



IOWANS CREATE COMMUNITY MURAL PROGRAM

PROGRAM GUIDELINES



Iowans Create Community Mural Program Fiscal Year 2026

BACKGROUND

The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and its arts division, the Iowa Arts Council, invite Iowa communities to apply for the Iowans Create Community Mural Program (“the program”). Through the program, IEDA may select one or more communities to receive an original mural, designed and created by a professional Iowa artist with financial assistance from the IEDA. The program is funded through an appropriation by the Iowa Legislature to 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 Creative Community Development and Infrastructure Programs Manager Jon Berg at jon.berg@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

September 10, 2025 – October 15, 2025

Applications accepted.

October 15, 2025 | Application Deadline

The deadline to submit an online application is 11:59 p.m. on October 15, 2025

November 2025 | Mural program Selection

Applicants selected to receive a mural will be announced. All applicants will be notified of their status.

November 2025 – February 28, 2026 | Community Engagement and Input

IEDA staff will meet with the artist and representatives from the selected community to discuss the mural specifics. Based on community engagement and input, the artist will provide the community with design concepts for the mural that reflect the community’s spirit, creative and cultural identity, and authentic sense of place.

March 1, 2026 – June 30, 2026 | Design Development and Installation

The artist and selected community will collaborate on the design development, creation, and installation of the chosen mural concept by June 30, 2026. The selected community will also coordinate with IEDA to select the date for a public event celebrating the mural.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Applicants

Only applicants of the types listed below are eligible to apply. Entities that do not fall into one of these categories are not eligible to apply.

- Unit of local, county, state or federally recognized tribal government physically located in Iowa.
- Active Iowa nonprofit organization registered with the Iowa Secretary of State and maintaining a staffed office physically located in Iowa.
- Economic development agency or organization physically located in Iowa.

Applicants must be physically located in and benefit an Iowa community with a population of 20,000 or fewer.

Ineligible Applicants

Ineligible applicants include individual applicants and the following types of entities.

- For-profit corporation or business.
- Political party.
- National service/professional organization.
- Organization that has received grants, loans or other incentives through the Iowa Arts Council, or any program administered by the IEDA, the Iowa Finance Authority or any state agency, that are not in compliance with reporting or other requirements or that are listed on the IEDA's funding moratorium list.
- Past winners of the Iowans Unite or Iowans Create Community Mural Contest.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must have selected and secured at least one mural site in their community at the time of application (more than one potential site is preferred). If the applicant is not the owner of the property that serves as the mural site, they must obtain the property owner's consent for the mural installation and furnish the Authority with written consent from the property owner for installation of the mural and agreement that the mural will remain in place for at least three years.

The mural will be completed within a total project budget not to exceed \$25,000 that may include eligible expenses related to final site selection, community engagement and planning, design development, creation, and installation. Muralists are required to allocate a portion of the awarded \$25,000 grant to activities related to the final site selection, community engagement, and planning.

The mural site must be suitable for a mural painting and be capable of being painted within the budget set at the discretion of IEDA. The applicant also must ensure that the surface is in proper condition for a mural painting or take any action necessary to prepare the surface of the mural site for the mural painting at the sole cost of the entrant or property owner.

The artist and designees from the selected community will collaborate on the planning, design, development, creation and installation of the mural by June 30, 2026.

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 standing with the Iowa Arts Council, the IEDA, other state agencies, including the Iowa Department of Revenue, and federal government agencies or departments. Applications or applicants determined by staff to be incomplete or ineligible will not move forward to panel review. A determination as to eligibility or completeness is the 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 an independent panel of judges. 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 within four weeks after the application deadline. Applicants are encouraged to refrain from contacting staff for application status updates during the 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 and Scoring Rubric

The Iowans Create Mural Program Scoring Rubric will be used by the review panel to evaluate 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 23 points.

PROGRAM SUBMISSION

Application

Applications should include a description of:

- The community's hometown spirit and unique creative and cultural identity
- Site readiness and partnerships
- Your unique community assets, including local spaces, events, and downtown districts.

Media Samples

In addition to the application form, each applicant is highly encouraged to Submit 3-5 media samples that are as relevant to the application as possible including the proposed site(s) for the mural and location within the community. Media samples should showcase and support the application narrative as it relates to the community's authentic sense of place.

Include a description with each sample, including:

- Title of the media

- Relevance of the media sample to the application
- If an audio or video sample is longer than three minutes, indicate the three-minute segment the panel should view.

The applicant is responsible for obtaining consent from persons shown in any photographs or video.

REVIEW PROCESS

A panel of judges will review and score the official application form and media. The community selected for the mural will be the applicant whose application receives the highest score from a panel of judges. The selected applicant will be notified by email or phone within four weeks of the application deadline.

Community Narrative

Provide a description of your community that includes and highlights:

- Your hometown spirit and community pride
- Unique creative and cultural identity
- Your unique community assets, including local spaces, events, and downtown districts that you want to elevate with a mural to strengthen your authentic sense of place

Community Narrative: 10 points possible		
10	5	1
The applicant provides clear highlights of the community's hometown spirit, creative and cultural identity, unique spaces and places and demonstrates how a mural will elevate the local sense of place.	The applicant provides some highlights of the community's hometown spirit, creative and cultural identity, unique spaces and places and provides some information about how a mural will elevate the local sense of place.	The applicant does not provide sufficient highlights of the community's hometown spirit, creative and cultural identity, unique spaces and/or how a mural will elevate the local sense of place is unclear.

Site Readiness and Partnerships

Share details on the secured mural site(s) and reasons for the selected locations. Include details on local partnerships with business owners and stakeholders and local resources to address any site challenges.

Site Readiness and Partnerships: 5 points possible		
5	3	1
Applicant clearly demonstrates the community's readiness through one or more identified and secured mural site(s) and established local partnerships to address site challenges.	Applicant provides some information on the community's readiness through one or more identified and secured mural site(s) and some detail about local partnerships to address site challenges.	Applicant does not provide information on the community's readiness and local partnerships. The mural site(s) are not identified or secured or significant concerns exist about the selected site(s).

Creativity and Media Samples

Submit 3-5 media samples including video and photos that identify the mural site(s) and support the community narrative as it relates to the community's authentic sense of place.

Media Samples: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Media clearly highlights the mural site(s) and supports the community narrative provided in the application.	Media shows the mural site(s) and some support of the community narrative provided in the application	Media does not show the mural site(s) and does not support the community narrative provided in the application

Overall 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.