

READI 2.0

Arts & Culture Initiative

Application and evaluation rubric



Prepared by Public Sphere Projects
DRAFT 01-21-2026



In this document

This document brings together key components of the READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Initiative application and review process.

The document includes three related sections: application questions and accompanying guidance; regional review criteria; and juried scoring questions and rubric. The application guidance is intended to help applicants clearly understand what information to provide in each section, while the review materials support a consistent, transparent, and equitable evaluation process for regional reviewers and jurors.

Contents

- I. Application
 - Application overview and eligibility
 - Section 1: Applicant information
 - Section 2: Project description
 - Section 3: Project impact
 - Section 4: Regional cultural plan alignment
 - Section 5: Partnerships and engagement
 - Section 6: Project Management and sustainability
 - Section 7: Technical assistance and resources
 - Uploads
- II. Regional evaluation rubric
- III. State panel evaluation rubric

Section I

Application

Application overview and eligibility

Overview

As part of Indiana's ongoing commitment to strengthening its creative and cultural landscape, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), in partnership with the Indiana Arts Commission (IAC), is launching the READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Initiative—made possible through a significant investment from Lilly Endowment Inc. Through this initiative, \$65 million will be dedicated to advancing arts and cultural projects across Indiana's READI 2.0 regions, supporting work that enhances quality of life, strengthens regional identity, and contributes to long-term community vibrancy.

The Arts & Culture Initiative will support a wide spectrum of regionally driven projects identified through each region's 2025 regional arts and culture plan.

This includes public art, cultural facilities, festivals, creative workforce development, digital innovation, and other locally prioritized cultural investments. These awards are designed to help communities implement impactful cultural projects that elevate Indiana as a place where creativity thrives. In addition to project funding, IEDC will provide technical assistance tailored to needs identified by awarded applicants.

Funding decisions will be made on a project-by-project basis, with IEDC determining the appropriate financing mechanism. Note that this program is a reimbursement grant program.

The Initiative will be administered by IEDC with support from IAC, which will define project-specific expectations, reporting requirements, and outcomes. Through this targeted investment the READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Initiative aims to build a stronger, more dynamic, and more culturally rich future for communities throughout Indiana.

Key dates

February 10, 2026 - Online info session (1:00 PM ET) **a recording will be available*

February 16, 2026 - Application portal opens

April 15, 2026 at 5:00pm: Application deadline

May 5, 2026: Regional review complete

May 15, 2026: IEDC/Jury review

July 1, 2026: Awardee notification

July 1, 2026 - December 31, 2028: Grant Period

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations, local or regional government entities, and consortia composed of multiple partners, which may include creative entrepreneurs and businesses. Applicants must represent an eligible entity or consortium; applications from individuals are not eligible, and for-profit businesses may not serve as the lead applicant. All applicants must be located within, or demonstrate a clear service connection to, a READI 2.0 region, propose projects that deliver a clear public and cultural benefit, and align with the region's adopted arts and culture plan.

Potential applicants and consortia may include the following:

- **Arts and culture nonprofit organizations (501(c)(3))** proposing projects such as cultural venue enhancements, public art, arts education, festivals, or creative workforce initiatives.
- **Local or regional government agencies** seeking to develop or expand creative programming, public art, cultural events, or community-based arts access.
- **Main Street or downtown organizations (including 501(c)(6) entities)** focused on activating commercial districts through creative uses, cultural programming, or arts-led placemaking.
- **Colleges and universities** exploring community-facing cultural projects such as maker spaces, fabrication labs, artist residencies, or creative learning hubs.
- **Individual artists and artist collectives**, proposing public-facing cultural projects or programs that provide community benefit, when applying through an eligible nonprofit or public entity serving as the applicant of record.
- **Mission-driven creative entrepreneurs or developers**, including for-profit entities, proposing arts, cultural, or creative real estate projects as part of a consortium or in partnership with higher education institutions, or public entities, with an eligible non-profit entity serving as the applicant of record.
- **Collaborative partnerships or consortia** led by an eligible nonprofit, government agency, higher education institution, advancing shared cultural assets or cultural tourism initiatives.

Questions?

Direct all questions related to the program or eligibility to [<nkouton@iedc.in.gov>](mailto:nkouton@iedc.in.gov) & [<heyoung@iedc.in.gov>](mailto:heyoung@iedc.in.gov).

About the online system

- A PDF copy of the application questions can be downloaded by clicking on the "Question List" button at the top of the form.
- The system auto-saves after every 100 characters typed or every time you click into a new question; however, there is also a "Save" button at the bottom of the page.
- If you copy and paste from an outside document into the online system, be sure to keep track of character limits (including spaces). Also note, formatted text won't transfer when pasted.
- If you do not provide an answer for one of the required questions, you will not be able to submit your application.
- Remember to click "Submit Form" when you are finished.
- Once successfully submitted, you will receive a confirmation email, and the application is no longer available for editing.

Privacy consideration

All documents submitted via the Indiana Arts Commission portal are public and subject to a public information request, unless marked otherwise. Applicants should therefore not include any information in the content of the application that cannot be shared publicly. This includes sensitive information in uploaded documents, such as bank, financial, and loan information.

For technical assistance with the online system: grantsadmin@iac.in.gov

Review process

Following an initial confirmation for application eligibility and completeness, the READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Initiative review process *follows a two-stage structure to ensure both regional alignment and statewide consistency.*

Applicants submit proposals through an online portal administered by the Indiana Arts Commission.

- **In the first stage**, proposals are reviewed by the READI 2.0 region(s) in which the project will take place. This stage is intended to determine whether, and how closely, the proposal responds to the objectives of the regional cultural plan.
- **In the second stage**, following a regional review, applications advance to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, who will convene an independent panel of experts. The panel will evaluate the full range of proposals using a scoring rubric that assesses project clarity, feasibility, regional alignment, impact, community engagement, and financial sustainability.

The independent review panel will make funding recommendations to Indiana Economic Development Corporation. Awards will be distributed pending compliance review at the State Level.

Section 1: Applicant of Record Information

The applicant of record is the eligible entity identified below and will serve as the primary legal, financial, and administrative representative for the project. The applicant of record will be responsible for execution of all grant agreements, receipt and management of funds, and fulfillment of all applicable reporting, compliance, and performance requirements. Any partners, collaborators, or individual artists associated with the project will participate under the direction of the applicant of record.

Grant ID

Create your Grant ID using the following format:

FY26LILLY-YourProject'sName

EXAMPLE: FY26LILLY-IndianaCeramicSupply

(Character Limit: 100)

Submitter Contact

Submitted by:

Title:

Email:

Telephone: (XXX-XXX-XXXX)

Applicant of Record Information

Organization/Entity Name*

Mailing address*

Mailing address line 2

City* / State* / ZIP code*

Telephone*

Website*

Federal EIN # (if applicable)

Business / Organization Type (Non-profit, governmental entity, etc.)

Primary Applicant Description

Describe your organization's mission and how it serves your community or region's cultural and economic vitality.

Is this a consortium application?

Please list all project partners.

Yes

Organization:

Name:

Contact:

Website:

Role:

No

IEDC region and entity details

*Please select your IEDC Region
(check one)*

- Accelerate Rural Indiana
- Central Indiana
- East Central
- Greater Lafayette
- Indiana First
- Indiana Uplands
- North Central
- Northeast
- Northwest
- Our Southern Indiana
- South Bend-Elkhart
- South Central
- Southeast
- Southwest
- Wabash River

Section 2: Project Description

Project Title

*This is the name of the project or program being proposed
(Character Limit: 100)*

Project Timeline

Grant Period: July 1, 2026 - December 31, 2028:

Anticipated Start Date: __/__/____

Anticipated Completion Date: __/__/____

(INSERT FILLABLE TIMELINE DIRECTLY INTO APPLICATION)

Project Summary

*Describe your project. Specify what READI 2.0 Arts and Culture funds will be used for.
Include details such as project history, partners, goals, core activities, and intended impact.
(Character Limit: 3000)*

Tell the story of your project from start to finish. Describe where the idea came from, who participates and at what scale, how READI 2.0 Arts & Culture funds will be used, and what you expect to accomplish. Aim to give reviewers a clear understanding of the project's structure, scope, and relevance to your region.

Brief description for publication (e.g., website/newsletter)

A brief description of the project that could be included in IEDC publications and announcements.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Project Website

(If applicable)

Project Type

Select all that apply

Select all categories below that represent your project. Choose every category that reflects a meaningful part of your project—whether programmatic, capacity-building, public programming, digital innovation, or capital investment. If none of the listed options fully describe your project, select “Other” and specify the project type.

Creative Workforce

Artist Residencies & Creative Exchanges

Place-based, thematic, or community-engaged residencies fostering creation and collaboration.

Skill Development & Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships, mentorships, skill-building, and hands-on training in arts, design, media, fabrication, or entrepreneurship.

Talent Retention, Leadership & Professional Advancement

Fellowships, accelerator programs, creative leadership cohorts, and professional development support.

Capacity-building

Digital & Hybrid Arts Innovation

Projects using emerging technologies—AR/VR, digital storytelling, projection mapping, fabrication technologies, and online creative platforms.

Sector Support & Shared Services

Shared studios, fabrication access, legal/financial services, technical assistance, or regional support hubs for creatives and cultural organizations.

Institution, Organization & Network Establishment

Formation of new arts nonprofits, cultural service providers, creative collectives, or regional arts networks.

Brand Identity, Storytelling & Cultural Marketing

Regional branding, cultural storytelling, destination marketing, shared campaigns, and communications initiatives that elevate cultural identity and visibility.

Public Programs

Arts Education & Lifelong Learning

In-school, out-of-school, intergenerational, and creative aging programs that expand education and lifelong participation in the arts.

Festivals, Competitions & Cultural Events

Arts, music, performance, or cultural festivals, biennials, competitions, and recurring community celebrations.

Capital Projects

Public Art & Placemaking Infrastructure

Murals, sculptures, installations, and artist-led design enhancements to public space.

Cultural Facilities & Creative Campus Development

New or expanded museums, art centers, galleries, rehearsal/performance venues, amphitheaters, creative districts, creative trails and culturally significant attractions.

Adaptive Reuse & Heritage Revitalization

Transforming historic or industrial buildings into contemporary cultural or creative-use spaces.

Mobile & Rural Access Infrastructure

Traveling or pop-up cultural assets—mobile makerspaces, galleries, libraries, and other units bringing arts access to communities.

Feasibility Studies

Regional assessments to determine the need, practicality and sustainability of creating or revitalizing arts and cultural facilities.

“Other” Projects (Please Specify): _____

(Character Limit: 100)

Section 3: Project Impact

Regional Impact

Describe how your project will create a meaningful, lasting impact for your community or region.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Consider the broader effect your project will have beyond individual participants. For example, explain how it influences a neighborhood, strengthens regional connections, fills a gap in cultural access, or supports a shared community goal. Help reviewers understand why this project is important at a regional scale and who stands to benefit.

Long-term Impact

Describe the lasting impact the project or program will create beyond the grant period, including how the benefits of your proposal—whether programmatic, capacity-building, capital, or otherwise—will continue to support artists, residents, or the broader creative ecosystem over time.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Think about what aspects of the proposed project or program will persist beyond the end of the grant period. For example, a single festival might lead to ongoing partnerships, a pilot program could inform future funding or policy, or a training series might leave participants with new skills they can continue using. Describe these kinds of ripple effects so reviewers can understand the longer-term value of your project. Projects do not need to be ongoing or permanent. One-time projects are eligible, and there is no requirement to continue operating the project after the grant period ends.

Geographical Reach

Select the county(ies) this project will serve (check all that apply).

Applicants should review their region's Cultural Plan prior to submission. Visit Indianareadi.com to view individual regional cultural plans.

Select all regions and counties where the project will have meaningful activity or impact. This helps reviewers understand the geographic reach of your project and how it connects communities across your region.

Accelerate Rural Indiana

Decatur

Shelby

- Rush
- Central Indiana
 - Boone
 - Hamilton
 - Hancock
 - Hendricks
 - Johnson
 - Madison
 - Marion
 - Morgan
 - Putnam
- East Central
 - Blackford
 - Delaware
 - Fayette
 - Grant
 - Henry
 - Jay
 - Randolph
 - Wayne
- Greater Lafayette
 - Benton
 - Carroll
 - Fountain
 - Montgomery
 - Tippecanoe
 - Warren
 - White
- Indiana First
 - Harriosn
 - Knox
 - Perry
 - Pike
 - Spencer
- Indiana Uplands
 - Brown
 - Crawford
 - Daviess

- Dubois
- Greene
- Lawrence
- Martin
- Monroe
- Orange
- Owen
- North Central
 - Cass
 - Clinton
 - Fulton
 - Howard
 - Miami
 - Tipton
- Northeast
 - Adams
 - Allen
 - DeKalb
 - Huntington
 - Kosciusko
 - LaGrange
 - Noble
 - Steuben
 - Wabash
 - Wells
 - Whitley
- Northwest
 - Jasper
 - Lake
 - LaPorte
 - Newton
 - Porter
 - Pulaski
 - Starke
- Our Southern Indiana
 - Clark
 - Floyd
 - Jefferson

- Scott
- Washington
- South Bend-Elkhart
 - Elkhart
 - Marshall
 - St. Joseph
- South Central
 - Bartholmew
 - Jackson
 - Jennings
- Southeast
 - Dearborn
 - Franklin
 - Ohio
 - Ripley
 - Switzerland
 - Union
- Southwest
 - Gibson
 - Posey
 - Vanderburgh
 - Warrick
- Wabash River
 - Clay
 - Parke
 - Sullivan
 - Vermillion
 - Vigo
- State Wide

Section 4: Regional Cultural Plan Alignment (*Regional scoring only*)

Alignment with Regional Cultural Plan

Explain how your project aligns with your region's arts & culture priorities based on its arts and culture plan.

(Character Limit: 3000)

Review your region's arts and culture plan and identify the priorities most relevant to the proposed project or program. Explain how your project supports or advances those priorities, helping reviewers see how your work fits within the region's larger cultural direction.

Section 5: Partnerships and Engagement

Project Partnerships

Are there other partner organizations involved in this project? List each partner and describe their role (e.g. collaborator, in-kind support, etc.). Note that projects or programs with confirmed partners or collaborators will receive priority in evaluation.

Use this section to show who you are working with and how responsibilities are shared. Identify each organization's role and level of commitment so reviewers can understand the strength of the collaboration.

Yes

Please list all project partners

(Character Limit: 100)

Name:

Contact:

Website:

Role:

No

Community Engagement and Outreach

Describe how artists, residents, governing bodies, etc will be engaged in shaping or implementing this project.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Explain how people will be meaningfully involved throughout the project. Describe the approaches you will use to invite input, share decision-making, and ensure participation is accessible.

Section 6: Project Management & Sustainability

Project Status

Describe the current status of your project including any completed planning, design, artist selection, feasibility studies, or community engagement.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Use this section to show how far along your project is and what groundwork has already been completed. Highlight key steps you've taken to prepare for implementation so reviewers can understand your level of readiness.

Organizational Capacity

Describe your organization's current capacity to execute this arts and culture project, including full-time, part-time, consultants & volunteers helping to oversee project implementation.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Help reviewers understand how your organization is set up to manage the project. Briefly describe the team, skills, and resources in place, and how responsibilities are organized to ensure the work can be carried out effectively.

Budget

Provide the total project cost, including request for Lilly funding, outlining all funding sources (public, private, philanthropic, in-kind).

Funding Source	Funding Entity	Funding Type	Commitment Status	Amount (\$)
Lilly Endowment Inc. Request	Indiana Economic Development Corporation		Pending / Under Review	
READI 2.0 (if applicable)	Indiana Economic Development Corporation			
Public-State				
Public-Federal				
Public-Local				
Other				

Private-Philanthropic				
Private-Corporate				
Private-Other (Includes Donations)				
In-Kind				
Total				\$-----

Financial Sustainability

If this project is meant to continue after the grant period ends, describe long-term operational and financial plans for sustaining the project.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Use this section to outline how the project will be supported in the future. Describe the resources, partnerships, or strategies that will help maintain the work over time and ensure its continued benefit beyond the grant period. Your project may be a one-time programmatic or capacity-building effort; however, you must clearly show how its benefits will extend beyond the event or activity itself. Highlight the long-term value, momentum, or impact your project will generate for artists, residents, or the broader creative ecosystem.

Section 7: Technical Assistance and Resources

The information collected in this section will be used by the IEDC team for internal planning purposes only and will not be evaluated as part of the application review or scoring process. Responses will help inform future technical assistance, resource development, and capacity-building support for applicants and the broader arts and culture field.

Technical Assistance Needs

Outline any technical assistance you anticipate needing to strengthen this project—such as artistic mentorship, fabrication support, curatorial or interpretive planning, audience development, evaluation, business operations, or other creative-sector expertise.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Use this section to describe any outside expertise or support that would help strengthen your project. Focus on the types of assistance that would improve planning, implementation, or long-term success—for example, help navigating permitting or approvals, strengthening partnerships, or developing sustainability strategies—and explain why that support would be valuable at this stage.

Project Evaluation

Describe how you will evaluate the project's impact and effectiveness in achieving the goals stated above. Examples may include surveys, interviews, testimonials, reflection meetings, comparison to previous projects, or other evaluation methods.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Explain how you will understand whether the project was successful. In addition to common feedback tools, this could include tracking participation over time, documenting changes in partnerships or capacity, or reviewing how lessons learned inform future programming or decisions.

READI Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Explain how this project connects with any of the [READI 2.0 Key Performance Indicators \(KPIs\)](#)—such as talent attraction/retention, population growth, increased wages, business formation, capital investment, or quality-of-place outcomes. You are not required to address all—or even any—of the KPIs; this is a non-evaluated question intended to help IEDC understand potential alignment.

(Character Limit: 1500)

Note any broader outcomes your project may influence beyond its immediate artistic goals. For example, describe how the project helps make the region more attractive to residents

or visitors, supports creative businesses, encourages reinvestment in a place, or contributes to a stronger sense of community—recognizing that this information is for context only and will not affect scoring.

Uploads

Document Uploads

Please provide the following required materials to support review of your project or program.

(Please note, all documents submitted are subject to the [Indiana Access to Public Records Act.](#))

Project budget

Upload a complete pdf project budget.

Budget funding mix documentation

If your project includes a mix of funding, attach documentation verifying committed or pending funds (e.g., bank letter for loan approval, grant award letters, investor commitments, or other financial verification).

In-kind support documentation

Provide written confirmation of any in-kind contributions, such as letters from partners detailing donated space, materials, services, or volunteer time.

Letters of support and partnership documentation

Upload letters of support from partners or collaborators. Projects with partners are prioritized; please include MOUs or follow the provided partnership letter guidelines.

Visual materials

Include renderings, site photos, design drafts, concept drawings, or other visuals that help reviewers understand the proposed project.

Section II

Regional evaluation rubric

Regional Review

As a regional reviewer, you are tasked with assessing whether the proposed project or program aligns with your region's adopted Arts and Culture Plan.

Your input provides important local context for the statewide review and helps ensure that projects reflect regional priorities, needs, and opportunities. Please indicate your assessment below and include any comments that may be helpful for understanding the project's relevance within the regional plan.

Does this proposed project or program align with your region's Arts and Culture Plan?

Alignment

- 0 – Not aligned or not relevant | Information missing, unclear, or not addressed
- 1 – Not aligned | Project does not address regional priorities, but has potential for further exploration or technical assistance
- 2 – Somewhat aligned | Connections are limited and underdeveloped
- 3 – Mostly aligned | Addresses identified regional priorities with minor gaps
- 4 – Exemplary alignment | Advances key regional priorities or strategies

Comments (optional):

(Character Limit: 1500)

Section III

State panel evaluation rubric

Panel Review

As a juror, you will use this rubric to evaluate applications to the READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Initiative using a 100-point scoring system. Each criterion is rated on a 0-4 readiness scale (Absent to Exemplary) and weighted to reflect its importance to regional alignment, community and cultural impact, project readiness, partnerships, and financial responsibility.

Scores should be based on the collective information provided under each evaluation criterion within the application, including Project Description, Project Impact, Partnerships and Engagement, Project Management & Sustainability, and Overall Submission. Panelists should assess proposals for clarity, completeness, and feasibility, while recognizing the range of project types and scales. Evaluation should focus on each project's ability to deliver meaningful, lasting benefit to communities across Indiana.

Applicant of Record Information
(Non-scoring)

Project Description
(20 PTS)

Does the description provide sufficient and thoughtful detail about the nature of the project? Does the description demonstrate understanding of the cultural landscape -- locally, regionally, or nationally? Does the project clearly communicate how the READI funds will be used within the context of this project?

Scoring (0-4 × 5)

- 0 – Absent | Information missing, unclear, or not addressed
- 1 – Emerging | Early concept; limited detail; minimal evidence
- 2 – Moderate | Adequate information; some gaps remain
- 3 – Strong | Clear, detailed, feasible
- 4 – Exemplary | Highly detailed, evidence-based, fully aligned, implementation-ready

Comments (optional):
(Character Limit: 1500)

Project Impact
(20 PTS)

Does the project or program clearly address a community need? Does it demonstrate a thoughtful and feasible solution? Does it engender wider impact -- beyond the proposing organization, contributing to a broader community, cultural, or regional benefit?

Scoring (0-4 × 5)

- 0 – Absent | Information missing, unclear, or not addressed
- 1 – Emerging | Early concept; limited detail; minimal evidence
- 2 – Moderate | Adequate information; some gaps remain
- 3 – Strong | Clear, detailed, feasible
- 4 – Exemplary | Highly detailed, evidence-based, fully aligned, implementation-ready

Comments (optional):
(Character Limit: 1500)

Regional Cultural Plan Alignment



(Scores and comments imported from regional review.)

Partnerships and Engagement

(20 PTS)

Is the proposed project or program responsive to community needs and feedback? Does the proposed project or program demonstrate depth and quality of community engagement in both planning and implementation? Is there evidence of engagement of artists, residents, youth, governing bodies, and underrepresented groups? Are there defined substantive roles for partners contributing to the project?

Scoring (0–4 × 5)

- 0 – Absent | Information missing, unclear, or not addressed
- 1 – Emerging | Early concept; limited detail; minimal evidence
- 2 – Moderate | Adequate information; some gaps remain
- 3 – Strong | Clear, detailed, feasible
- 4 – Exemplary | Highly detailed, evidence-based, fully aligned, implementation-ready

Comments (optional):

(Character Limit: 1500)

Project Management & Sustainability

(20 PTS)

Does the organization demonstrate the required capacity to responsibly manage and steward project funds? Is there sufficient evidence that the organization is capable of raising or earning additional funds beyond the Arts & Culture Initiative grant to support the project's success?

Scoring (0–4 × 5)

- 0 – Absent | Information missing, unclear, or not addressed
- 1 – Emerging | Early concept; limited detail; minimal evidence
- 2 – Moderate | Adequate information; some gaps remain
- 3 – Strong | Clear, detailed, feasible
- 4 – Exemplary | Highly detailed, evidence-based, fully aligned, implementation-ready

Comments (optional):

(Character Limit: 1500)

Technical Assistance and Resources

(Non-scoring)

Overall Submission

(20 PTS)

Does this application constitute a thoughtful, feasible, and impactful project? Does the proposing organization or consortium appear capable of undertaking the proposed project? Is regional context and impact meaningfully considered? Is there evidence of community need, engagement, and support?

Scoring (0–4 × 5)

- 0 – Absent | Information missing, unclear, or not addressed
- 1 – Emerging | Early concept; limited detail; minimal evidence
- 2 – Moderate | Adequate information; some gaps remain
- 3 – Strong | Clear, detailed, feasible
- 4 – Exemplary | Highly detailed, evidence-based, fully aligned, implementation-ready

Comments (optional):

(Character Limit: 1500)



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