



A Public Grantmaker

The Illinois Arts Council Agency (IACA) was created as a state agency by the Illinois General Assembly in 1965. IACA is governed by a Council of private citizens appointed by the Governor who are charged with developing the state's public arts policy, fostering quality culturally diverse programs, and approving grants expenditures. Resources to support the Illinois Arts Council Agency are provided by the Governor and General Assembly of Illinois and the National Endowment for the Arts.

IACA Mission

To build a strong, creative, and connected Illinois through the arts.

What We Do:

The Illinois Arts Council Agency serves the people of Illinois through a variety of grants and services, primarily geared to:

- **Support Illinois' Arts Sector:** Operating and technical support provided to organizations and programs statewide helps keep Illinois' arts sector vital, vibrant, and accessible to all.
- **Advance Arts Education:** The arts can be a part of the education of every single child in this state through the programs, services, partnerships, and collaborations of the Illinois Arts Council Agency.
- **Foster Creativity and Working Artists:** Resources, opportunities, and direct support for the work of individual artists, the foundation of Illinois' creative environment.

Individual Artist Support Program

The Individual Artist Support Program (IAS) was created to help Illinois artists realize a career goal, take advantage of a professional opportunity, and/or produce a project or body of work for public viewing. IAS represents the Illinois Arts Council Agency's commitment to continuing to support the work of individual artists. IAS encompasses two individual tracks:

- **The Professional Development Track (IA-PD)** seeks to support professional development opportunities related to an individual artist's career. Grant amounts for IA-PD are \$500 or \$750, no cash match is required. These applications are reviewed internally by IACA staff.
- **The Individual Artist Project Track (IA-Project)** seeks to support individual creative artists in the creation, production, and presentation of their work. *This track is open to originating artists (choreographers, music composers, scriptwriters, etc.) only.* Grant amounts for IA-Project are \$1,500 or \$2,500, with a 25% cash match required.

This document focuses on the IA-Project Track application and panel process.

Timeline

Early July: Save the Date announcement

Early August: Guidelines available

Early August–Early September: Webinars/workshops held

September 15: Deadline

Mid October: Eligibility determined

Late October: Discipline Panelists confirmed and online review begins

Mid-November: Discipline Panels online review complete

Mid-November: Discipline Panels scores tallied and final round applicants determined

Mid-November: Final Interdisciplinary Panel confirmed and online review begins

Mid-December: Final Interdisciplinary Panel convenes in Chicago to determine award recommendations

Mid/Late December: Approval of funding recommendations

Late December–Early January: Decision notifications go out to applicants

Early/Mid January: Projects begin

Early January: News Release distributed announcing awardees

August 31: Projects end

September 30: Final Reports due

Application Process

ACCESS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The guidelines and application are made available on the IACA website a minimum of six weeks prior to the deadline. A news alert is posted on our website and goes out to the field, including past applicants and individuals who have signed up for our email list, announcing the availability of the grant and listing the application webinars and workshops to be held. In addition to the webinars/workshops, IACA staff is available to answer questions via email, phone call, and in person through the day of the deadline.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

IACA programs have limited restrictions on application eligibility. The IAS program is open to any Illinois resident who meets residency requirements, is not enrolled in a degree-seeking program, and did not receive an IAS grant in the previous fiscal year.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The IACA utilizes an online application process through eGrant, a product of the Bromelkamp Company. All applicants create an account with eGrant and submit the majority of their application materials through the eGrant system. At this time the system is not set up to accept work samples; applicants must submit work samples (DVDs, CDs, etc) to the IACA by mail or hand-delivery.

The application materials include a narrative, budget, resume/bio, artist statement, work sample inventory, and proof of Illinois residency (copy of a driver's license, voter ID card, or Illinois tax return).

Applicants use the narrative to describe their project, the target audience, a timeline for the creation and presentation of the project, how the project will be promoted, and why it is important to their career. The budget outlines anticipated expenses and the amount and source of the required 25% cash match.

A Few Thoughts:

Because the applicant pool is self-selecting, it can be quite large, with a variety of types of artists from experienced professionals to emerging and DIY artists. All applicants need to be treated with the same respect and due diligence. The IACA staff review submitted applications to ensure they meet legal and programmatic eligibility requirements but make no judgment as to the quality of the work or project and its likelihood of support. If the application is deemed eligible, it will go through the panel process.

Panelists and the Panel Process

PANELISTS

To assist the IACA in the grantsmaking process, the Agency relies upon the expertise of the applicants' peers in recommending to the IACA the projects most deserving of state support from among those submitted for funding. Advisory panels comprising volunteer experts from communities statewide are appointed by the Agency chairman to assist in the review of the IAS grants. Panelists are selected through open nominations and serve one-year terms.

Panelists are identified for eight discipline-specific panels in Dance, Literature, Music, Theater, Media Arts/New Performance Forms/Interdisciplinary Arts, and Visual Arts (due to the large number of applications in the Visual Arts category, the applications are divided between two separate panels). All IAS panelists have backgrounds in arts practice, though they may also be teachers, critics, curators, artistic directors, etc. Panelists are chosen on the basis of their professional achievements and broad knowledge of the arts, as well as an understanding of the state's artistic community, and represent a wide range of artistic styles and aesthetic concerns. Panels are assembled to provide a balance of geographical representation, cultural diversity, age, and gender.

The possibility of conflict of interest is inherent in the nature of the Illinois Arts Council Agency's directive to provide funding for artistic endeavors since IACA members, staff, and in-state panelists are presumed to have an above-average knowledge of and interest in the arts. Without this level of knowledge and interest, the effectiveness of the IACA would be diminished drastically as the people most qualified to advise in the specialized area of arts support would be excluded from the important role of decision maker. The Agency has adopted a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Statement to clarify a panelist's role in such situations.

PANEL PROCESS

The review of the IA-Project applications consists of three rounds designed to narrow down the total applicant pool into the group to be recommended for Project Grants.

Round One

In this round the applicants' electronic applications are reviewed by discipline-specific panels, each with three panelists. This review takes place electronically through the eGrant Review Module. Panelists are assigned a login and password to access the system where the applications are available for review. Each panelist independently reviews the application material, makes comments, and enters scores for each application.

During this round each application is evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Feasibility** – has the applicant sufficiently addressed their ability to carry out the proposed project?
- **Impact** – does the proposed project have the potential to advance the applicant's work and career as indicated in the project narrative, artistic resume, and artist/cultural statement?
- **Clarity** – is the project/concept, as indicated in the project narrative, clear?

Work Samples are NOT reviewed by the discipline-specific panels.

After reviewing an application panel members record comments and scores for the three criteria, using a 5-to-1 scoring system (**5 = Outstanding; 4 = Excellent; 3 = Good; 2 = Marginal; 1 = Poor**).

Once scores from all preliminary discipline-based panels have been recorded and tabulated, a threshold score is determined by IACA staff. Applications that meet or exceed the threshold score, or score in the top 25% of applications in their discipline, will advance to the second round. *By including the top 25% of applicants in each discipline, the IACA is able to ensure equitable representation of the disciplines in the next round.*

Round Two

In Round Two, the applications and work samples of the remaining applicants are reviewed by a Multi-Disciplinary panel comprising one representative from each of the round-one discipline panels.

As in Round One, the panelists are given access to the applications through the eGrant Review Module. Panelists are asked to review all material, make comments, and enter preliminary scores for all applicants. In addition, the Multi-Disciplinary panel is convened in Chicago.

During the panel meeting, the applicants' work samples are reviewed, discussed, and evaluated along with the written application materials. Staff presents basic information about each application, i.e. applicant's name, discipline and dollar request amount, and the project outline. Next, the work sample is briefly reviewed. After the work sample review, the discipline panel representative begins the discussion about the application, followed by comments from all other panelists. At the conclusion of the review and discussion, each panelist scores the

application, evaluating on the criteria listed below and using the same scoring system as before: **5 = Outstanding; 4 = Excellent; 3 = Good; 2 = Marginal; 1 = Poor.**

- **Feasibility** – has the applicant sufficiently addressed their ability to carry out the proposed project?
- **Impact** – does the proposed project have the potential to advance the applicant’s work and career as indicated in the project narrative, artistic resume, and artist/cultural statement?
- **Quality of Applicant’s Work**, as evidenced by Work Sample submitted.
- **Clarity** – is the project/concept, as indicated in the project narrative, clear?

Should the need arise during the panel’s review of applications, we may turn to comments made by the other members of the preliminary discipline panels.

Round Three

Once all applicants have been reviewed and scored, average scores are presented. Discussion of the top-scored applicants follows. The final recommendations for IAS - Artist Project Grants result from this discussion. Panel recommendations are then presented to the Illinois Arts Council Agency board for final approval.

Artist Notification and Feedback

NOTIFICATION

Once all recommendations have been approved by the IACA board, applicants are notified by email of the Agency’s decision. Applicants approved for funding are sent a grants packet in the mail with a grant agreement/contract and other documents required to release funds.

A news release announcing the award recipients is posted on the IACA website and sent out statewide.

FEEDBACK

The IACA offers a number of ways for an applicant to access feedback on their application.

- All IACA panel meetings are open to the public. Applicants may attend the panel meeting to watch the proceedings. They may not, however, address the panel, nor may the panel ask a question of an applicant.
- All panel meetings are recorded with notes taken by IACA staff. All panelist comments become a matter of public record, although they will not be attributed.
- Once an applicant receives notification of the panel review outcome and the Agency’s decision, they may inquire about the comments made on their application. The IACA staff encapsulates the comments and presents them anonymously

Final Reporting

At the conclusion of the grant period, each IAS grantee is required to file a final report. The report is submitted electronically through the eGrant system. The grantee is asked to:

- Describe the project/activity as completed during the grant period;
- Indicate any major changes to the project;
- Summarize the impact the grant had on their career and professional life;
- Provide a financial statement itemizing actual expenses showing the IACA grant was spent and the cash match requirement was met;
- Provide examples of promotional/publicity material and/or reviews/articles;
- Provide documentation (images/video/audio/publication) of the funded project.

A Few Thoughts

The documentation submitted with the final report, as well as the work samples submitted with the application, is kept on file for all IAS grant recipients as part of a larger archive documenting the history of IACA's Individual Artists Support Programs.

An update: In the current fiscal year (FY14), the Illinois Arts Council Agency has seen a restoration of some funds to its budget. This will allow the Agency to reinstate a number of programs suspended due to budget constraints. In addition to current programs for individual artists, the IAS program described in this document, and the Ethnic and Folk Arts Master/Apprentice Program, the IACA plans to expand support to individual artists in the state by reviving three programs that have been suspended since Fiscal Year 2010:

- **Artist Fellowship Program** – unrestricted direct support to originating artists,
- **Artstour & Live Music** – opportunities for Illinois performing artists to tour throughout the state, and
- **Literary Awards Program** – companion awards to Illinois non-profit literary presses/magazines and the Illinois writers they publish.



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