

FY27 Guidelines

GIG Fund: Interstate Touring Program

About this Opportunity

GIG Fund: Interstate Touring provides cost-share grants of \$2,000-\$10,000 to help smaller Midwestern nonprofits present professional artists from outside their state.

The goal of the program is to support creative exchange in the Midwest while expanding access to arts and culture in underserved communities. Grant funds are available for organizations that book out-of-state artists for performances, exhibitions, and workshops.

Funded projects should:

- Expand access to arts and creativity for underserved audiences in the Midwest
- Offer relevant artistic programming to their audiences
- Feature engagements with artists/ensembles from state(s) other than applicant's own

Priority will be given to applicants based in and serving rural communities and applicants who are programming artists from the Arts Midwest region.

How to Apply at a Glance

1. Read the guidelines

Read this copy of the guidelines, which includes all the application questions.

2. Prepare your application

[Visit our grants portal](#), SmartSimple, to begin this process. [View our informational video](#) for instructions.

3. Complete the application form

Phase 1 (Eligibility Review) is due November 4, 2026 at 12 pm (noon) CT.

Phase 2 (Full Proposal) is due November 17, 2026 at 12 pm (noon) CT.

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)
- Working over the phone with a program manager on any questions about the application

Please contact Katie Ortman, program manager, as early as possible with accessibility requests. We may not be able to accommodate requests made after November 1, 2026. Katie can be reached at katie.ortman@artsmidwest.org, or you can review the recorded informational video or sign up to attend an informational session or office hours (see schedule and details below in “What is the Timeline?” section).

You may also enlist assistance from another person to complete the application. Please see the “How to Use SmartSimple” section for more information.

Eligibility

Who should apply?

- **Smaller Non-profit Organizations:** 501c3 non-profit organizations with annual expenses of \$2 million or less and tribal organizations of any budget size.
- **In the Midwest:** Organizations located in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, or Wisconsin, and the Native Nations and communities 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.
- **In Good Standing:** Organizations must not have overdue reports or funding restrictions with Arts Midwest.
- **In Compliance with Federal Requirements:** These funds originate with the National Endowment for the Arts and require that applicants comply with federal eligibility requirements and the NEA’s Assurance of Compliance.

Only one application per organization will be accepted.

What is the Timeline?

Date	Activity
November 4, 2026	Phase 1 (Eligibility Review) due
November 17, 2026	Phase 2 (Full Proposal) due
December 2026	Panel review
January 2027	Award notifications
March 1, 2027 – February 29, 2028	Project period

What are the Project Requirements?

Projects must meet all three requirements.

1. Engage a Professional Artist or Ensemble

The artist must:

- Live outside the applicant's state.
- Be at least 18 years old and not a full-time student.
- Be the primary focus of the project.
- Demonstrate artistic, educational, or cultural excellence.

A portion of the grant must be used for artist compensation.

Priority will be given to applications featuring artists from Arts Midwest's region but it is not a requirement. As long as the artist you're working with is based in a state (or country) that is not your own, they will be eligible.

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

- Activities must include at least one public performance, exhibition, or workshop.
- Activities may be in-person or virtual and must be fully accessible.

3. Reach an Underserved Audience

- At least one activity must engage an audience with limited access to the arts due to geography, income, disability, or other barriers to participating in 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 the contracted artist.
- A concert series focused on the music of regional or national composers.
- Working with visiting artists to provide classes for people with disabilities.

Examples of Ineligible Projects

Funding is not available for:

- Capital projects
- Murals
- Self-produced artist projects (you may not hire yourself)
- Projects featuring artists from the applicant's state
- Projects that feature mostly student performers
- Fellowships or scholarships
- Non-arts projects (e.g. fireworks displays, conference speakers, etc.)
- Fundraisers or benefits
- Projects that are funded by another Arts Midwest or federal grant
- Applications featuring artists who are residents from the following countries will not be eligible for support given Federal restrictions by the Office of Foreign Assets Control: Belarus, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Syria, and Venezuela.

Grant Awards

Applicants may request a grant between \$2,000 and \$10,000. These grants are supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and require a 1:1 non-federal cost-share, or match. To demonstrate the match, your expenses should be at least double your grant request. If you are unfamiliar with federal grants or matching budgets, we recommend reading our [three-part guide](#) on Understanding Federal Grant Requirements before applying.

Matching funds may include:

- Staff salaries and wages
- Volunteer time and in-kind contributions
- Donations, non-federal grants, and ticket revenue
- Cash contributions from the applicant or partners

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.

Ineligible Expenses

Please do not include unallowable costs in your budget. Unallowable costs include, but are not limited to:

- Refreshments, concessions, food, and alcohol
- Fellowships or cash prizes
- Purchase of capital equipment
- Overlapping project costs between federal awards, whether received directly from a federal agency or indirectly, such as through a state agency or other entity
- Entertainment costs, such as opening parties, receptions, or fundraisers designed to raise funds for your own organization and on behalf of another person, organization, or cause

Awards are federally funded, so all costs must be allowable per 2 CFR 200, also known as the Uniform Guidance.

How to Use SmartSimple

Arts Midwest uses SmartSimple grants portal for applications. You must register in the system before you apply, if you are a new user. Please follow the steps below to complete your registration and your application. 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: Registration (for new users only)

1. Register in our SmartSimple grants portal
2. On the registration page, click “Registered Non-profit Organization.”
3. Input your information.
4. Once you have filled out your registration and submitted, you will receive an email with a login link. Click on the login link.
5. The link will take you to a screen where you will create a new password for your account. Then click submit.

6. Once you have created the password, you will receive a verification code in your email. Copy the verification code from that email, and paste in the box on the login page.
7. Now you're in the SmartSimple portal! Make sure your profile is correct. Go to the top right corner with your name letter symbol and click on Personal Profile. Confirm the info is correct from your registration.

Step 2: Application

Navigate to the Organization Portal Home. To begin the application, click on "Begin a new application." Click "Apply Now" on GIG Fund FY27.

1. Click save and begin your application.

Application Questions

Application Phase 1: Eligibility Review (Due November 4, 2026)

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
- How did you hear about this opportunity?
- Publicity name
- 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)
- What is the population of the city where you are located? (0-9,999; 10,000-49,999; 50,000+)
- Is your organization based in or within 25 miles of a city with a population of 50,000+? (yes/no)
- Project start and end dates
- Grant request amount
- Did your organization expend \$1,000,000 or more in federal funds during your most recent fiscal year? (yes/no)
 - If yes, please provide your most recently completed Single Audit financial statement. (upload field)
- Please provide your most recently completed Financial Statement Audit.

- Within the last three years, has your organization experienced any of the following related to grant funding?
 - Single and/or Financial Statement Audit findings, Repayment of grant funds, Revocation of a grant award, Corrective action required by a funder (select all that apply)
 - Please briefly describe the issues and any corrective actions taken (text field)
- If grant funds are provided on a reimbursement basis, does your organization have the financial capacity to pay project expenses before requesting reimbursement? (yes/no)
- Please review the following assurances, which are current as of September 14, 2026. If funded, you will need to comply with these assurances.

Application Phase 2: Full Proposal (Due November 17, 2026)

Once Arts Midwest reviews your eligibility from Phase 1, you can move on to Phase 2.

Initial Questions

- 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 bring to your community. Where are they from? 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)
- Did you use AI to help you complete your application?
 - If yes, please describe how you used AI.

- Applicants may use AI in editing or proofreading narratives. Arts Midwest does not allow AI-generated artwork to be submitted as part of an application.

Review Criteria

Applications are reviewed by an independent panel using four equally weighted criteria:

- Artistic excellence and merit.
- Audience engagement.
- Organizational capacity and resource management.
- Project planning and readiness.

Priority will be given to applicants based in and serving rural communities and applicants who are programming artists from the Arts Midwest region. We anticipate that 40% of awards will go to rural organizations. Arts Midwest defines rural communities as being smaller than 10,000 people and more than 25 miles away from a metropolitan community.

Reporting and Crediting Requirements

Grantees must submit:

- An activity listing at least 30 days before the project begins.
- A final report within 30 days after project completion. To view final report requirements check out [this Guide](#).

All funded projects must acknowledge both the National Endowment for the Arts and Arts Midwest in promotional materials.

Office Hours + Informational Video

Before applying, [review the informational video](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Applicants are also welcome to attend Office Hours:

- 12:30-1:30 pm CST, Monday, October 5, 2026. [Sign up for Office Hours #1](#).
- 4-5 pm CST, Wednesday, October 14, 2026. [Sign up for Office Hours #2](#).
- 10-11 am CST, Tuesday, October 27, 2026. [Sign up for Office Hours #3](#).

You can also email Katie Ortman, program manager, with your questions at katie.ortman@artsmidwest.org.

Other Guides, Tools, Resources

Arts Midwest Resources

- [GIG Fund: Interstate Touring Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Understanding your Federal Award Requirements](#)
- [How to Build your Federal Award Budget](#)
- [Reporting on your Federal Award](#)

Sample Applications

- [Sample Application 1: Wormfarm](#)
- [Sample Application 2: Chicago Composers Orchestra](#)

Accessibility Resources

- [Section 504 Self-Evaluation Workbook](#)
- [Arts Midwest's Accessibility Center](#)

Crediting and Visibility

- [Downloadable logos](#) for crediting

Other Resources

- [SmartSimple Registration Instructions](#)
- [Getting a UEI from SAM.gov Instructions](#)

Contact

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