



Creative Accelerator Fund

Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2025

Open: September 25, 2024

Deadline: November 20, 2024

State of Illinois
JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Arts Council
Nora Daley, Board Chair
Joshua Davis-Ruperto, Executive Director

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Accessible Guidelines

To obtain accessibility information regarding applications and written materials contact the Illinois Arts Council’s ADA/504 Access Coordinator. Please be aware staff is working remotely and it is recommended to reach out to them via email. If you prefer more direct communications send an email that contains your preferred contact telephone number and general timeline of when you are available.

IAC 504/ADA Coordinator

Teresa Davis

Email: Teresa.N.Davis@illinois.gov

Tel. 312-814-6753

TTY 888-261-7957

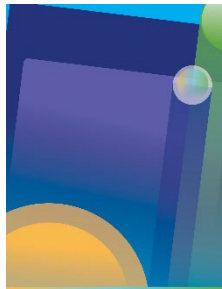
IAC 504/ADA Specialist

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Cover artwork by Margaret Gonzalez

Illinois Arts Council Staff Contacts

For specific information on this grant, contact the appropriate program staff. Please be aware staff are working a hybrid model and it is recommended to reach out to them via email. If you prefer more direct communications send an email that contains your preferred contact telephone number and general timeline of when you are available. For technical assistance contact John Gawlik.

Please visit IAC's [Workshops & Webinars page](#) for information on Webinars and Drop-ins with Q & A.

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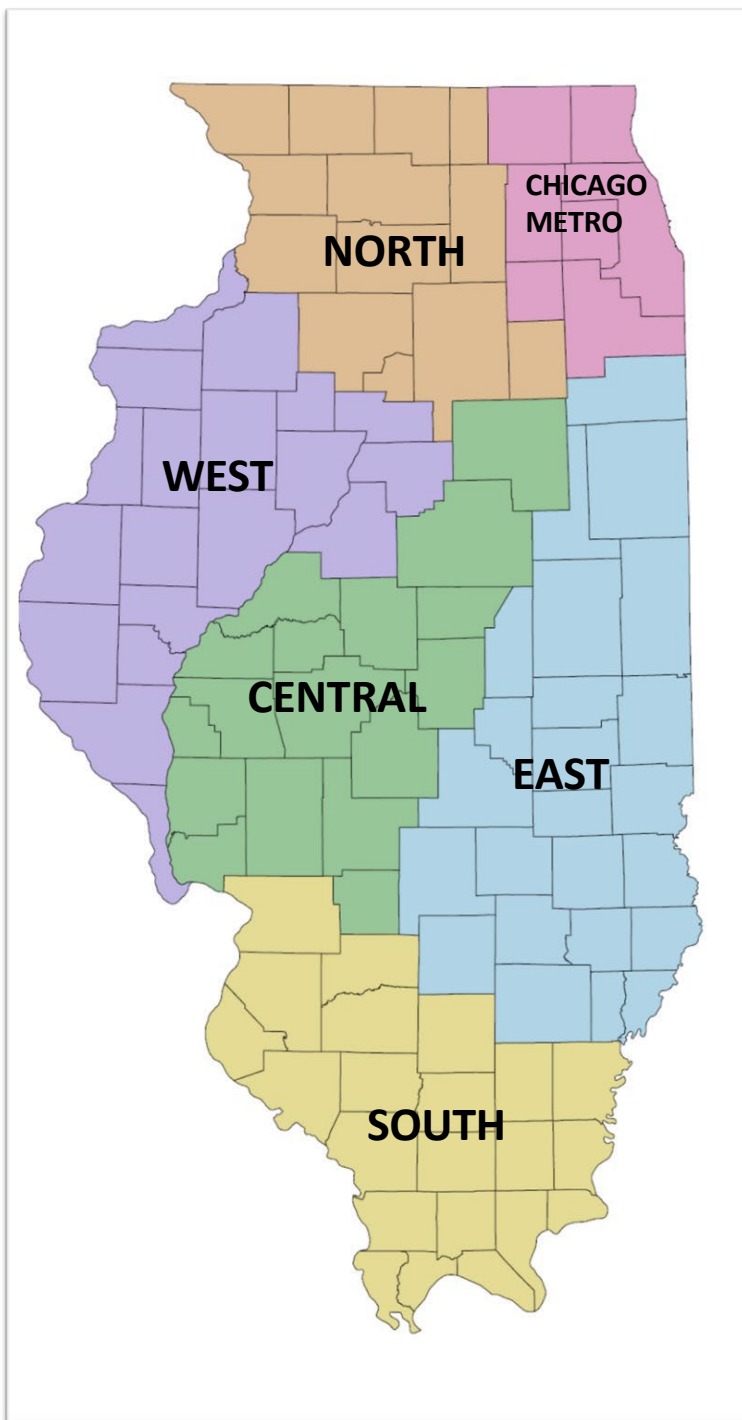
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To determine your Program Director please visit IAC's Program Director finder tool:

<https://arts.illinois.gov/about-iac/staff/grant-staff-locator.html>



A New Arts Council

In 2023, the Illinois Arts Council (IAC) and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) embarked on the Equitable Grant Making Assessment Initiative (EGAIN). EGAIN was a collaborative effort to examine the agency's grantmaking through an equity lens, to identify funding gaps, and recommend strategies that the agency can pursue to reduce barriers to arts support.

The aims of the initiative were to:

- Analyze the demographic distribution of IAC's general operating support awards.
- Engage IAC constituents in providing feedback about their needs, experiences, and perceptions.
- Identify equity strengths and weaknesses in the IAC's approach to general operating support funding.
- Recommend applied actions the IAC can take to work toward greater grant making equity.
- Serve as an evidence base in IAC's case for the resources needed to reach more Illinois communities with state support.

As a result of this initiative there have been significant changes to all IAC grant programs which include:

- Streamlined application processes and grant opportunities.
- The creation of six distinct regions within the state for equitable funding across the Illinois' communities.
 - Chicago Metro Region (sub-divided into 5 Metro Regions)
 - Northern Region
 - Central Region
 - Eastern Region
 - Southern Region
 - Western Region
- Applications will be reviewed and distributed by regions and will no longer be submitted by discipline categories.
- Factoring in historically under-resourced communities of rural, high-poverty, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), and disability into the grant making structure and process.

What does this mean for IAC artist support?

Creative Accelerator is a new IAC fund to provide financial holistic support to individual artists that have an active and sustained practice and are residents of Illinois. A primary goal of the program is to bolster a creative workforce that composes a significant portion of Illinois' creative and economic activity. IAC will not run the Artist Fellowship Award program in FY25. For the Creative Accelerator Fund IAC will not evaluate the artistic work, but rather will look for evidence that the individual is a practicing Illinois artist.

We recognize that this is a significant change to IAC's programs, but we are excited by the possibility of supporting more artists throughout the state. We are proud that the Illinois Arts Council has been able to provide support to so many Illinois artists and cultural organizations over the past 59 years.

Creative Accelerator Fund Summary

The Illinois Arts Council's (IAC) Creative Accelerator Fund (CAF) provides crucial support to artists with a goal of strengthening the creative workforce that composes a significant portion of Illinois' economic activity.

Who's Eligible

- Individual artists with an active and sustained practice. (see full definition page 5)
- At the time of application artists must:
 - Be age 21 or older.
 - Be established as an Illinois resident prior to November 20, 2023.
 - Be able to include a work sample created by you during 2022-2024.
 - Be able to include a work sample created by you during 2021 or prior.
 - Not be currently enrolled full-time at a college or university in any undergraduate or graduate program. Ph.D. candidates need to have completed their course work by the application deadline to be eligible.

Award Amount

- \$10,000 award
- This award is taxable income

Application Information

- The application requests information about your artistic practice and the benefit a CAF award would have on that practice. The narrative may be submitted as a written document or short video or audio recording.
- Applicant must agree to specific assurances regarding residency, age, willingness to engage with IAC communications, etc.

Matching Requirement

- None

Key Dates:

Application Deadline:

- Wednesday, November 20, 2024, at 11:59pm

Grant Period:

- No sooner than January 15, 2025, to August 31, 2025

Creative Accelerator Fund Details

For the purpose of CAF, IAC defines “Individual Artist with an active and sustained practice” as:

- An individual working in arts, crafts, design, dance, digital media, film/video, literature, music, performance, photography, theater, visual arts, folk and traditional arts, or community-based arts.

By “active and sustained,” we mean that you are currently committing time to practicing your art form that you have practiced since at least 2021. You do not necessarily need to derive significant income from your work in the arts (though it’s also fine if you do). It is also acceptable if your art form has changed over those years. The first submitted work sample needs to have been completed in 2022, 2023, or 2024. The second submitted work sample needs to have been completed in 2021 or prior.

There are numerous fields that benefit from creativity that we are not able to support with CAF. We value the creative energy you bring to this work. However, this program’s funding was approved by Illinois Arts Council’s governor-appointed Council to support individuals working in artistic disciplines. So, while we recognize your creativity in your respective field, we cannot provide CAF awards to this work.

Below are examples of both eligible, and ineligible, art practices. If you have any questions about whether your work is eligible for CAF please [contact us](#).

Examples of *eligible* art practices include, but are not limited to:

actors	musicians
performance artists	composers
theater designers and directors	conductors
puppeteers	creative writers of all genres
choreographers	visual artists
dancers	muralists/public artists
filmmakers/videographers	community-based artists
media artists	community-based teaching artists

Examples of *ineligible* art practices include, but are not limited to:

therapeutic arts of any kind	culinary
producers	cosmetology
software development	fitness
computer engineering	martial arts
curators	

For the purpose of CAF IAC defines “Work Sample created by you” as:

- Creative work should be 1. Entirely created by you or 2. Created with a substantial contribution by you. If the latter, please explain in the Work Sample Description what your part in the work’s creation is. For example, if you were the cinematographer for a film scene that was written/directed/performed by others, you’ll need to specify your contribution was the cinematography.

Collaborative applications will not be considered for CAF. It is expected that if both artists are eligible for CAF they would submit their own separate applications.

If artificial intelligence (A.I.) was used as a tool in the creation of your work, that needs to be explained in the Work Sample Description. You may not submit any work entirely generated by an A.I. program as your own.

Applicants must:

- Apply utilizing a Salesforce grant portal account registered to the applicant.
- Submit all required application materials prior to the deadline.

Making Arts Accessible to All

Accessibility in the arts provides inclusive participation of people with disabilities in all cultural and creative spaces. Recipients of IAC funds are expected to make reasonable efforts for any public art activities and programs to be as accessible as possible. For further information and resources on how to do this please see the [Accessibility Resources](#) page on the IAC website.

Applicant Restrictions

- Applicants may only submit one application per fiscal year.
- IAC Board members are prohibited from applying.

Deadline

The FY25 CAF deadline is Wednesday, November 20, 2024. The application must be successfully submitted by 11:59 PM CST to the [IAC's Salesforce grant portal](#).

Please note that all draft applications will be removed from the IAC system 30 days after the deadline.

Unallowable Expenses

CAF is holistic support to individual artists; we trust you know the best way to invest and sustain your artistic practice.

However, as a state agency there are some expenditures that not allowable with state funds including:

- subsidizing an individual's academic study or projects associated with that study
- political activities such as contributions, lobbying, or fundraisers

Creative Accelerator Fund Review Criteria

The review of CAF applications is based on successful evidence of the answers to the following application requirements:

1. Does the application demonstrate the individual artist has an active and sustained practice?

- Artist has provided a work sample from 2022-2024.
- Artist has provided a work sample from 2021 or prior.
- Artist has described their art practice and how CAF may benefit them as an artist.

2. Is the application complete?

3. Is the artist eligible to receive funds from the State of Illinois?

- Applicant can show proof they have been an Illinois resident for a minimum of one year.
- Applicant has submitted a valid State ID or Driver's License.
- Applicant is compliant with IAC requirements.
- Applicant is not on the Illinois Stop Payment List. Individuals may be placed on the Illinois Stop Payment List for not being in compliance with all state agencies. Examples include owing money to another state agency or not being up to date with reporting on state grants.

CAF Process, Notification, and Compliance

Review Process

- When the application is created, the Salesforce grant portal will issue an application number that will be used in future communication regarding that application.
 - Applications which have been ruled ineligible or incomplete will not be reviewed.
 - Applications are reviewed based on the review criteria (see page 6).
 - Final award determination will be determined via randomized selection. Individuals that are included in any of IAC's priority groups will have their application entered in multiple randomized selections. Randomized selections will be grouped according to IAC region.
 - The final recommendations are presented to the IAC board for their consideration and approval.
 - A record of the review process is maintained for all reviewed applications.
-

Notification

All applicants will be notified of funding decisions once the IAC has reviewed and approved funding recommendations. Applicants approved for funding will:

- Receive, via email, instructions regarding requirements to accept and claim the award (see Award Acceptance section below).
- Disbursement needs may be requested at this time. Disbursements must take place within the grant period as detailed within the grant agreement. Artists with a disability are encouraged to look at services provided by [IL ABLE](#) to assist with managing award funds.
- Once all documents have been returned via the IAC Salesforce grant portal and all requirements met, including the completion, and filing of all previous fiscal year Final Reports, the award will be processed, and the payment voucher will be sent to the Illinois State Comptroller for payment.
- **Once the payment voucher has been received by the State Comptroller payments can take two to six months.**

Recipients can check the status of the grant payment through the [Comptroller's vendor website](#), or sign-up to be notified about the payment via email, text, or both. Recipients can also sign up for direct deposit from the Illinois Comptroller if they have received a payment from The Comptroller's Office within the previous 24 months. Otherwise, the check will be mailed to the address on file. Please contact The Comptroller's Office at (217) 557-0930 if you would like to set up direct deposit.

Compliance

Award Acceptance

For awards to be processed all acceptance documents must be submitted to the IAC Grants Office. Award acceptance is a multi-step process that requires uploads to the Salesforce grant portal and email exchanges. It is the responsibility of the applicant to read all emails carefully and follow the instructions.

The documents to be submitted via the IAC Salesforce grant portal include:

- Completed and signed W9 form.
- Legal Status Disclosure Certificate (LSDC) signed and dated by the Applicant.
- Artist biography, of 300 words or less, that notes your preferred name for public communications.
- Headshot or work photo that may be used public communications. Photo should be in jpeg format with photo credit/meta tag (image no larger than 750px x 750px, 20MB)
- Grant Agreement signed and dated by the Applicant.

Applicants approved for funding will be requested to upload a W9, biography, and headshot to [IAC's Salesforce grant portal](#). Following the upload of these documents the Applicant will be sent a link to sign the grant agreement and LSDC via Formstack.

Report

All FY25 CAF recipients will be required to complete and submit a report no later than September 30, 2025, as stated on the grant agreement.

The final report for CAF award will ask:

- How did the CAF award benefit you as an artist
- Optional quote on the impact of the award and/or photo with photo credit

Application Overview

IAC utilizes an [online grant portal](#), powered by Salesforce, to accept applications. The IAC CAF online application consists of form field components and the uploading of required documents. Each component must be completed and submitted in the required format by the deadline.

For instructions go to the [Using Salesforce](#) section of the IAC website. There is also a [user manual](#) for the online grant portal on our website to help guide the application process. Please review this carefully and use as a reference.

How to Apply

First:

- Verify eligibility
- Prepare all required supporting files (see page 11)

Next:

- Log into [IAC Salesforce grant portal](#)
- Click on the Applicant Information tab from the top header in Salesforce
 - New Applicants should add an individual applicant account and fill in all required form fields
 - Returning Applicants should make sure all information is up to date
- Click on the Grant Programs tab
- Select the “Creative Accelerator – 2025” grant program
 - Complete the form fields in the application.
 - Upload or link to all required attachments.
- Successfully submit the application to IAC Salesforce grant portal.

Application Components

1. Applicant Information

Under this tab, please create or update the entity applying for the grant. **For CAF this must be an individual.**

This tab requires the following information:

- Individual Name and General Contact Information
- Primary Discipline Selection – select one
- Any additional disciplines reflected in programming – select as many as applicable
- Checkboxes if individual identifies as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) or has a disability.

Please note the information in the Applicant Information tab may be updated at any time. Please keep the contacts current to ensure communications from IAC reach you.

2. Grant Programs Selection

Under the Grant Programs tab select the “Creative Accelerator – 2025.” If the user has multiple applicants set up, the system will prompt the selection of the applicant organization to move forward.

On this main section please provide confirmation that:

- Confirmation that the Applicant Information tab has been updated
- You are an active artist during 2022-2024

- You are a sustained artist with activity from 2021 or prior
- You have been established as an Illinois resident prior to November 20, 2023.
- You are legally able to receive taxable income in the U.S. (e.g., citizen, permanent resident, and/or any other person who can provide a W9 and SSN or ITIN).
- You are 21 years of age or older.
- You are not currently enrolled full-time at a college or university in 1. an undergraduate program or 2. graduate program.
- IAC may use images of your work samples in our communications and outreach.
- You consent to a potential interview with IAC’s communications team. The IAC regularly connects with its grantees to help promote the work they do and to celebrate arts and culture in Illinois. IAC outlets include the Muse newsletter, website, and social media.
- Number of years as a practicing artist outside of a degree obtaining program

If any of the checkboxes listed above are left blank the application will be made ineligible and not considered for funding.

Please note that after any application is started it will appear on the home screen in the Salesforce grant portal. Within the grant application the requirements/sections will be listed along the left-side of the screen.

3. Supporting Documents

The supporting documents to be provided are:

1. Application Narrative
2. 2022-2024 Work Sample
3. 2021, or prior, Work Sample
4. Valid Driver’s License or State ID, with potential other residency verification

Supporting Documents utilizing video or audio files submitted via a link (ex. YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, etc.):

- Have no size restriction
- Must be public and without password protection
- May not link to sites that require an account (e.g., Instagram)

Supporting Documents submitted via upload:

- May be no larger than 25 MB in size.
- Salesforce will accept the formats listed below:
 - Audio acceptable formats are: mp3, .wav, .ogg.
 - Video acceptable formats are: .vi, .mov, .mpeg, .mpg, .swf
 - Document Files acceptable format is: .pdf

Please refer to the “Supporting Documents” section for instructions.

4. Submit / Certification

Please note this is a two-step process to both certify and submit your application. Once the application is complete click the Submit Button in the lower left-hand corner. A pop-up will require certification of eligibility and application content.

After certification there is a submit button which must be clicked to complete the application in the [IAC Salesforce grant portal](#). The application will not be successfully submitted until the second submit button is clicked.

Supporting Documents

1. Application Narrative

The narrative is limited to one page or a two-minute video or audio recording answering the following:

Tell us about your art practice

- What art form(s) do you practice
- Describe the community area(s) of Illinois where you practice your art
- How the award would benefit your art practice

If uploading a file, it should be named: Applicant Name_Narrative

2. 2022-2024 Work Sample

The first work sample must be from a work created by you in 2022, 2023, or 2024. The work sample submitted may not be from work created for a degree-obtaining program.

Each work sample has a corresponding field to describe it in a maximum of 1,000-characters. In the Work Sample Description field, applicants must provide the following for each work:

- Title of work
- Date of completion
- Optional additional details

If your work sample does not list the date of completion in the description the application will be ineligible.

If uploading a file, it should be named: Applicant Name_Work Sample 1

3. 2021, or prior, Work Sample

The second work sample must be from a work created by you in 2021 or prior. The work sample submitted may not be from work created for a degree-obtaining program.

Each work sample has a corresponding field to describe it in a maximum of 1,000-characters. In the Work Sample Description field, applicants must provide the following for each work:

- Title of work
- Date of completion
- Optional additional details

If your work sample does not list the date of completion in the description the application will be ineligible.

If uploading a file, it should be named: Applicant Name_Work Sample 2

4. Driver's License or State ID

CAF is funded by state taxes and therefore requires a minimum of one year of residency in the State of Illinois.

Your residency verification requires your valid Illinois Driver's License or Illinois State ID.

If the issue date is prior to November 20, 2023, this is the only document required to upload.

If your Driver's License or State ID was issued after November 20, 2023:

- Please create and upload a single file with your current ID and one of the following additional pieces of residency verification:
 - Your previous Driver's License or State ID
 - A utility bill in your name from prior to November 20, 2023
 - A W2 or 1099 from 2023

If your application does not meet the residency verification the application will be ineligible.

Submit this document as a PDF file named: Applicant Name_Residency

For general information contact:

Illinois Arts Council

115 S. LaSalle St., Suite 2202

Chicago, IL 60603

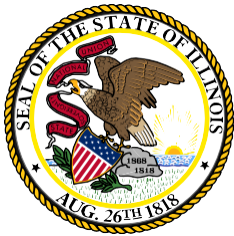
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Visit the [Illinois Arts Council Board Members](#) page for a complete list of current board members.



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