



CREATION AND PRESENTATION Grant Program

INTERIM Year Guidelines

Fiscal Year 2026

Wisconsin Arts Board – FY26

Creation and Presentation Program Interim Year Guidelines

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THE WISCONSIN ARTS BOARD

Mission

Created in 1973, the Wisconsin 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.

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 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 the state's creative industries – primarily including arts organizations, artists, and arts programs.

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CREATION AND PRESENTATION GRANTS PROGRAM

Purpose

The arts play an important role in the lives of every person in Wisconsin. All communities benefit from participating, experiencing, sharing and learning through the arts. Funding from this program supports organizations that provide essential arts programming to their communities and are integral to their communities' cultural legacies. Through direct financial support of ongoing programming by arts organizations, the Arts Board sustains the vitality of Wisconsin culturally, educationally and economically.

Creation and Presentation grants provide artistic program and operational support to established nonprofit arts organizations that have art at the core of their mission, that create or present ongoing arts programming that makes a significant local, regional, or statewide impact on the cultural life of Wisconsin, and that further the Arts Board's community development and arts education related goals (see [Goals 1 and 2 in the Arts Board's strategic plan](#)).

The program supports 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organizations with strong operations - including stable management, ongoing assessment and evaluation, high artistic quality, and programming appropriate to the communities they serve. These grants also fund overall operating support for eligible arts programs of tribal or local governments and universities. In these cases, the organizations will use either government or university nonprofit status.

Applicants to this program may not apply to the Creative Communities Grant Program.

This is a multi-year grant program wherein applicants will submit a Full Year application in their designated year and submit Interim Year applications in the other three years of the cycle. This allows us to collect information needed for accountability, but in a way that reduces the amount of work required of the applicant, and spreads that work over a four-year period. The Full Year application takes organizational size and capacity into account, even while it continues to be a rigorous tool upon which applicants can draw for applications to other funders. The Interim Year application provides an artistic and organizational health "check-in." In both Full and Interim Years, the application form and narrative continue to be based on past performance rather than future projections.

Interim Year Applicants in Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26)

FY26 grants support activities in Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026).

In FY26, applicants that received a FY25 Creation and Presentation grant and that work in the following artistic discipline categories will submit Interim Year applications:

[Dance](#), [Folk](#), [Literary](#), [Multi-Disciplinary](#), [Opera/Musical Theater](#), [Theater](#), [Presenting,*](#) and [Visual Arts](#)

**Note: A presenting organization is defined as an organization that serves its community primarily by brokering relationships between touring performing artists and the presenter's community. It does so by acting as the catalyst to bring those artists from outside of the presenter's community into that community, to perform in concerts and/or residencies.*

Important Note: New applicants to the program are defined as those organizations that did *not* receive a FY25 Creation and Presentation grant award in the last fiscal year. They must submit a [Full Year](#) application this year, regardless of their artistic discipline category, and may not submit an Interim Year application. New applicants are required to contact Arts Board staff *prior* to beginning a Full Year application.

To see the extended timeline for Full Year application submission by discipline category, click on this [chart link](#).

Funding

The program is designed to provide grant amounts that are as consistent as possible from year to year to those applicants that continue to meet eligibility requirements – always dependent on the number of applicants and the availability of funds. If the applicant pool remains consistent, the quality of the applications remains high, and the Arts Board's grant budget remains consistent, the award amounts should be consistent between the full year award and the subsequent interim year awards. Likewise, if the funding for the program decreases or increases, the award amounts will decrease or increase.

Funding Amounts: Actual award amounts are determined by a formula that includes peer advisory grant application review panel score, the applicant's 3-year-average operating revenue, the number of eligible applicants to the program, and the amount of funding available for the program. Award amounts may vary somewhat from year to year, according to that formula, the Arts Board's allocation from the state legislature, and the WAB's grant award amount from the National Endowment for the Arts. No more than 8% of the Arts Board's available funds through this grant program will go to one organization. Grants will not exceed 25% of the average of an applicant's last three years of operating revenue. The minimum grant amount that will be awarded through this program is \$2,000, barring unforeseen circumstances.

Grantee Board Involvement: Articulating the Public Value of Creation and Presentation Grants

The grantee will be accountable and responsive to the Wisconsin Legislature by validating the value of state and federal investment in the arts to the community that the grantee serves. Please note: This validation will occur in the form of education, not lobbying. To do so, the grantee will appoint a **board member** annually who will a) ensure that the organization articulates a message to its community and to the legislature regarding the value that it provides to its community; and b) will notify its entire board about the following required activities related to the Creation and Presentation grant, and the impact of these required activities on their duties as board members.

Required activities:

- Annually, **send a letter** to the organization's State Assemblyperson and State Senator (not its U.S. Congressional representatives), and the Governor discussing the importance of the arts to Wisconsin's economy and quality of life, describing specifically how this Creation and Presentation grant has affected the organization, and describing specifically the value that the grant has allowed the organization to provide to the community it serves and its thanks for that. Keep a copy of these letters in the organization's files and share a copy with the Arts Board. (The sample letter here meets both notification and invitation requirements.)

<https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/Documents/Sample%20Creation%20and%20Presentation%20Legislative%20Letter.pdf>

- At least annually, **send personal invitations** to the organization's State Assemblyperson and State Senator (not its U.S. Congressional representatives), 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 and share a copy with the Arts Board. (The sample letter here meets both notification and invitation requirements.)

<https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/Documents/Sample%20Creation%20and%20Presentation%20Legislative%20Letter.pdf>

Encouraged activities:

- Annually, **meet** with the organization's State Assemblyperson and State Senator to discuss the public value of this state funding for the organization and its community.
- Meet with local staff members of the organization's U.S. Congressional representatives if there is an office in the vicinity.

Please note: The above actions help educate legislators and do not constitute lobbying. Grantees should call Arts Board staff with any questions about this distinction.

Goals of the Creation and Presentation Grants Program:

- to promote and sustain art of the highest artistic quality;
- to promote and sustain organizational and financial stability;
- to ensure artistic relevance and effective arts organizations through appropriate organizational planning, ongoing assessment and evaluation, community input, and sound promotion;
- to increase local, regional, and statewide leadership among arts organizations in Wisconsin;
- to increase audience participation in, and appreciation of, programs created and presented by Wisconsin arts organizations;
- to help arts organizations articulate the value of the work that they do – and the impact of that work on community and economic development – to their local and state officials and to the people in their community;
- to encourage arts organizations to work to enhance arts education efforts in their community.

These goals are essential to the long-term vitality of arts organizations, and the communities that they serve.

Public Service Activity Requirement

Section 41.53 of the Wisconsin Statutes requires that each Arts Board grant recipient perform a public service activity no earlier than July 1 and no later than June 30 of the fiscal year for which the grant is awarded. 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. The activity should increase the public's awareness of Wisconsin's artists and artistic resources, the impact of the arts on economic and community development, 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 is designed to reach all members of the community;
- ensure that the activity relates clearly to the general artistic programming supported by the Creation and Presentation grant; and
- conduct the activity within Wisconsin in a public facility that is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Who May Apply

Only organizations that received a FY25 Creation and Presentation grant last year are eligible to submit a FY26 Interim Year application. (This does not include Music Organizations, which must submit a Full Year application this year.)

New Applicants

Organizations that did not receive a FY25 Creation and Presentation Grant must submit a Full Year application – not this Interim Year application. Please visit the [Creation and Presentation web page](#) to access the Full Year Guidelines and application form.

Who May Not Apply

Organizations that did not receive a FY25 Creation and Presentation grant – and organizations who work within the Music discipline – may not apply for a FY26 Interim Year grant. FY26 is the Full Year in the application cycle for Music Organizations, so they must apply for a Full Year grant.)

In addition, arts organizations that have delinquent final reports due to the Arts Board, or organizations that received a *Creative Communities* grant in this fiscal year may not apply.

Types of Activities Funded

The Creation and Presentation grant program provides grants to organizations for annual arts programming seasons (of exhibits, performances, screenings, etc.). Repeated events, such as a yearly multi-day festival, are eligible. Specific activities include:

- General operating expenses - utilities (electricity, water, heating and cooling, etc.), internet-related costs, telephone-related costs, printing-related costs and office supplies (including paper products), etc. *Eligible general operating expenses do not include food, beverage, administrative building rent, or capital expenses (purchasing items that cost \$5,000 or more);*
- Artistic and technical/production personnel (staff) expenses;
- Temporary staffing assistance;
- Outside (non-staff) artistic fees and services;
- Marketing/promotional expenses;
- Artistic space rental/expenditures;
- Production/exhibition expenses;
- Acquisition of artwork.

Types of Activities Not Funded

In general, the Arts Board does not fund the following nor can the direct dollar for dollar 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;
- Food or beverage;
- Building/space rental for administrative purposes;
- Benefit/fundraiser activities;
- Cash prizes or awards;
- Competitions;
- Deficits incurred from past activities;
- Individual tuition;
- Activities for which academic credit is given;
- Curriculum expansion;
- 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;
- Lobbyists' payments;
- Activities not open to the general public.

Grant Award Determination

Interim Year grant amounts are as consistent as possible to those of the previous Fiscal Year's award amounts. The funding formula incorporates a) the peer advisory grant application review panel's score, b) the organization's average operating revenue (based on the average operating revenue of the three most recently completed fiscal years and not including capitol campaigns or endowments), c) the number of eligible applicants in the pool, and d) the amount of funding available for the program. (See Funding, p.5.) Grants will not exceed 25% of the average of an applicant's last three years' operating revenue, or the most recent year's operating revenue, whichever is less. The minimum grant given in this program will be \$2,000, barring unforeseen circumstances.

Matching Requirements

All Creation and Presentation grants require at least a 1:1 cash match. In-kind goods and services may not be used to match Arts Board funds through this program but are useful to include in the application as an indication of community support.

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.

Deadlines

- September 25, 2025 – Draft narrative review request deadline (optional)
- October 2, 2025 – Draft application form/support materials review request deadline (optional)
- **October 9, 2025 (3:00 pm) – Online application deadline (required)**

Grant Proposal Writing Assistance

The Arts Board staff is available for grant proposal writing assistance throughout the year. The staff can explain and clarify eligibility requirements, review criteria, and definitions. Discussions with the staff do not influence funding decisions. Call (608) 266-0190 weekdays between 7:45am-4:30pm for assistance, or email artsboard@wisconsin.gov.

Applicants are encouraged to submit a request for staff to review a draft of their application form and support material. This request must be submitted by October 2, 2025, by posting a note through the online application system. Applicants can also email Arts Board staff. This form review consists of a simple check of the application form and support material for completeness by Arts Board staff.

Applicants may also request a draft narrative review by Arts Board staff. This request must be submitted by September 25, 2025. Staff may suggest ways to strengthen the narrative in this review. Please note: receiving staff assistance does not guarantee funding.

Preparing Applications

A completed Creation and Presentation grant application must be submitted online using the Arts Board's online application system by **3pm on October 9, 2025**.

No hard copy material is required.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Submitting the Online Application Form

1. Go to the Arts Board's [Creation and Presentation web page](#).
2. Read the information there.
3. Click on "Apply Here" in the upper right corner of the page or go to wab.smartsimple.com; login; follow the instructions that you received in the email from the WI Arts Board that notified you that the application is open; begin the application.
4. Deadline for online application submission is 3 pm 10/9/25. No paper copy is required.

Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Application Evaluation Criteria

Interim year applications will be evaluated based on the purpose and goals of the Creation and Presentation program, and specifically on the following.

Artistic/Educational/Cultural Value

- Applicant fully answered the narrative questions and provided required support materials.
- Applicant continues to do essentially the same kind of work that it outlined in its Full Year proposal, with essentially the same organizational structure.
- Applicant provided the name and contact information for the board member responsible for the public value related required activities (see p. 5 of these Guidelines).

Review Process

1. Wisconsin Arts Board (WAB) staff reviews the Interim Year application to determine compliance with basic eligibility requirements, and whether it meets the evaluation criteria noted above.
2. The WAB staff review recommendations are considered and accepted or denied by the WAB Board members prior to making all awards.

Funding Process

The Arts Board uses a formula to determine funding for Creation and Presentation grants. The formula incorporates average fiscal size of organizations and panel scores. For Interim Year applications, grants will be awarded in approximately the same amount as the previous year, pending available funds. While 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.

Grant Contract

The grant award agreement/service contract will be made available to grant recipients through the online application/grants management system once a grant is approved. The terms and conditions included in the grant award contract are [here](#).

Timeline

Draft narrative submitted for review (<i>optional</i>) -	September 25, 2025
Draft application form submitted for review (<i>optional</i>) -	October 2, 2025
Final online application deadline -	October 9, 2025
Arts Board Grant Determination Meeting -	December 12, 2025
Grant award announcement (via email) -	December 16, 2025 (approximate)
Check mailed -	January 2026 (approximate)
Retroactive Eligible Activities on which grant can be spent, begin (no earlier than) -	July 1, 2025
Eligible Activities on which grant can be spent, end (no later than) -	June 30, 2026
The Final Report for this FY26 grant must be submitted no later than the same due date as next year's FY27 Creation and Presentation application. Deadline -	October 2026 (<i>Note: If the applicant will not submit a FY27 application, the Final Report for this FY26 grant is still due no later than this date.</i>)

Acknowledgment of Arts Board Support

A toolkit for grant recipients can be found on the Arts Board's website and here: https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/Pages/Creation_and_Presentation_Grant_Recipient_Resources.aspx

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/performance/exhibit/event) 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, place it where mention of funded activities occurs.

In addition, applicants are required to inform their State Assemblyperson, State Senator and the Governor of the importance of the arts to Wisconsin's economy and quality of life – especially of those activities funded by this grant. See "Articulating the Public Value of Creation and Presentation Grants" on page 5 of these Guidelines.

Final Report Requirements

A Final Report must be submitted for this grant, using the [online application/grants management system](#). This report is due at the same time as the application for next year's grant is due (October, 2026). Please contact Arts Board staff with any questions.

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 contracts, 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. Please visit the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) website for more information.

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 fifty 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.