project costs 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 project costs
- Purchase of a vehicle
- Tuition, fees or project activity that results in an undergraduate or graduate course credit, degree or certification for any employee or agent of an applicant
- Unrealized ticket or event revenue, i.e., providing free tickets or scholarships to attend an event

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 is eligible for $2,500 in grant funds needs at least $2,500 in matching funds for a minimum total grant project budget of $5,000.

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.

- Cash match is actual cash, like cash donations, grants, organizational reserves, 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 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.

Panel Review
Applications by eligible applicants that are complete and adhere to program requirements will be reviewed by a panel within IEDA with appropriate expertise commensurate 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 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.

<u>**Application Questions and Scoring Rubric**</u>
The Certified Film Festivals Grant 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 – not scored
CFF Name and Contact Information
CFF Primary Event Information: Date(s) and Location(s)

CFF Stated Goals from Certification Application: *The certification application can be found in the applicant's SlideRoom history. If these Stated Goals cannot be found, contact* [EJ Philby Burton](#) *for assistance.*

CFF Grant Description
Film Festival Plans
Describe the planned activities that will take place at the film festival event during the funding period, including ALL of the following information:
- What the planned activities are that will be supported by this grant and how they will be accessible by the public.
- Where the planned activities will take place.
- How the film festival is working towards achieving the goals listed in their original CFF certification application.
- How the film festival will be unique, fresh, or new this year as compared to previous years.

FILM FESTIVAL PLANS: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Film Festival planning is clear. The value and appropriateness of the plans to the CFF's goals are clear and the activities will clearly help the CFF grow. Project activities that engage the public are exemplary, clearly defined, and accessible.	Film Festival planning is satisfactory. The value and appropriateness of the plans to the CFF's goals are considered and the activities may help the CFF grow. Project activities that engage the public are described and accessibility is considered.	Film Festival planning is inadequate. The value and appropriateness of the plans to the CFF's goals are unclear and the activities are unlikely to help the CFF grow. Project activities that engage the public are not described or accessibility is unclear.

Schedule of Key Activity Dates
Provide a timeline of when the activities outlined in the Film Festival Plans will occur. Be sure to include when key artistic decisions will be made, project phases, and events, as applicable. Grant activities may represent a phase of a larger event with a longer timeline. If, for context, you describe activities that occur outside of the eligible funding period, indicate by adding an asterisk (*). Deadlines can be listed as the month it is set to be complete, such as "September 2025", rather than a specific date.

SCHEDULE OF KEY ACTIVITY DATES: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Confident project will successfully happen through a clear, detailed timeline of tasks.	Project is achievable through the identified timeline of tasks.	Multiple concerns about project achievability. Timeline of tasks is insufficient.

Community Involvement
Describe the intended communities, participants, and/or audiences involved in the project activities, including:
- Key Demographics.
- Specific plans to engage the identified groups in the project activities.

- How they will benefit from project activities.
- Plans to provide equitable access to project activities.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Target population for the project is well-defined. Exemplary plans are in place to engage the public. Community members will clearly benefit from project activities.	Target population for the project is identified. Plans are in place to engage the public. Community members will benefit from project activities.	Target population for the project is not clearly identified. Plans to engage the public are unclear or inadequate. Community members may not benefit from project activities.

CFF Project Budget

Direct Project Expenses
Itemize the eligible direct grant project expenses covered by both the requested grant 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 outlined in the tables above. Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include dollar signs, decimals or commas.

Select CFF Tier
Select the Tier that the CFF was categorized into at the time of certification. The Tier corresponds with the amount of grant funding that the CFF may be eligible for through this grant program.
Picture Palace Tier: $5,000
Electric Theater Tier: $2,500
Movie House Tier: $1,500

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 the organization's operating budget. Be as specific as possible in listing the source.

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 your own organization as these are considered part of your own organization's 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 grant 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 (Optional)
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: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Budget and intended use of requested funds are clear, appropriate and will help the applicant to achieve intended goal. Numerous sources of matching support are identified.	Budget and the intended use of requested funds are identified. It is unclear if they will help the applicant to achieve the intended goal. Some sources of matching support are identified.	Budget and the intended use of requested funds are unclear or inadequate. Only one source of matching support is identified.

Event Media Samples
Submit 3-5 event media samples that directly relate to the film festival. Media samples should demonstrate the quality of the film festival by showing the events that occur at the film festival. Media 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 one page each.
- Panelists will not be required to view more than one page of a document or more than three minutes of an audio or video file.
- If the artist(s) for the project is not yet selected, submit representative samples of work by artists the applicant has presented in the past.

Include a description with each sample, including:
- Date of the 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.

EVENT MEDIA SAMPLES: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Event media samples are of high quality, relevant to the grant activities and clearly demonstrate an exceptional film festival event.	Event media samples are of average quality, relevant to the grant activities and demonstrate an average film festival event.	Event media samples are of poor quality, irrelevant to the grant activities, and/or demonstrate an inadequate film festival event.

Overall Application

The following scoring criteria references the quality of the proposal and application as a whole and not a particular question. Support materials will be considered in overall 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 average.	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.