

# artisticINNOVATIONS

A SERVICE OF MID-AMERICA ARTS ALLIANCE

## Artistic Innovations Grant Program - Grant Guidelines

**Deadline: 5:00 p.m. CST, Thursday, March 13, 2025**

Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) partners with and supports artists, organizations and communities to grow access to the arts, culture, and creativity. This grant program is made possible by the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance "CFDA" #45.025 Promotion of the Arts Partnership Agreements).

Read **M-AAA's Mission, Vision, and Values** to learn more about us at: <https://www.maaa.org/about/mission/>.

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Artistic Innovations grant program supports the creation of new or original works of art of all disciplines by exclusively engaging in-region individual artists and art-based organizations in M-AAA's six-state region (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, or Texas). See **Applicant Eligibility Requirements** for more information.

this grant program offers up to \$15,000 in support of expenses incurred in the art-making process and public presentation to the applicant's audience. This grant requires a dollar-for-dollar (1:1) match or cost share. M-AAA encourages applicants to request an amount of up to \$15,000 that reflects their project and their capacity to manage the grant. Federal funding sources from the NEA, or another Federal agency (e.g., grants, subsidies) cannot be used to meet the 1:1 match or cost share requirement for the same project in a single application cycle or an overlapping grant period of activity. See **Project Eligibility Requirements** for more information.

All projects must include at least 2 public-facing engagements that occur in M-AAA's six-state region:

1. a premiere or feature presentation; and
2. an educational or outreach activity.

Eligible applications will be adjudicated for artistic merit and artistic excellence by discipline-specific advisory panels. See **Review Criteria** for more information.

M-AAA awards will be made to at least 2 grant recipients per state across the six-state region. This program will disburse 1:1 matching or cost sharing grants of up to \$15,000

to no less than twelve grantees. See [Grant Awards & Grantee Requirements](#) for more information.

Read **M-AAA's FY2025 Artistic Innovations Grant Recipients** and their projects at: <https://www.maaa.org/artists-grants-fellowships/artistic-innovations/2025-grant-recipients/>.

To support applicants in their preparation process of applying, they can preview the application form in the [Application At-A-Glance](#) document.

## APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

As part of its annual grant program, M-AAA intends to make awards that encourage the spirit of experimentation and exploration and benefit a broad constituency. We encourage applications from a variety of eligible applicants of all disciplines including:

- Artists and art-based organizations\* that embody and/or serve underserved populations, such as those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, race/ethnicity, economics, and/or disability \*\*;
- Artists and art-based organizations located in rural and urban communities; and
- Artists and art-based organizations applying for the first time to M-AAA.

\*Arts-based organizations include arts and culture as a primary and major focus of a broader mission

\*\*M-AAA abides by state and federal laws that prohibit public support to organizations (people or entities) that discriminate against people with disabilities. All of our partners and grantees—that includes exhibition venues, grant recipients, and presenting organizations—are required to ensure that they are in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

Note: An individual with a disability is defined by the [ADA](#) as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Individual Artist Applicants *must*:

1. Not be an Artistic Innovations grant recipient or the featured artist/ensemble in another Artistic Innovations project in fiscal year 2025 (projects occurred between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025).

- a. Note: Individual artists cannot be the recipient of two or more grants of more than \$1,000 each through any of M-AAA's artist grant programs in any single fiscal year.
2. Not submit more than one application in a single application cycle.
3. Be at least 21 years of age on or before the application deadline.
4. Be a citizen, permanent resident, or have non-resident status.  
Note: Social Security Number information is not required at the time of application.
5. Have an artist statement and/or résumé that demonstrates at least a 3-year history of arts engagement in a creative practice before the application deadline. Examples of your creative practice do not have to be from consecutive years or seasons. We know that most applicants were disrupted by the pandemic. As a result, it is acceptable to list activities from a recent year other than 2023 or 2022. Virtual programming, planning, and COVID-19 recovery activities are all considered to be arts programming.
  - a. To define eligibility, a 3-year history of arts engagement refers to when the applicant began their creative practice independent of activities required in pursuit of an academic degree or other certification.
6. Apply directly on their own behalf. Applications through a fiscal sponsor/agent are not allowed.
7. Be a full-time resident in M-AAA's six-state region before the application deadline and during the entire grant period of activity, if awarded.
8. Compensate all professional artists or supporting professional personnel at no less than the prevailing minimum compensation per the CFR Part 505 of Title 29 Labor Standards on projects or productions assisted by grants from the NEA. Part 505 does not provide information on specific compensation levels. For more information visit: <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=pt29.3.505&rgn=div5>, and the U.S. Department of Labor's State Minimum Wage Laws, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/minimum-wage/state>; and
9. Be in good standing with M-AAA and all federal agencies with no delinquent grant documents and/or reports, if awarded.

Organizational Applicants *must*:

1. Not be an Artistic Innovations grant recipient or the featured artist/ensemble in another Artistic Innovations project in fiscal year 2025 (projects occurred between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025).

- a. Note: Organizations are limited to an aggregate award amount of \$15,000 through M-AAA's recurring grant programs in any single fiscal year.
2. Not submit more than one application in a single application cycle.
3. Be an arts-based nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)3, US organization, a local state agency (a unit of a local government), a federally or non-federally recognized tribal community or tribe that are also a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) located within M-AAA's six-state region.
4. Be an arts-based nonprofit organization that has its own Board of Directors with its own established bylaws, and manages its budget independent of a parent organization.
5. Be incorporated in and currently conducting business in one or more states in M-AAA's six-state region before the application deadline and during the entire grant period of activity, if awarded.
6. Have completed at least a 3-year history of arts engagement before the application deadline. Examples of your organization's arts programming do not have to be from consecutive years or seasons. We know that most applicants were disrupted by the pandemic. As a result, it is acceptable to list activities from a recent year other than 2023 or 2022. Virtual programming, planning, and COVID-19 recovery activities are all considered to be arts programming.
  - a. To define eligibility, a 3-year history of arts engagement refers to when an organization began its arts programming and not when it incorporated or received nonprofit, tax-exempt status;
7. Have arts and culture explicitly stated as central to the organization's mission. An arts-based organization that includes arts and culture as a primary and major focus of a larger mission may apply if its larger mission is centered on serving a specific cultural group.
8. Compensate all professional artists or supporting professional personnel at no less than the prevailing minimum compensation per the CFR Part 505 of Title 29 Labor Standards on projects or productions assisted by grants from the NEA. Part 505 does not provide information on specific compensation levels. For more information visit: <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=pt29.3.505&rqn=div5>, and the U.S. Department of Labor's State Minimum Wage Laws, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/minimum-wage/state>;
9. Apply directly on their own behalf. Applications through a fiscal sponsor/agent are not allowed.
10. Have and provide a valid 9-digit Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) as a Tax-Exempt Organization registered with the IRS at: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits>.

- a. Note: Organizations that have had their IRS status revoked are not eligible to apply for a grant. Tax-exempt status must be current at the time of application.
11. Have and provide a valid 12-character alphanumeric Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) as assigned (or proof of registration) in the System for Award Management (SAM) at: <https://sam.gov/content/home>. Organizations are required to have a valid UEI ID but not an entity registration to do business with M-AAA.
  - a. Note: The physical address must match the UEI registered in SAM.gov.;
12. Be in good standing with M-AAA and all federal agencies with no delinquent grant documents and/or reports, if awarded.

Those not eligible to apply include:

- Current M-AAA board members, staff members, and immediate families of full-time employees;
- Fiscal sponsors/agents on behalf of an applicant (an organization must apply directly on its own behalf and cannot act as a pass-through entity);
- For-profit entities;
- Organizations whose primary focus and mission is not arts-based programming;
- Organizations that have had their IRS status revoked;
- Public television and other public media companies; and
- State arts agencies.

*For questions regarding your type of organization that is not listed above, email us at: [innovations@maa.org](mailto:innovations@maa.org).*

## **PROJECT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

A great Artistic Innovations project is a work that has in-person experiences of art, art-making of any discipline, or artists at the heart of the endeavor and introduces a new original idea or artwork at any point in its creative development to the applicant's audience by artists and art-based nonprofit organizations in M-AAA's six-state region (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, or Texas). M-AAA recognizes that in-person public-facing engagements might not be possible given public health safety issues, but for the application process, we require applicants to plan for and describe the best-case scenario in which in-person experiences can take place during the grant period of activities.

Eligible projects must:

1. Be new or original artwork at any point in its creative development. Artwork may span one or more creative disciplines including, but not limited to:
  - Crafts (Clay, Fiber, Glass, Leather, Metal, Mixed Media, Paper, Plastic, Wood)
  - Dance/movement (Ballet, Ethnic/Jazz, Tribal, Modern)
  - Design Arts (Architecture, Fashion, Graphic, Industrial, Interior, Landscape Architecture, Urban/Metropolitan)
  - Folklife/Traditional Arts (Crafts & Visual Arts, Dance, Music, Oral Traditions/Spoken word, Stand-up comedy/Storytelling)
  - Humanities (Facilitated conversations, Compilation of historical documentation, Preservation of history)
  - Interdisciplinary (a combination of two or more creative disciplines)
  - Literature (Fiction, Memoirs, Non-Fiction, Playwriting, Poetry)
  - Media Arts (Film, Audio, Technology/Experiments, Podcasts, Video)
  - Multidisciplinary (composed of several creative disciplines)
  - Music (Band, Chamber, Choral, Ethnic, Jazz, New, Orchestral, Popular, Solo/Recital, Song Writing)
  - Opera/Music Theatre (Opera, Musical Theater)
  - Photography
  - Theater (General, Mime, Puppet, Theater for Young Audiences, Storytelling)
  - Visual Arts (Collage, Experimental, Graphics, Multimedia, Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture)

*This list is not comprehensive. For questions regarding a specific art discipline that is not listed above, email us at: [innovations@maa.org](mailto:innovations@maa.org).*

2. Not have more than one application submitted for the same project in a single application cycle.
3. Must include at least 2 public-facing engagements that occur in M-AAA's six-state region between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026.
4. Exclusively draw upon the talent of artists/partners based in the M-AAA region at the time of application and throughout the grant period of activity.
5. Have a grant request of no more than \$15,000. Applicants are encouraged to request an amount that is reflective of the project and their capacity to manage the grant; and
6. Provide a detailed budget that reflects a dollar-for-dollar match or cost share for the grant amount requested.

- a. All funding, procured or pending should be included in the project budget.
  - Applicants may meet the 1:1 match or cost share requirement through a combination of cash reserves, donations, and/or in-kind contributions.
  - M-AAA does not require evidence of a 1:1 match or cost share at the time of application.
- b. Federal and other M-AAA grant funding procured or pending for the project must be included in the budget. Costs associated with other federal funds, whether direct or indirect, cannot be included in the Project Budget.
- c. Grant funds may be used for expenses incurred starting on or after July 1, 2025, and must be totally expended on or by June 30, 2026.
- d. M-AAA grant funds must be used exclusively for direct project expenses incurred in the art-making process and production of public-facing engagements.
  - *Allowed expense costs* include, but are not limited to:
    - artists/personnel fees
    - commissioning fees
    - production or exhibition materials
    - promotion and audience development
    - rehearsal or studio expenses
- e. M-AAA grant funds cannot be used for:
  - alcoholic beverages
  - audit costs that are not directly related to a single audit (formerly known as A-133 audit)
  - capital outlay including construction projects, purchase or renovation of facilities
  - cash awards to individuals or organizations to honor or recognize achievement
  - cash reserves, endowments, investments, and trusts
  - commercial (for-profit) enterprises or activities, including concessions, food, T-shirts, artwork, or other items for resale. This includes online or virtual sales/shops
  - compensation for the applicant organization's board of directors
  - contracts with artists/personnel who reside outside M-AAA's region
  - contributions and donations to other entities
  - costs for the creation of new organizations

- costs incurred before the beginning or after the completion of the grant period
- costs to bring a project into compliance with federal grant requirements. This includes environmental or historical assessments or reviews or the hiring of individuals to write assessments or reviews or to otherwise comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and/or the National Historic Preservation Act
- direct grants to individuals
- expenditures related to compensation to foreign nationals and/or travel to or from foreign countries
- fines and penalties, bad debt costs, deficit reduction
- fringe benefits: costs other than wages or salary that are attributable to an employee/staff in the form of insurance, pension, sick and vacation leave, etc.
- general operating or seasonal support
- gifts and prizes, including cash prizes as well as other items (e.g., electronic devices, gift certificates) with monetary value
- lobbying, including activities intended to influence the outcome of elections or influence government officials regarding pending legislation, either directly or through specific lobbying appeals to the public
- marketing expenses that are not directly related to the project
- other indirect costs not directly related to the project
- project costs supported by any other federal funding. This includes federal funding received either directly from a federal agency or indirectly from a pass-through organization such as a state arts agency, regional arts organization, or a grant made to another entity
- regranting or subgranting
- rental costs for home office workspace owned by the applicant
- research involving human subjects
- social activities such as receptions, parties, fundraising galas
- the purchase of vehicles
- voter registration drives and related activities
- Visa costs paid to the US government

For more details about the Project Budget, see the [Application At-A-Glance](#) document.

Projects not eligible include:



- activities that engage artists who reside outside the M-AAA region
- activities that engage solely through online streaming content
- acquisitions
- adaptations from one medium to another
- any application submitted more than once in a single application cycle
- art competitions, festivals, or fairs
- awards or fellowships
- conservation, repair, or restoration
- facility construction, maintenance, or renovation
- fundraisers, or scholarships
- institution/organization establishment, or support
- regranteeing, or subgranteeing
- remounting of past work in a new venue
- rereleases of previously published or recorded material
- stabilization/endowment/challenge
- student participation assessments
- traditional restaging of classic productions

## REVIEW CRITERIA

M-AAA staff will review each application to determine completeness and if it meets the eligibility requirements. Ineligible applicants will be notified with an opportunity to obtain a summary of review comments to help with future submissions by no later than July 2025. See [Program Timeline](#).

Applications deemed eligible for project selection will be adjudicated by a panel of arts professionals based on “*Artistic Merit Through Stewardship of Funding*” and “*Artistic Excellence through the Artwork*”.

*Artistic Merit Through Stewardship of Funding:*

- **Project Design and Budget:** The application demonstrates a realistic timeline, an appropriate budget, clear artistic-based objectives, and adequate risk management considerations.
- **Project Management:** The application indicates the ability of the applicant to implement the project as demonstrated by the qualifications of those involved, including but not limited to appropriate paid personnel, volunteers, and partners, and shows a proactive plan for audience development.
- **Project Accessibility:** The application reflects fair practices for the applicant’s audience to access and/or participate in the project. The application shows evidence that funded project services, information, and facilities where activities are to take place will be accessible for everyone.

### *Artistic Excellence through the Artwork:*

- **Project Leadership:** The application indicates that the applicant and any partners involved in the project design and execution demonstrate skills, expertise, and experiences that are central to the project as evidenced in the work samples.
- **Project Impact:** The application reflects how the project fits into the scope and mission of the applicant's body of work and demonstrates the project's reach and/or depth of engagement to a broad constituency, including geographic and demographic characteristics, and accessibility through its execution and evaluation.
- **Overall Grant Program and Project Alignment:** The application demonstrates how the project aligns with the grant program's objectives to support the creation of original, innovative, and/or experimental artwork through at least 2 public-facing engagements in the six-state region.

## **PANEL ADJUDICATION AND RANKING SCALE**

M-AAA relies upon regional arts leaders in the field to serve as panel reviewers for the Artistic Innovations grant program. To best serve the arts ecosystem across our six-state region, we aim to have a diverse panel of reviewers representative of artistic disciplines, organizational expertise, as well as the populations in M-AAA's six-state region. Panels are composed of both arts professionals and knowledgeable laypersons. Most panelists are arts professionals qualified by their activities, training, skills, and/or experience in one or more art forms.

Panels will evaluate each eligible application using the following 6-point ranking scale for each Review Criteria listed above:

- 6 – Exemplary: Fully achieves the stated criteria. Meets all of the review criteria requirements to the HIGHEST degree.
- 5 – Strong: Strongly achieves the stated criteria. Meets all of the review criteria requirements to a SIGNIFICANT degree.
- 4 – Good: Sufficiently achieves the stated criteria. Meets all of the review criteria requirements to SOME degree.
- 3 – Fair: Moderately achieves the stated criteria. Meets MOST of the review requirements.
- 2 – Marginal: Minimally achieves the stated criteria. Meets SOME of the review requirements.
- 1 – Weak: Does not achieve the stated criteria. Inadequately meets the review requirements.

## Application Feedback

Applicants deemed eligible but were denied funding will have an opportunity to request a summary of review comments to help with future applications.

## GRANT AWARDS & REQUIREMENTS

The Artistic Innovations grant program is made possible through the generous support of the NEA. M-AAA will disburse awards of up to \$15,000 to no less than 12 grantees to support the creation and public presentation of new or original artwork in M-AAA's six-state region (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, or Texas). Funded projects *must* adhere to the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Federal Awards in accordance with [2 CFR Part 200](#) and [NEA's General Terms and Conditions](#).

If selected, the applicant will enter into a grant agreement with M-AAA. The agreement will outline the terms and conditions and federal regulations to ensure compliance with our grant requirements. Grant recipients are expected to acknowledge M-AAA's [Assurance of Compliance](#) and [Crediting Requirements](#), as well as comply with other administrative requirements before funding distribution.

Funding will be distributed through 2 partial payments:

1. 50% upon execution of the grant agreement, W-9 Form, and successful review of the Interim Report due by August 31, 2025.
2. 50% upon successful review of the Final Report due by July 31, 2026.

To assist grantees in managing their grants, M-AAA offers information and resources at: <https://www.maaa.org/artists-grants-fellowships/artistic-innovations/>, and <https://www.maaa.org/resources/for-grantees/>.

## PROGRAM TIMELINE

- Application opens on January 30, 2025.
- Application deadline is March 13, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. CST.
- Office hours for applicants will be available between February 3 to March 5, 2025.
- Eligibility reviews by M-AAA staff underway in March 2025.
- Panel adjudications underway in April 2024.
- Applicants will be notified of their status by June 13, 2025.
- Awarded projects will be publicly announced on M-AAA's website in July 2025.
- M-AAA grant agreements, funding distributions, and other grantee requirements will take place in July-August 2025.
- Grant period of funded activities underway, July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026.
- Final reports are due by July 31, 2026.

# Artistic Innovations Grant Program - How To Apply

**Deadline: 5:00 p.m. CST, Thursday, March 13, 2025**

## HOW TO APPLY

The Artistic Innovations grant accepts applications via an online form platform. The latest version of Google Chrome (Firefox or Safari) is the recommended web browser to use when working in the online application form. To maximize the functionality of the online form platform, try clearing your browsing data, cookies, and search history in Google Chrome, Firefox, or Safari.

We encourage applicants to use the [Application At-A-Glance](#) document to support you with preparing answers in Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or similar note-taking applications to ensure you have a backup for reference. While draft application forms can be saved online, technology is not flawlessly reliable. Unfortunately, our platform does not support file types saved in Mac Pages or Numbers.

We strongly recommend applicants prepare their narrative responses before working in the application form. All supporting materials *must* be in Microsoft Word, Excel, PDF, or Google Docs format. **Note: The maximum upload for no more than one application is 35 megabytes. Strongly recommend compressing files (e.g., PDFs) to reduce the size and to save space in your application before uploading files to the platform.** See [Document Checklist in the Application At-A Glance](#) document to ensure you have all required documents and any optional materials ready for upload to your application form. **Applicants will not have an opportunity to resubmit missing information.**

Draft application forms can be saved for editing later by clicking “*Save my progress and resume later*” at the top (or bottom) of the application form webpage. Each time you save your application you will be asked for an email address and a password. We highly recommend using a shared email address and reusing the same password so that your project team can access the drafted form to make changes, review, and/or share the information. An email with new instructions on how to resume the most recent draft of your form will be sent each time it is saved.

To resume a saved draft of your application form, refer to the most recent email in your inbox (or bookmark the “*Thank you for saving/resume your application*” webpage). If you did not receive a confirmation email at the time of saving your application, then the application was not saved. **For applications that are unsuccessfully saved, regrettably, applicants will need to start a new application.**

Once submitted, applicants will receive a confirmation email of their submitted responses including a list of upload files to the email address entered to certify the

application form. Double-check the spelling of the email address when certifying your application, and check that inbox or spam folder for that confirmation email.

If you are experiencing issues logging into your application or errors were detected while saving and uploading files to the platform, email us at: [innovations@maaa.org](mailto:innovations@maaa.org).

**Applications are due on Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. CST.**

The application for Individual Artists can be found here:

<https://maaa.tfaforms.net/5112342>

The application for Arts-based Organizations can be found here:

<https://maaa.tfaforms.net/5112343>

We urge you to submit your application early to ensure your materials are properly received. The application platform may experience slower processing times when user traffic is higher as the deadline nears. **Applicants will not have an opportunity to resubmit missing information.**

## **REQUEST FOR EXTENSIONS & LATE SUBMISSIONS**

Extension requests *must* be received 5 days before the application deadline. An extension gives you extra time to finish your application. Applicants *must* complete and submit an Extension Request Form before the application deadline with justification for an extension. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis; approval is not guaranteed. The form can be found here:

<https://maaa.tfaforms.net/5097231>

If your application is received after 5:00 p.m. CST, it is considered late and not guaranteed for review. Applicants who experience technical difficulties at the time of application must immediately email us at [innovations@maaa.org](mailto:innovations@maaa.org). M-AAA staff will evaluate if your application can be processed after the deadline.

## **ALTERNATIVE FORMATS**

Grant materials are available in alternative accessible formats upon request. If you have accessibility needs for an alternate format or process for completing the application, contact **M-AAA's Accessibility Coordinator, Angelette Severt by email at [angelette@maaa.org](mailto:angelette@maaa.org) or by telephone at (816) 421-1388 ext. #216.**

## **HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Applicants can consult with M-AAA staff before applying during our office hours and help desk support schedule. Staff will not review or provide comments on draft materials. See [Program Timeline](#) for our office hours and help desk support schedule.

For all programmatic questions and/or technical support, email us at: [innovations@maaa.org](mailto:innovations@maaa.org).