Illinois ARTS Council

60th

Creative Projects Grant

Creative Projects Grant

Fiscal Year 2026

Opens: July 1, 2025
Open Deadline

Table of Contents

Link   [About the Illinois Arts Council](#)
Link   [IAC Salesforce Grant Portal](#)
Link   [IAC Accessibility Resources](#)
Link   [IAC Glossary](#)

Accessible Guidelines

To obtain accessibility information regarding applications and written materials contact the Illinois Arts Council's ADA/504 Access Coordinator. Please be aware staff is working remotely and it is recommended to reach out to them via email. If you prefer more direct communications send an email that contains your preferred contact telephone number and general timeline of when you are available.

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Teresa Davis
Email: Teresa.N.Davis@illinois.gov
Tel. 312-814-6753
TTY 888-261-7957

IAC 504/ADA Specialist
Danielle Heal
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TTY 888-261-7957

Illinois Arts Council Staff Contacts

For specific information on this grant, contact the appropriate program staff. Please be aware staff are working a hybrid model and it is recommended to reach out to them via email. If you prefer more direct communications send an email that contains your preferred contact telephone number and general timeline of when you are available. To determine your Program Director please visit IAC's Program Director finder tool: https://arts.illinois.gov/about-iac/staff/grant-staff-locator.html

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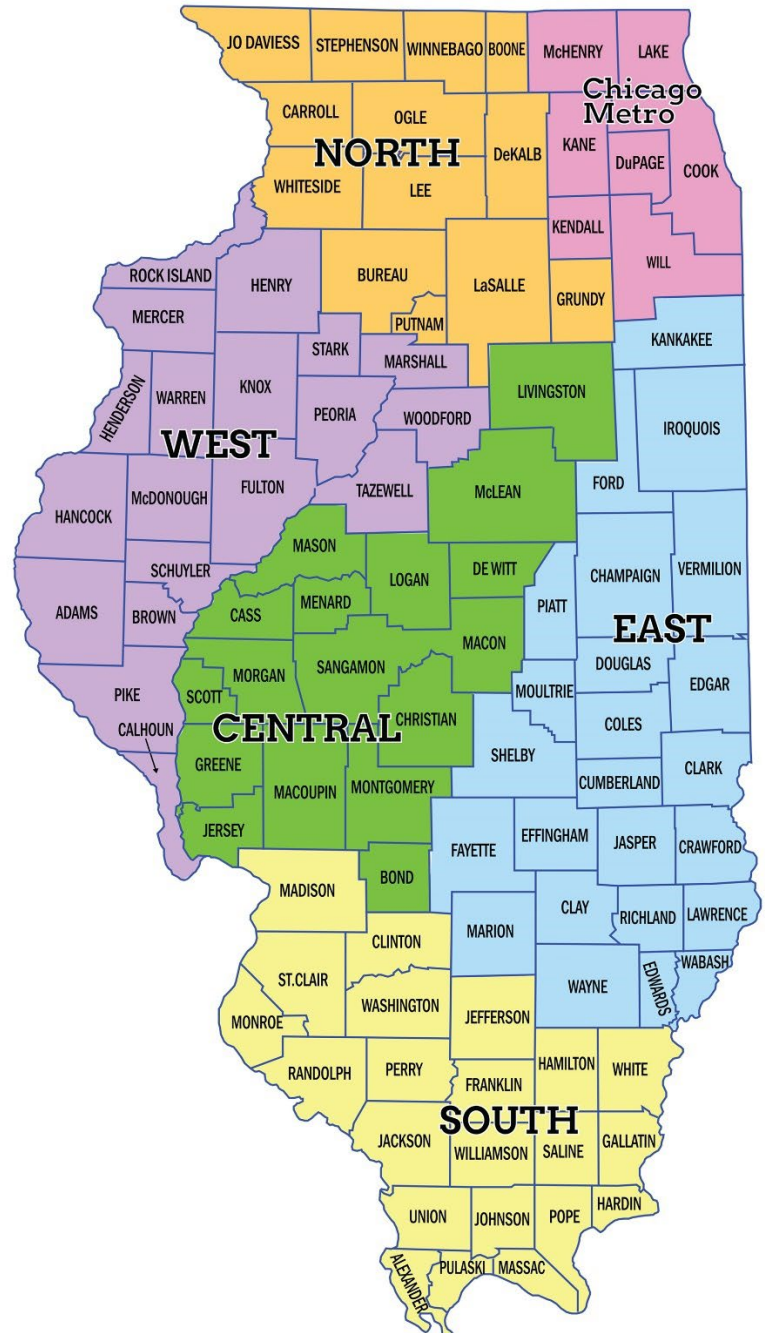Northern Region / Chicago Metro 1
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Creative Projects Grant Summary

The Illinois Arts Council's (IAC) Creative Projects Grant (CPG) support artists' and organizations' arts projects. CPG projects must include a public release or presentation of the work accomplished during the grant period. CPG may only support a single project during the grant period. While the project may have multiple activities (class, performance, etc.) CPG may not be used to bundle multiple projects.

Individual artists may submit an application in CPG for a professional development opportunity as their project. Professional development grants do not require a public release or presentation.

CPG replaces the Creative Catalyst Grant and absorbs the Folk Arts Mentorship grant program. Ethnic, Folk, or Traditional artists interested in mentorship or project funding should now apply through CPG.

Who's Eligible
- Individual Artists and Arts Educators
- Registered 501(c)(3) Not-For-Profit Organizations in good standing with the Office of the Illinois Secretary of State
- Branches of Government Entities (e.g., Municipalities, County, Libraries, Park Districts, etc.)

Who's Ineligible
- Recipients of the FY25 Creative Catalyst Grant
- Public K-12 school districts, schools, and charter schools. (see Creative Learning Grant for funding opportunity)

Award Amount
- Up to $12,000
- For individual artists this award is taxable income

Application Information
- The application requests information about the arts project that will take place during the grant period.
- IAC General Operating Support (GOS) grantees must demonstrate how the project is a unique opportunity outside of their daily operations and programming.

Key Dates:

Application Deadline:
- A minimum of 8 weeks prior to the project start date. Applications per-region will remain open until funds are fully expended for that region.

Grant Period:
- No sooner than 8 weeks from application submission to August 31, 2026

Creative Projects Grant Details

For the purpose of CPG IAC will consider projects in arts, crafts, design, dance, digital media, film/video, literature, music, performance, photography, theater, visual arts, ethnic, folk and traditional arts, or community-based arts.

Below are examples of both eligible, and ineligible, art practices that would have the potential to create projects funded under CPG. If you have any questions about whether your work is eligible for CPG please [contact us](#).

Examples of *eligible* art practices include, but are not limited to:

ethnic, folk, and traditional arts	music
acting	composition
performance art	conducting
theater design and direction	creative writing
puppeteering	visual arts
choreography	murals/public art
dance	community-based art
film/video/media arts	community-based teaching arts
digital media	

Examples of *ineligible* art practices include, but are not limited to:

therapeutic arts	cosmetology
software development	fitness
computer engineering	martial arts
culinary	

Applicants must:
- Apply utilizing a Salesforce grant portal account registered to the applicant.
- Submit all required application materials a minimum of 8 weeks prior to the arts project start date.

Making Arts Accessible to All
Accessibility in the arts provides inclusive participation of people with disabilities in all cultural and creative spaces. Recipients of IAC funds are expected to make reasonable efforts for any public art activities and programs to be as accessible as possible. For further information and resources on how to do this please see the [Accessibility Resources](#) page on the IAC website.

Applicant Restrictions
- Applicants may only submit one application per fiscal year.
- College and university arts programs may apply for CPG only if the project benefits, and is accessible to, the general public. Those events which are normally considered a part of regular or academic programs will not be funded.
- Organizations with which IAC Board members are affiliated are eligible to apply. However, a Board member may not be the authorizing official signing any documents relating to an application or grant.
- Collaborative applications from individual artists are acceptable, but the applying artist will be fiscally responsible for the award, including taxes.
- A project may only be funded once. Multiple applicants may not apply separately for the same projects.

Deadline

CPG is an open deadline grant program. Applications will be accepted until allotted funds have been expended. Each IAC region has its own allocation of funds. Funds will be expended at varying rates and regions will close to new applications at different times. Please check the IAC website before applying to see if funds are available for your region.

Applications must be submitted to the IAC's Salesforce grant portal a minimum of 8 weeks prior to the start date for the arts project being submitted for IAC funding.

Please note that all draft applications will be removed from the IAC system 30 days after the grant program closes.

Grant Period

FY26 CPG support activities occurring no sooner than 8 weeks from application submission and extending until August 31, 2026.

Please note the grant period start date may change depending on the review process and/or the applicant's timeliness in grant acceptance.

Allowable and Unallowable Expenses

IAC CPG funds may be used to support eligible expenses associated with the proposed art project.

Detailed Allowable Expenses, not limited to:
- Fees for artists, teaching artists, and contractual personnel. Artists must be compensated at best practice levels including prep time.
    - All artists, companies, ensembles, etc. that receive money from this grant must be Illinois residents.
- Up to 15% of administrative expenses.
    - Organizations may include staff salaries, rent, etc.
    - Individual artists may include fees to self, studio rental, etc.
- Generally, equipment costs. For durable equipment with a useful life of more than one-year equipment may not exceed $3,000. Equipment costs must be a justifiable expense associated with the proposed art project.
- Consumable supply costs, office supplies, printing, art supplies, etc.
- Marketing and promotion costs
- Project documentation expenses
- Individual artists may apply for professional development opportunities such as conferences and trainings. This is the only activity outside of Illinois that IAC may support.
- Travel and lodging should be budgeted for the most cost-effective means allowable by your location in the state of Illinois. If driving, the mileage reimbursement rate must follow federal standards of $0.70 per mile. Lodging expenses may not exceed the allowable federal rates.

Detailed Unallowable Expenses, not limited to:
- CPG funds may not be used for re-granting or cash awards.
- CPG funds may not be used for the purchase of food or alcoholic beverages, including per diems or receptions.
- The Council will not support subsidizing an individual's academic study or projects associated with that study.
- The Council will not support any activity outside of the United States.

- The Council will not support out-of-state touring or project activity (unless it is Professional Development as described under Allowable Expenses).
- The Council will not support fees or payments to artists, companies, ensembles, etc. that are not based in Illinois.
- Council CPG funds may not be used for capital improvements or construction. CPG funds may not be used to purchase permanent equipment that exceeds the $3,000 cap noted under allowable expenses.
- Laptops, or other personal computers, may not be funded as equipment expenses.
- Council funds may not be used to pay the balance of an organization's previous year's operating deficit.
- With the exception of state colleges/ universities, state agencies and their affiliates are ineligible to receive funds from the IAC. State agencies are those entities defined by the Office of the Comptroller in Procedure 27.50.10 in the SAMS manual.
- Council funds cannot be used to pay any expenses incurred outside the project timeline.
- The Council will not support fundraisers or benefits.
- Council funds may not be used for political activities such as contributions, lobbying, or fundraisers.

Creative Projects Grant Review Criteria

The review of CPG applications is based on successful evidence of the answers to the following application requirements:

1. **Application completeness**
   - All required fields and attachments have been correctly completed and are in the requested format.

2. **Application details an arts project or professional development opportunity**

3. **Budget submitted includes standard industry expectations for costs such as rentals, fees, supplies, etc.**

4. **Confirmation of Project Feasibility**
   - Application provides evidence that the project will take place as described. This considers necessary resources including artists, place, budget, and location, in the timeline of the designated grant period.

5. **Eligible to receive funds from the State of Illinois**
   - Applicant is compliant with IAC requirements.
   - Applicant is not on the Illinois Stop Payment List. Organizations and individuals may be placed on the Illinois Stop Payment List for not being in compliance with all state agencies. Examples include owing money to another state agency or not being up to date with reporting on state grants.
   - Organizational applicants are in good standing with the Secretary of State
   - Individual artists can show proof they have been an Illinois resident for a minimum of 1-year from the date of application.
   - Individual artists have submitted a valid State ID or Driver's License.

CPG Process, Notification, and Compliance

Review Process

- When the application is created, the Salesforce grant portal will issue an application number that will be used in future communication regarding that application.
- Applications which have been ruled ineligible or incomplete will not be reviewed.
- Applications are reviewed based on the review criteria (see page 7).
- The final recommendations are presented to the IAC board for their consideration and approval.
- A record of the review process is maintained for all reviewed applications; applicants may reach out for review feedback after receiving decision notification.

Notification

All applicants will be notified of funding decisions once the IAC has reviewed and approved funding recommendations. Applicants approved for funding will:

- Receive, via email, instructions regarding requirements to accept and claim the award (see Award Acceptance section below). Please note that some email systems direct IAC notification emails to spam email boxes or quarantine them by the security settings on the organization's server/domain. We encourage you to mark "no-reply@webmerge.me" and "InsureSign@send.insuresign.com" as safe email addresses in your account.
- Artists with a disability are encouraged to look at services provided by IL ABLE to assist with managing award funds.
- Once all documents have been returned via the IAC Salesforce grant portal and all requirements met, including the completion, and filing of all previous fiscal year Final Reports, the award will be processed, and the payment voucher will be sent to the Illinois State Comptroller for payment.
- **Once the payment voucher has been received by the Illinois State Comptroller payments can take two to six months.**

Recipients can check the status of the grant payment through the Illinois State Comptroller's vendor website, or sign-up to be notified about the payment via email, text, or both. Recipients can also sign up for direct deposit from the Illinois Comptroller if they have received a payment from the Illinois State Comptroller's Office within the previous 24 months. Otherwise, the check will be mailed to the address on file. Please contact the Illinois State Comptroller's Office at (217) 557-0930 if you would like to set up direct deposit.

Compliance

Grant Acceptance
For awards to be processed all grant acceptance documents must be submitted to the IAC Grants Office. Grant acceptance is a multi-step process that requires uploads to the Salesforce grant portal and email exchanges. It is the responsibility of the applicant to read all emails carefully and follow the instructions.

The documents to be uploaded to the IAC Salesforce grant portal include:

- Completed and signed W9 form.
- Copies of letters submitted to legislators. CPG grantees are required to notify by letter their state representative, state senator, and the Office of the Governor of the grant amount and the project or program it helps support. Prior to mailing the letters to the legislators, make electronic copies of the letters to include with your grant acceptance materials.

Following the upload of the documents listed above, applicants approved for funding will be emailed the following for digital signature and date:
- Grant Agreement with Legal Status Disclosure Certificate (LSDC)

Final Report
All FY26 CPG grantees will be required to complete and submit a final report no later than September 30, 2026, as stated on the grant agreement.

The final report for CPG grants will ask:
- Brief narrative response on if the event took place as described in the application and if there were any challenges
- Was the event documented, and if so, how
- Total project budget revenue and expense including IAC funds
- Brief explanation if the overall project expense was greater than the project income
- Attendance for different activities and events both in-person and online
- Populations benefited by race, age, or distinct group
- Addresses for all activity locations
- Optional quote on the impact of the grant and/or photo with photo credit

Crediting Requirements
Grant recipients must credit the IAC in all promotional material and public notices in the following manner:

"<GRANTEE> acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council."

For further information regarding usage of the logo and to download a copy, go to the logo page of the IAC website.

Grant Portal Overview & Applicant Information

IAC utilizes an online grant portal, powered by Salesforce, to accept applications. The IAC CPG online application consists of form field components and the uploading of required documents. Each component must be completed and submitted in the required format by the deadline.

For instructions go to the Using Salesforce section of the IAC website. There is also a user manual for the online grant portal on our website to help guide the application process. Please review this carefully and use as a reference.

Accessing Your Account

The online grant system can be accessed at https://arts-illinois.my.site.com/
- If you already have a user account, use your existing account information to login.
- If you do not have a user account, create a new account by clicking "Not a member" and complete the form with name, email and password.

Applicants should use Chrome as the online browser when accessing Salesforce, as the system will not operate properly in other browsers.

If you have difficulties accessing your account (e.g. password reset not working or cannot create an account), email Program Representative, Jasmine Roberson at Jasmine.Roberson@Illinois.gov for assistance.

Applicant Information

Once logged in all applicants should first click on the Applicant Information tab from the top header in Salesforce.
- New applicants should add an applicant account, complete, and save all required form fields. If you are applying as an individual artist please create an individual account. If you are applying on behalf of an organization please complete an organizational account.
- Returning applicants should make sure all information is saved and is up to date on their applicant account.

Information requested for an **individual** applicant account includes:
- Applicant Name (legal name)
- Artist Name, if applicable
- General Contact Information, including a drop-down selection of zip-code and county.
- Primary Discipline Selection – select one
- Any additional disciplines reflected in artistic practice – select as many as applicable
- Checkboxes if individual identifies as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) or has a disability.

Information requested for an **organizational** applicant account includes:
- Applicant Name (legal name)
- Doing-Business-As Name, if applicable
- General Contact Information
- Year Founded or year organization began arts programming
- Organization Mission

- Primary Discipline Selection – select one
  - Colleges and Universities with multiple applications – please select multidisciplinary as the primary discipline and the specific applicant disciplines as the additional disciplines.
- Any additional disciplines reflected in programming – select as many as applicable
- Staff and Board overall demographic information. Note that staff is considered to be those individuals the organization requires to maintain daily operations. Staff is not necessarily defined as paid positions.
  - Number of Board Members
  - Number of BIPOC Board Members
  - Number of Staff Members
  - Number of BIPOC Staff Members
- Contact information for Authorizing Official, Executive Director, Board President, and Accessibility Coordinator (a designated staff member responsible for overseeing accessibility). We recommend keeping separate persons with separate emails as the different contact officials in the Salesforce grantee portal. This will help us reach out to your organization in case any of the emails change. If your organization does not have ongoing office staff, including individual cell numbers can also be helpful.
- UEI number (12 characters) and FEIN number (10 characters, including hyphen, e.g., 12-3456789).

Please note the information in the applicant information tab may be updated at any time. Please keep the information current to ensure communications from IAC reach you.

Grant Program Selection and Completion

After the Applicant Information is completed, applicants should click on the Grant Programs tab to access the application.
- Select the "Creative Projects 2026 – Individual Artist Application" or "Creative Projects 2026 – Organization Application" grant program and click apply
  - The system will prompt you to select an applicant.
- Complete the form fields in the application (see page 12) and click save
- Upload all required attachments (see page 14)
- Certify and submit the application to IAC Salesforce grant portal.
  - Please note this is a two-step process. Once the application is complete click the Submit Button in the lower left-hand corner. A pop-up will require certification of eligibility and application content.
  - After certification there is a submit button which must be clicked to complete the application in the IAC Salesforce grant portal. The application will not be successfully submitted until the second submit button is clicked.

General Online Application Information

- Please note that after any application is started it will appear on the home screen in the Salesforce grant portal.
- Once the application is started the applicant can revisit the application at any time before the deadline to continue working on the application.
- Within the grant application the requirements/sections will be listed along the left-side of the screen.

Application Overview

Application Components

1. Form Fields
Below are the form fields to complete after clicking Apply for the Creative Projects Grant – 2026 grant program:
- Applicant's Website, if different than what is submitted on the Applicant Information tab
- Confirmation that the Applicant Information tab has been updated
- Grant Notification Official name and email
- Project Start Date
- Project End Date
- Project Location
- Description of Arts Project
  - Concisely describe the main activities of the project or professional development opportunity for which you are requesting funds. (maximum 2,000 characters with spaces)
- Briefly describe how your past arts practice or activities may inform and support this project. (maximum 2,000 characters with spaces)
- Public Release or Presentation
  - Summarize the public release or presentation that will take place during this project. Professional development applicants may mark this field as "not applicable." (maximum 2,000 characters with spaces)
- Timeline
  - List in chronological order the main activities of the project (including public release or presentation) or professional development opportunity. The anticipated dates must include month and year, and be within the grant period. (maximum 2,000 characters with spaces)
- Artist's Involvement
  - List if Illinois artists will be involved and the anticipated pay. Artists must be compensated at best practice levels including prep time. (maximum 2,000 characters with spaces)

Organizational applicants may provide the following:
- Department, if applicable
- If the organization is an IAC General Operating Support grantee, they must describe how this project is unique and not part of daily operations and programming. (maximum 2,000 characters with spaces)

Individual artist applicants must provide acknowledgement of the following:
- You have been established as an Illinois resident for a minimum of one year.
- You are legally able to receive taxable income in the U.S. (e.g., U.S. citizen, permanent resident, and/or any other person who can provide a W9 and SSN or ITIN).
- You are 21 years of age or older.
- You are not currently enrolled in a degree-obtaining program.

2. Supporting Documents
The supporting documents to be provided are:
1. Proof of Project Feasibility

Individual artist applicants must also submit:
2. Valid Illinois Driver's License or State ID
3. One-year Residency Verification if necessary

Please refer to the "Supporting Documents" section for full descriptions.

3. Budget
Please complete the financial information tab with the details on your project budget. On the first table please fill in IAC expenses up to $12,000:
- Contractual Services
- Space Rental
- Travel & Lodging
- Marketing
- Supplies
- Equipment (up to $3,000)
- Administrative Expenses (up to 15% of total grant)
- Other (please specify)

On the second table please fill in any non-IAC expenses with their cost description and source of income.

Supporting Documents

Supporting Documents submitted via upload:
- May be no larger than 25 MB in size.
- Salesforce will accept the formats listed below:
    - Image Files acceptable formats are: .png, .jpg
    - Document Files acceptable format is: .pdf

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1. Proof of Project Feasibility

This supporting document should demonstrate that this arts project, or professional development opportunity, can take place. No application, when submitted, can be more than an "informed estimate" of activities and costs to occur, but careful planning will ensure that the financial support requested will be adequate to carry out the arts project or professional development opportunity. This supporting document should demonstrate that this proposed arts project or professional development opportunity was carefully planned and will have the time, space, people, and funds to take place if IAC funding is provided.

On the first page briefly summarize what is included in this attachment.

On the subsequent pages please detail how you plan to accomplish this project. Proof of Project Feasibility should confirm the following:
1. People involved
2. Projected budget costs
3. Planned locations or venues
4. Additional budget support if necessary

Examples of Proof of Project Feasibility include:
- Fully executed contract or memo of agreement
- Letter of intent
- Email between the mutually involved parties
- Price estimates from vendors
- Examples of past work may be included as demonstration of past practice, but do not replace documentation specific to the proposed project or professional development opportunity.

It is up to the applicant to provide evidence and documentation of feasibility in a clear manner. Projects vary greatly and there is not a singular template.

Submit all documentation compiled into a single PDF file named: Applicant Name_Feasibility

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2. INDVIDUAL ARTIST APPLICANTS ONLY: Valid Illinois Driver's License or State ID

CPG is funded by state taxes and therefore requires a minimum of one year of residency in the State of Illinois.

Your residency verification requires your valid Illinois Driver's License or Illinois State ID. A valid Illinois Driver's License or Illinois State ID will need to expire on, or after, the date of application submission.

If the Illinois Driver's License or Illinois State ID was issued less than one year prior to the date of application submission you must also submit One-Year Residency Verification detailed below.

IAC maintains a Personal Identity Protection Policy which can be found on our website:
https://arts.illinois.gov/personal-identity-information-protection-policy.html

Submit a picture of the front of your Illinois Driver's License or Illinois State ID as a PDF file named: Applicant Name_Residency

3. INDVIDUAL ARTIST APPLICANTS ONLY: One-Year Residency Verification

If the issue date of your Illinois Driver's License or Illinois State ID is less than one year prior to the date of applications submission, you must also submit one of the following additional pieces of residency verification to show you have lived in Illinois for more than one year:
- Your previous Driver's License or State ID
- A utility bill in your name that is more than one year old
- A W2 or 1099 from 2023

 If your application does not meet the residency verification it will be ineligible.

Submit this document as a PDF file named: Applicant Name_Additional Residency

For general information contact:
Illinois Arts Council
115 S. LaSalle St., Suite 2202
Chicago, IL 60603
312-814-6750
Toll free in Illinois 800-237-6994
TTY 888-261-7957
Email: iac.info@illinois.gov
Web site: www.arts.illinois.gov

Visit the Illinois Arts Council Board Members page for a complete list of current board members.

The IAC acknowledges continuous support from the National Endowment for the Arts.