

GIG Fund

Application Guidelines

These guidelines are for grants to support general arts activities in the Midwest. For grants to support arts and wellness projects, please visit <https://artsmidwest.org/get-support/gig-fund/applying-arts-and-wellness>.

GIG (Grow, Invest, Gather) Fund grants provide funding for smaller nonprofits to offer public-facing arts projects and activities in Midwestern communities.

The goal of the GIG Fund is to make arts opportunities more accessible to underserved audiences across the region. Funds may be used for performances; exhibits; arts festivals; public art, or other activities that provide Midwesterners the opportunity to experience art and creativity.

GIG Fund projects should:

- Expand access to arts and creativity for underserved audiences in the Midwest
- Highlight arts and creativity as an essential element of Midwestern life
- Support smaller nonprofits in offering relevant artistic programming to their audiences

Applicants may apply for only one Arts Midwest GIG Fund grant per year. If you are applying for a standard GIG Fund grant, you should not apply for a GIG Fund: Arts and Wellness grant.

Applications for the 2025-2026 cycle are now open.

1. Review the Guidelines

Learn more about the types of projects we fund and review upcoming grant deadlines below. You can also download a Word version of the guidelines, which includes all the application questions.

2. Submit Your Intent to Apply by September 15, 2025

Before applying, confirm your organization's eligibility by submitting an Intent to Apply—a quick step that takes less than 15 minutes. This is required to proceed with the full application.

Submit your Intent to Apply by Monday, September 15, 2025 at 11:59 pm Central Time. Visit our grants portal, SmartSimple, to begin this process. Find setup instructions [\[here\]](#).

3. Submit Your Application by September 29, 2025

Complete and submit your full application by Monday, September 29, 2025 at 11:59pm Central Time.

Eligibility

Who should apply?

- **Smaller Non-profit Organizations:** 501c3 non-profit organizations and tribal organizations with annual expenses of \$2 million or less.
- **In the Midwest:** Organizations located in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, or Wisconsin, and the Native Nations that share this geography.
- **Focused on Arts & Culture:** Arts and cultural organizations in any arts discipline (literature, performing arts, visual arts, traditional arts, multidisciplinary arts, etc.) or nonprofit organizations that provide arts programming (social service agencies, etc.)
- **With a UEI:** Organizations will need to have a UEI number from SAM.gov in order to receive funding. Apply for a free UEI at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).
- **In Good Standing:** Organizations must not have overdue reports or funding restrictions with Arts Midwest.

Project Requirements

This round of GIG Fund grants is for supporting activities taking place between December 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026. There are three requirements.

1. Engage a Professional Artist or Ensemble

- A portion of the grant award must be used to pay the artist(s).
- Artists can be from anywhere, including the applicant's own community.
- Artists must demonstrate high artistic, educational, or cultural value as understood by the target community.
- Artists must be at least 18 years old and not be full-time students.
- The artist and their work must be the focus of the engagement.

2. Offer at Least Two Activities Featuring the Artist(s)

- Activities should feature an educational component that allows direct interaction between artists and participants. Examples include:
 - Workshops & masterclasses
 - Lectures, panels, or demonstrations
 - Meet-and-greets or talkbacks
- Activities must include at least one performance or exhibition that is open to the general public.
- Activities may be in-person and/or virtual.

- Activities must take place in an accessible facility or on an accessible online platform.

3. Reach an Underserved Audience

At least one activity must engage an underserved audience—groups with limited access to the arts due to geography (such as rural audiences), economics (such as lower income audiences), disability, or lack of relevant content (such as families or school communities without ready access to children’s or all-ages programming).

Eligible project examples

Sample activities could include:

- A rural community hosting a short artist residency at a local school.
- An artist hosting a creative writing program with justice-impacted citizens.
- An artist talkback or meet & greet in an exhibition featuring the work of local, regional, or national artists.
- Presenting a concert series focused on the music of local, regional, or national composers.
- Initiating a new partnership to provide art classes for people with disabilities.

Examples of ineligible projects

The GIG Fund does not support the following types of projects:

- Capital projects
- Independent artists seeking funding for their own self-produced material. A guest artist must be featured.
- Projects that feature mostly student performers.
- Artist fellowships/scholarships
- Projects that are not arts focused (e.g. fireworks displays, conference speakers, etc.)
- Projects that are part of a benefit or fundraiser.
- Projects that are funded by another active Arts Midwest program.
- Projects funded by another federal grant.

Grant Awards

Organizations may request a grant between \$2,000 and \$15,000. These grants are federal funds that derive from the National Endowment for the Arts. A 1:1 match is required. [Please read the following important notice about federal policies that govern these grant awards.](#)

Matching requirement

Organizations will be required to demonstrate matching funds (aka cost share) on a 1:1 basis for the grant amount.

To demonstrate the match, your expenses should each be at least double your GIG Fund grant request. Potential sources for the match may include:

- Salaries and wages for project staff
- In-kind contributions, volunteer hours
- Earned and contributed revenue (donations, ticket sales, other non-Federal grants)
- Cash from the applicant or partner organizations.

Federal funds cannot be used as match.

Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to: Artist fees (required), materials (e.g., paint, costumes, props), staff salaries to administer the project, software licenses to host virtual activities, facility rental, equipment purchases, accessibility accommodations for individuals with disabilities or auto-immune conditions, marketing and promotion, and artist travel.

Accessibility

We want this opportunity to be accessible to all and will work with applicants who need to use other means to apply. Alternative application options may include, but are not limited to:

- Using an adapted form in Microsoft Word (available upon request)
- Sharing a video application (available upon request)

Please complete [this form](#) if you are requesting accessibility assistance or email grants@artsmidwest.org

Visit our [Accessibility Policy](#) for more information on our commitment to accessibility.

Two-Step Application Process

For all grant applications, we use an online platform called [SmartSimple](#). Applicants will need to register if they are new to using the system.

Previous applicants and grantees will be able to access the application by visiting the “Begin a new application” tile on the “Grants for Organizations” home page.

Step 1: Intent to Apply (Due September 15, 2025)

Questions and requirements:

- Applicant organization details (EIN, UEI number from SAM.gov, annual operating budget, mission statement, organization location information, publicity name).
- Primary contact information
- Short summary of proposed project (100 words)

- Short description of project activities (250 words)
- Have you received funding from Arts Midwest before? (yes/no)
- Have you received funding from your state arts agency in the last five years? (yes/no)
- Do you anticipate your local state arts agency will fund this project? (yes/no)
- Project start and end dates
- Grant request amount

Step 2: Full Application (Due September 29, 2025)

- Project discipline
- Number of anticipated adults served
- Number of anticipated youth served

Narrative questions

1. Artist summary (500 words)

Please provide details about the artist(s) you intend to work with. Why have you chosen them?

2. Activity summary (500 words)

Describe the two proposed project activities that feature the artist/ensemble, including where and when they will take place. If exact dates are unknown, please provide a range of possible dates/months.

3. Describe the community your program impacts (500 words)

Please describe the community you plan to reach with your programming with details about the underserved group(s) you intend to reach.

Other required information

- Project budget
- Additional details about your budget (optional)

Panel Review Process and Criteria

Applications are reviewed by an independent advisory panel. That panel is composed of arts experts and other individuals with broad knowledge of community programs. Panel composition changes annually.

The panel will use four criteria in the review process. Each criterion is on a scale of (5) for a maximum of (20) points per application.

Grantees are selected based on:

- Artistic excellence and merit of programming. The panel will review the artist and activity summaries to assign these points.
- Depth of audience engagement. The panel will review the community summary and data provided on intended audience(s) to assign these points.
- Resource management. The panel will consider the applicant's ability to manage and implement a federal award. This could include organization capacity; reasonable budget plans; etc.
- Planning for success. The panel will evaluate the plan for using the grant funds including proposed project activities and audiences reached.

Timeline

September 15, 2025: Intent to Apply due

September 29, 2025: Full Application due

October 2025: Panel Review

November 2025: Applicants notified, awards made, awardees announced

December 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026: Funded projects take place

Reporting Requirements

An activity listing is due 30 days prior to the project start so we can confirm project requirements will be met.

A final report is due 30 days after the project is completed. Visit the [Final Report section of our website](#) to view final report requirements.

Webinar and Office Hours

If you have additional questions, we invite you to join us for a webinar or office hours. You can sign up for any session at the links below:

- Webinar: July 24 at 11:00am Central Time. [Register here.](#)
- Office Hours: August 12 at 10:00am Central Time. [Register here.](#)

Contact

For any questions, please email grants@artsmidwest.org.