

IOWANS CREATE COMMUNITY MURAL PROGRAM
PROGRAM GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND

The Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), invites Iowa communities to apply for the Iowans Create Community Mural Program. Through the program, one or more communities may be selected to receive an original mural designed and created by a professional Iowa artist with financial assistance from IEDA.

The program is funded through an appropriation from the Iowa Legislature to IEDA. IEDA also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

QUESTIONS

Potential applicants, especially first-time applicants, are encouraged to review all published materials, including the administrative rules and guidelines. Applicants with questions regarding the program should contact Creative Community Development and Infrastructure Programs Manager Jon Berg at jon.berg@iowaeda.com well in advance of the application deadline.

ACCESSIBILITY

IEDA is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to eligible applicants. For technical support submitting the online application, contact Accessibility Coordinator Elizabeth Ferreira at 515.348.6325 or elizabeth.ferreira@iowaeda.com at least two weeks before the application deadline.

TIMELINE

August 26, 2026–October 28, 2026 | Application period
Online applications will be accepted through 11:59 p.m. October 28, 2026.

November 2026 | Mural program selection
Applicants selected to receive a mural will be announced. All applicants will be notified of their status.

November 2026–February 26, 2027 | Community engagement and input
IEDA staff will meet with the artist and representatives from the selected community to discuss mural specifics. Based on community engagement and input, the artist will provide the community with mural design concepts that reflect the community's spirit, creative and cultural identity, and authentic sense of place.

March 1, 2027–June 30, 2027 | Design development and installation
The artist and selected community will collaborate on design development, creation and installation of the selected mural concept by June 30, 2027. The selected community will also coordinate with IEDA to select the date for a public event celebrating the mural.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

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

- A unit of local, county, state or federally recognized tribal government physically located in Iowa.
- An active Iowa nonprofit organization registered with the Iowa Secretary of State that maintains a staffed office physically located in Iowa.
- An 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:

- A for-profit corporation or business.
- A political party.
- A national service or professional organization.
- An organization that has received grants, loans or other incentives through the Iowa Arts Council or any program administered by IEDA, the Iowa Finance Authority or another state agency and is not in compliance with reporting or other requirements or is listed on IEDA's funding moratorium list.
- A past winner of this program, Iowans Unite or the Iowans Create Community Mural Contest.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Mural Site

Applicants must have selected and secured at least one potential mural site in their community at the time of application. More than one potential site is preferred. If the applicant does not own the property that will serve as the mural site, the applicant will be required to obtain the property owner's consent for the mural installation and provide IEDA with written confirmation of property owner consent to the installation. The applicant also must provide written confirmation that the property owner agrees the mural will remain in place for at least three years.

Site Readiness

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

Project Budget

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

Community Collaboration

The artist and designees from the selected community will collaborate on the planning, design development, creation and installation of the mural by June 30, 2027.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Applicants must submit applications through 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 program application requirements. Applicants can visit help.liaisonedu.com for assistance with online submission.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Community Narrative

Applications should include a description of:

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

Media Samples

In addition to the application form, each applicant is strongly encouraged to submit three to five media samples that are as relevant to the application as possible. Media samples should include the proposed mural site or sites and show their locations within the community. They should showcase and support the application narrative as it relates to the community's authentic sense of place.

Include a description with each sample that identifies:

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

The applicant is responsible for obtaining consent from individuals shown in any photographs or videos.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Eligibility Review

Submitted applications are reviewed by staff for completeness, eligibility and adherence to published guidelines. Applications are reviewed as submitted. However, IEDA may contact applicants if additional information is required. New application information or subsequent application clarifications submitted after the application deadline will not be considered unless requested by an IEDA program manager.

Staff will also review an applicant's record of compliance and standing with 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 regarding eligibility or completeness is the final agency action.

Competitive Panel Review

Complete applications submitted by eligible applicants that adhere to program requirements will be referred to an independent panel of judges for competitive review. Applications will be scored and ranked using the scoring rubric below. The panel will review the official application form and submitted media samples. Recommendations for consideration and approval will be submitted to the director of IEDA.

SCORING RUBRIC

The Iowans Create Community Mural Program scoring rubric will be used by the review panel to evaluate applications. Each section includes criteria and corresponding point values to support an unbiased review process. The rubric is scored on a 23-point scale.

The following application questions are provided for reference only. Applicants must review and complete all application requirements in the SlideRoom portal.

Community Narrative: 10 points possible

Provide a description of your community that includes and highlights:

- Your hometown spirit and community pride.
- Your 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 community's authentic sense of place.

Points	10	5	1
Description	The applicant clearly highlights the community's hometown spirit, creative and cultural identity, and 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, and 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 information about the community's hometown spirit, creative and cultural identity, or unique spaces and places, or it is unclear how a mural will elevate the local sense of place.

Site Readiness and Partnerships: 5 points possible

Share details about the secured mural site or sites and the reasons for the selected locations. Include details about local partnerships with business owners and stakeholders and local resources available to address any site challenges.

Points	5	3	1
Description	The applicant clearly demonstrates the community's readiness through one or more identified and secured mural sites and established local partnerships to address site challenges.	The applicant provides some information about the community's readiness through one or more identified and secured mural sites and some details about local partnerships to address site challenges.	The applicant does not provide sufficient information about the community's readiness or local partnerships. The mural site or sites are not identified or secured, or significant concerns exist about the selected site or sites.

Creativity and Media Samples: 3 points possible

Submit three to five media samples, including videos and photographs, that identify the mural site or sites and support the community narrative as it relates to the community's authentic sense of place.

Points	3	2	1
Description	Media clearly highlight the mural site or sites and support the community narrative provided in the application.	Media show the mural site or sites and provide some support for the community narrative provided in the application.	Media do not show the mural site or sites or support the community narrative provided in the application.

Overall Case for Support: 5 points possible

Points	5	3	1
Description	The case for support is exemplary and merits investment from the state.	The case for support is average.	The case for support is below average or does not merit state investment.

AWARD NOTIFICATION

Applicants will be notified of their award status by email or phone, typically within four weeks of the application deadline. Applicants are encouraged to refrain from contacting staff for application status updates during the review process.