



Arts Challenge Initiative (ACI) Capacity Building Program Guidelines

FY 2025

Online Application Deadline: January 30, 2025

FY25 Arts Challenge Initiative – Capacity Building Grant Guidelines

<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
The Wisconsin Arts Board	3
Mission	3
Board and Staff Members.....	3
ACI-Capacity Building Program	3
Program Description	3
Articulating the Public Value of Capacity Building Grants.....	4
Public Service Activity Requirement.....	4
Who May Apply.....	5
Types of Activities Funded	5
Types of Activities Not Funded	6
Grant Amounts and Matching Requirements.....	6
The Granting Process	7
Grant Proposal Writing Assistance	7
Preparing Applications.....	7
Application Process.....	7
Narrative Questions.....	8
Required Financial Documentation and Support Materials	8
Service Contract/Grant Agreement.....	9
Review Process	9
Timeline.....	9
Acknowledgment of Arts Board Support.....	9
Final Reports	10
Retention of Records	10
Accessibility Compliance and Documentation	10
Affirmative Action Plan	11
Appeals.....	11
Glossary of Terms	12

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The Wisconsin Arts Board

Mission

Created in 1973, the Wisconsin Arts Board (Arts Board) is the state agency that nurtures creativity, cultivates expression, promotes the arts, supports the arts in education, stimulates community and economic development and serves as a resource for people of every culture and heritage. This mission is encapsulated in our positioning statement: **Creativity. Culture. Community. Commerce.**

The Arts Board fulfills this mission by communicating the vital role that the arts play in our state's economy and quality of life, and by providing funds, services, and information to artists, arts organizations, educational institutions, communities, and all other interested citizens of the state. It supports the work of arts organizations and artists with funds from the citizens of Wisconsin through a biennial state appropriation by the Wisconsin State Legislature and annual funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Board and Staff Members

The Arts Board is governed by a Board of 15 members appointed by the Governor to serve three-year terms. Board members are Wisconsin citizens recognized for their accomplishments in the arts, humanities, business, education or public service. The board includes members from urban and rural areas across the state and from diverse racial, economic and cultural backgrounds. Click [here](#) to apply to be/nominate a board member.

The Board sets the mission and goals for the agency, evaluates the Arts Board's progress toward these goals, formulates policy, and makes the final decisions on the use of funds. The Board has final authority in granting funds. The members meet a minimum of four times per year, and all meetings are open to the public. The Arts Board's program and support staff implements Board policy, administers the Board's initiatives, partnerships and funding programs, and provides assistance to the state's communities through its work with WI's creative industries – primarily including arts organizations, artists, and arts programs.

ACI Capacity Building Grant Program

Program Description

The ACI Capacity Building Grants Program is designed to provide the Arts Board with a critical tool to work with Wisconsin's arts organizations of color to build their organizational capacity and long-term sustainability. Grantees receive funds to undertake specific capacity building activities such as hiring direct consulting services for specific operational or policy issues; addressing human resource needs; or focusing on other programmatic or operational capacity issues. ACI is intended to support arts producing, creating, and presenting organizations that engage the community they serve in a season of performances/exhibits. (A season includes at least two performances/exhibits that are open to the public, beyond the organization's youth-focused arts education work.)

The time period for this grant's activity is July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. Grant recipients may request an extension of time if they are unable to expend the funds by June 30.

Articulating the Public Value of Capacity Building Grants

If awarded a grant, the grantee organization agrees to tell its legislators and the Governor about the value of state and federal investment of the arts to the community that the grantee serves. Please note: This validation will occur in the form of education. To do so, the grantee will:

- Send a letter to the organization's State Representative, State Senator, and the Governor describing specifically how this Capacity Building grant has allowed the organization to provide a valuable activity in the community it serves. Keep a copy of these letters in the organization's files.
- Send personal invitations to the organization's State Representative and State Senator to attend, participate in programming, or interact with audiences and staff of the organization. Keep a copy of these invitations in the organization's files.
- Submit Final Reports and support materials in a timely fashion as summarized in the Final Report section of the Capacity Building guidelines.

Please note: The above requirements help educate legislators and do not constitute lobbying. Grantees should call Arts Board staff with any questions about this distinction. Samples of the above letters and invitations are available on the Arts Board's website.

Public Service Activity Requirement

Section 44.56 of the Wisconsin Statutes requires that each Arts Board grant recipient perform a public service no earlier than July 1 and no later than June 30 of the fiscal year for which the grant is awarded. The public service should increase the public's awareness of Wisconsin's artists and artistic resources, the economic impact of the arts, the importance of formal K-12 arts education for our children, or the importance of life long learning in the arts.

To fulfill this requirement, organizations must:

- make a public announcement of the activity that reaches the largest possible number of community members;
- ensure that the activity relates clearly to the project supported by the Capacity Building grant; and
- conduct the activity within Wisconsin in a public facility that is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Public service activities include but are not limited to the following: an exhibition, a performance, a publication, a lecture/demonstration, a workshop, a residency, or a media presentation. A fee for admission or publication may be charged.

Who May Apply

Basic Eligibility Requirements – The following conditions must apply for an application to be eligible for funding through the ACI Capacity Building grants program:

1. Art is central to the mission of the applicant organization.
2. The applicant is incorporated in and conducts business in Wisconsin and holds tax-exempt status from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
3. The applicant has substantial policy, management and artistic control by members of the African American, Latin-x American, Native American, or Asian American communities. (This means that the majority of the artists, board, and administrative staff of the applicant organization are of the community of color on which the organization focuses its primary mission/service.)
4. The applicant is a professional organization with paid or equivalent administrative staff (equivalent means regular and consistent administration by volunteer board or staff).
5. The majority of board members and the majority of staff members live in Wisconsin.
6. The organization can document three or more consecutive years of arts programming or arts service prior to the funding period. (First public performance, exhibit, or activity occurred at least before January 2022.)
7. The most recently completed fiscal year of the organization's budget included at least \$10,000 of revenue. (This is required because WAB grants cannot comprise more than 25% of an organization's budget.)

IMPORTANT: Nonprofit organizations that fulfill these general eligibility requirements may apply to this program only if their organization has substantial policy, management and artistic control by members of the African American, Latin-x American, Native American, or Asian American communities. This means that the majority of the artists, board, and administrative staff of the applicant are of the community of color on which the organization focuses its primary mission/service.

Not eligible

1. Individual artists
2. Organizations that are exclusively fund-raising entities, such as United Arts Funds
3. Organizations that serve an exclusive membership not open to the general public

If you have any questions regarding eligibility, please discuss these with the ACI Coordinator at the Wisconsin Arts Board (artsboard@wisconsin.gov).

Types of Activities Funded

The following capacity building activities are eligible under this program:

- Artist Fees
- Human Resources/Staff Salaries
- Consultant Fees for services related to specific operational or policy issues

- Conference, Seminar, or Workshop Costs
- Strategic Planning (could include Succession Planning)
- Evaluation and Assessment Costs
- Other Infrastructure Support
 - Marketing
 - Information Technology
 - Financial Systems
 - Fundraising Processes
 - Program Design and Implementation

Types of Activities Not Funded

In general, the Arts Board does not fund the following nor can the direct 1:1 match for Arts Board funds be used for these expenses:

- Capital equipment (items costing more than \$5,000 with a useful life of more than one year) or capital expenditures, e.g., renovation of existing facilities;
- Endowments;
- Benefit/fundraiser activities;
- Prizes or awards;
- Competitions;
- Deficits incurred from past activities;
- Individual tuition;
- Activities for which academic credit is given;
- Out-of-state travel;
- Hospitality expenses, i.e. entertainment, refreshments or food at receptions, parties, gallery openings;
- Activities that have already been completed by the beginning of the grant period;
- Activities that have a religious purpose;
- General operating expenses;
- Curriculum expansion;
- Activities not open to the general public (activities conducted in public schools are considered to be public).

Grant Amounts and Matching Requirements

No grant will exceed 25% of the applicant's operating budget. With that caveat, grant amounts will be determined by a formula that takes into consideration grants awarded in the current fiscal year from other WAB grant programs, the number of eligible applicants to this program, and the organizational budgets. Grants must be matched at least dollar for dollar in cash.

The Granting Process

The following information relates to the application process of the Arts Board and to the subsequent procedures once an award has been made. Please read all guidelines carefully prior to submitting an application.

Grant Proposal Writing Assistance

The Arts Board staff is available to provide grant proposal writing assistance throughout the year. The staff can explain and clarify eligibility requirements, review criteria, and definitions. The staff can also discuss proposals and alternative ideas. Discussions with the staff, however, do not influence funding decisions.

Email artsboard@wisconsin.gov or call (608) 266-0190 weekdays between 7:30am and 4:30pm for assistance.

Preparing Applications

A completed Arts Challenge Initiative grant application must be submitted online using the Arts Board's online application system by 3pm on January 30, 2025. No hard copy material is required.

While submitting a draft of an application is not required, all applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a **draft application** at least one week prior to the final deadline date. The draft will be reviewed by Arts Board staff members and the applicant will receive feedback on the completeness of the application. An applicant may also choose to request that Arts Board staff make a more in-depth, qualitative review of the draft. The chances of receiving a qualitative review are higher the earlier the draft is submitted.

Please note: Receiving staff assistance does not guarantee funding.

Application Process

Submitting the Online Application Form

1. Go to <https://wab.smartsimple.com>
2. Continuing Applicants: Log in with email and password

New Applicants:

Click on the “Register” button, lower left-hand section of the page.
Register as ‘A Non-Profit Organization’.
Wait for an email with a link to set up a password within the system.
Set up password and username and begin the application.

3. Deadline for application submission is 3 pm on 1/30/25.

Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Narrative Questions

Within the application form, applicants will be asked to briefly provide the following information (bulleted lists are acceptable) in the space available.

1. Outline any major changes to your organization that have occurred within the past 12 months (in mission, staff/board structure, artistic programming, etc.).
2. Provide a one-page synopsis of your organization's work in your fiscal year 2024, and your planned activities through June 30, 2025 (artistic and organizational).
3. Identify the capacity building activity/activities to which you will apply FY25 grant funds received through this program. (Please check all that apply.)
 - Artist Fees
 - Human Resources/Staff Salaries
 - Consultant Fees for services related to specific operational or policy issues
 - Board Development and Engagement
 - Conference, Seminar, or Workshop Costs
 - Strategic Planning (could include Succession Planning)
 - Evaluation and Assessment Costs
 - Other Infrastructure Support
 - Marketing
 - Information Technology
 - Financial Systems/ Fundraising Processes
 - Program Design and Implementation
4. Provide specific details on how you will apply ACI-Capacity Building program funds to the eligible activities you checked above and how those activities further your mission.

Required Financial Documentation and Support Materials

The list of required application and support materials is included in the Support Material tab of the application form and will assist applicants in gathering and organizing materials. These include

- A copy of the IRS form 990 from the organization's most recently completed fiscal year, or a note that the Wisconsin Arts Board already has it on file.
- Samples of programming including material from selected performances, exhibits or publications (include no more than four items). During the draft application process, discuss with Arts Board staff which materials are best suited to support your application.
- Any materials relating to the capacity building activity that you propose to do, such as conference brochures, consultant resumes, etc.
- 3 digital images of the artistic work that you have produced since last July 1.

Service Contract/Grant Agreement

The grant award service contract/grant agreement will be made available to grant recipients through the online application/grants management system once a grant is approved.

Review Process

Steps of the Review Process

1. Arts Board staff is available throughout the application process to advise applicants, this advice does not represent the decision of the panel or the Board, nor bind the Board in future determinations.
2. Arts Board staff reviews applications to determine compliance with basic eligibility requirements and alignment with the program's goals.
3. Staff recommends eligible applicants to the Arts Board.
4. The Board reviews and accepts or denies the staff recommendations.
5. Checks will be available as soon as possible after March 15, 2025, provided the grant recipient has returned a signed grant contract and other required material, that the legislature has passed the state budget, and that the Arts Board has the funds in hand.

Timeline

Application deadline	January 30, 2025, 3pm
Arts Board Grant Determination Meeting	March 11, 2025
Grant award announcement and posting of grant agreement/contract	As soon as possible after March 11, 2025
Grant activity begins	July 1, 2024 (this grant can be applied retroactively to expenses incurred anytime between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025)
Final Report due	At FY26 ACI annual meeting; date TBD

Acknowledgment of Arts Board Support

Each grantee must give credit for grant-supported activities in all printed, online, and broadcast promotion, publicity, advertising, and printed programs by including the following credit line: "This project was supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts."

The Wisconsin Arts Board logo must also be used on the grantee's website and in all printed materials. A camera-ready copy of the logo can be found on our [website](#) together with specific size and color requirements. In order to demonstrate the public value of the partnership

between the Arts Board and the grantee through this grant, the Arts Board requests that grantees place the logo on their website's home page. If that is in conflict with the policy of the grantee organization, put it where mention of funded activities occurs.

In addition, applicants are required to inform their State Representative, State Senator and the Governor of the importance of the arts – especially of those activities funded by this grant – to Wisconsin's economy and quality of life.

Final Reports

A Final Report must be submitted within five months of the end of the grant period. This report may be substantially in the form of a video, though a final report form must also be submitted through the WAB's online grant system. Most grant recipients will participate in the annual ACI meeting, during which they will present the bulk of their final report information orally - and be recorded for WAB's reporting purposes. Contact staff for more information. Applications for WAB grants from organizations that have not filed final reports for past grants will not be accepted for panel review. Grant recipients are required to include appropriate high-quality digital images, digital video, or digital sound recordings relating to the funded activities that can be celebrated in future Arts Board materials, upon request. Recipients should make plans accordingly to capture digital images, etc. of the funded activities during the course of the year.

Retention of Records

Grant recipients may be subject to an audit by the Arts Board or the National Endowment for the Arts. Organizations must retain financial records, including supporting documents, and all other information pertinent to an Arts Board grant for six years after the receipt of the award. This includes invoices, canceled checks, receipts, itemization of in-kind contributions, and general ledger records.

Accessibility Compliance and Documentation

All Wisconsinites should have access to the arts, both as audience members and artists. In order to comply with state and federal laws prohibiting the Wisconsin Arts Board, as a recipient of federal funds, from providing support to people or entities that discriminate against individuals with disabilities, each grantee is required to provide assurances that it will comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"), in making its programs and activities accessible to individuals with disabilities.

By signing the Arts Board application and service contract, grantees acknowledge that their programs, services, and facilities should be accessible to people with disabilities. Monies will not be granted and the Arts Board's endorsement or sponsorship will not be provided unless the applicants are able, upon request, to provide documentation of their efforts to be in compliance. Such documentation might include, but is not limited to, records of accessibility efforts completed to date, readily achievable facility access changes which have been accomplished, provision for maintaining accessibility features, training or education efforts

designed to improve accessibility by individuals with disabilities, and efforts to involve such individuals in planning and achieving access to facilities and programs.

Affirmative Action Plan

The Arts Board encourages all organizations to be as inclusive as possible in their hiring practices. In addition to this, it is a requirement of the State of Wisconsin that organizations with ten or more employees that receive grants of \$50,000 or more must submit a written affirmative action plan acceptable under Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Code within fifteen working days after the contract is awarded. Some exemptions apply. Arts Board staff will contact your organization should it be required to submit an affirmative action plan.

Appeals

The Arts Board recognizes that errors may occur in its application process and is committed to acknowledging any such errors and responding to rectify the effects of an error. The following appeals process enables applicants to identify these errors and omissions, and bring them to the attention of the Board, if the applicant can satisfactorily document that the application was misrepresented or improperly reviewed through no fault of the applicant.

Applicants may appeal the Board's funding decision only on the following grounds:

- a) The Arts Board has made a procedural error in handling the application; or
- b) A member of the staff, peer advisory review panel, or the Board violated the conflict of interest policy of the Board. Board decisions are subject to reversal or modification solely on these grounds.

The appeal must be made exclusively on the basis of materials submitted at the time of application. Changes in the applicant's situation after submittal cannot be considered. Evaluations of artistic quality or merit, including artistic excellence and leadership, the quality of the artistic activity, or the artistic work of an individual artist are not subject to appeal. The amount of the grant may not be appealed. No interpretation or judgment of relevant peer review panels may be appealed.

Any appeal must be submitted in writing to the Arts Board's Chairperson and postmarked no later than thirty (30) calendar days after the sent date of the written notification of the Board's decision. The appeal letter should identify the error or omission and the effect such error had on the recommendation of the advisory panel.

The Board Chairperson will review each appeal in consultation with the Executive Director to determine whether grounds for an appeal exist based on the above criteria. If such grounds are determined to exist, the appeal will be forwarded to the Executive Committee of the Board for consideration. The Executive Committee will solicit staff comment, review records and otherwise seek information pertaining to the case, and then will formulate a recommendation for action to the entire Board. If the appeal is supported by the Board, funds will be awarded only if they are available.

Glossary of Terms

The current Glossary of Terms is located at:

<https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/Pages/GlossaryOfTerms.aspx>