



New Jersey State Council on the Arts
Request For Proposals
Individual Artist Fellowship Program Administration and Artist Service
Organization Feasibility Study
Proposal Deadline: February 12, 2026 at Noon ET

Este documento también está disponible [en español](#).

ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts (Arts Council) is a division of the New Jersey Department of State, created in 1966 by Public Law Chapter 214 and consists of 17 Governor-appointed members and three ex-officio members representing the New Jersey Secretary of State, the Senate, and the Assembly. The Council's volunteer members are supported by a professional staff who carry out the Council's programs and services from the State Capital in Trenton.

What We Believe

We believe the arts are central to every element we value most in a modern society including human understanding, cultural and civic pride, strong communities, excellent schools, lifelong learning, creative expression, and economic opportunity.

Our Mission

In 1966, the Legislature passed and the governor signed a bill creating the Arts Council, and directing us to do all that is necessary and appropriate to: support, encourage, and foster public interest in the arts; enlarge public and private resources devoted to the arts; promote freedom of expression in the arts; and facilitate the inclusion of art in every public building in New Jersey.

How We Are Funded

Public support for the arts in New Jersey comes from a dedicated, renewable revenue source - the Hotel/Motel Occupancy Fee - established in 2003. Additionally, the Arts Council receives an annual, competitive grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. As the largest funder of the arts in New Jersey, the Arts Council is committed to providing annual and multi-year grants to New Jersey's nonprofit arts organizations, arts projects, and artists. Strategic, responsive, and responsible grantmaking is the Council's highest priority, ensuring programs and services are equitable, accessible, and have the greatest possible statewide impact.

Commitment to Public Benefit and Equity

In New Jersey, we know that diversity is one of our greatest strengths. The Arts Council embraces the principles of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of our work. With a focus on learning, data, and accountability, we will continue to assess and challenge inequities, identify gaps in engagement and service, and focus on the details that shape systemic change.

Accessibility

The Arts Council is committed to ensuring its programs are accessible to all people.

For accessibility services related to filing an application, please contact Accessibility Coordinator Lindsay Dandeo at 609-984-7020 ([NJ Relay 711](https://www.nj.gov/transportation/relay711/)) | lindsay.dandeo@sos.nj.gov.

GOALS AND PURPOSE OF THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Arts Council has awarded Individual Artist Fellowships for more than 50 years. The Individual Artist Fellowship (IAF) program supports actively practicing New Jersey artists and helps them advance their careers by providing a monetary award. The State of New Jersey is rich in arts and culture; according to [data shared by the National Endowment for the Arts](#), more than 90,000 working artists live in the state. We know that the needs of artists can't be fulfilled by the IAF program alone; they also need professional development opportunities, centralized resources for career advancement, connections, capacity building, financial training, and more. Yet, New Jersey has no artist-specific service organization to provide artists in all disciplines with resources like training, business services, access to additional funding, community building, and advocacy.

One way the Arts Council works to strategically achieve its mission is through partnerships. Working collaboratively with mission-aligned partners provides the opportunity to leverage collective expertise, capacity, and resources to meet public and arts sector need. Through this Request for Proposal (RFP), the Arts Council is seeking to identify a mission-aligned organization to partner with on a multi-year project in service of two major, interconnected goals:

1. Administration of IAF: Effectively administer the annual IAF program in support of New Jersey artists in 13 artistic disciplines, optimizing the Arts Council's resources and investment.
2. Determine need/feasibility of an artist service entity: Undertake a comprehensive feasibility study to determine the feasibility of establishing an artist service organization in the state.

The ideal partner organization will have:

- a mission centered primarily on the arts; or an aligned mission (e.g., arts fiscal agent, service organization, etc.)
- experience developing and managing programs that serve the needs and interests of artists, ideally across-disciplines
- a demonstrated history of collaboration with government and/or other arts funders, interest groups, and artists
- a strong commitment to the professional development of artists
- an interest in, and successful history of, partnering with other entities to serve mutual goals
- willingness to scale up to the capacity necessary to manage an annual grant program for individuals that receives 1000+ applications and makes nearly 200 awards each year
- existing statewide reach, or the ability to scale up reach to serve artists in all geographies of New Jersey
- existing strategies and an interest in further collaboration to eliminate barriers to participation and to increase access for underrepresented communities, including but not limited to persons with disabilities.

INDIVIDUAL ARTIST FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The IAF program is a long-standing cornerstone of the Arts Council's support for individual artists. The program is intended to fund New Jersey artists who are actively practicing and sharing their work with the public, professionally or otherwise. Fellowships are awarded to artists who demonstrate the highest artistic quality to enable them to advance their practices and pursue their artistic goals. Annually, Fellows are selected through a competitive and anonymous evaluation process by independent panels of peer reviewers. Panelists review discipline-specific applications and score them based solely on the artistic quality of the work submitted as part of the application. Currently, the IAF program operates on a two-year rotation of 13 generative artistic disciplines and has two tiers of funding: the Fellowship Awards and the Finalist Awards. Final average scores determine the funding levels, and in recent years, the Council awarded \$2 million dollars to artists divided among both tiers of funding. Fellows are showcased through additional Arts Council opportunities, such as an annual digital and print catalog.

Since the program's origin in 1970, there have been several iterations of its structure and of the Arts Council's investment. For decades, the Arts Council has relied on the administrative capacity and expertise of a nonprofit partner to help make the program possible. And over the last five years, the Arts Council's investment in the program has grown significantly, with the most recent round of Fellowships totaling \$2 million, supporting 216 New Jersey artists. Learn more about the program's current structure and the most recent program rules and instructions [here](#).

STATEWIDE ARTIST SERVICE ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Recognizing the gap in comprehensive and direct services for artists living and working in New Jersey, the Arts Council is committed to identifying the appropriate partner to explore the possibility of establishing a service organization with a mission to support the needs of individual artists statewide, across disciplines. Different arts service organizations currently exist within the state providing needed services for arts organizations, artists, and stakeholders of several specific artistic disciplines. However, New Jersey is without an entity dedicated exclusively to ongoing services for individual artists of any discipline. Through our work, and over time, the Arts Council has become increasingly aware that New Jersey artists experience a variety of needs and challenges that may require such an entity. While the Arts Council cannot establish a service organization, we can provide the impetus, resources, and thought partnership to explore the feasibility of establishing an entity of this kind, should a feasibility study confirm the need and indicate an appropriate structure.

ARTS COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR AND ROLE IN THE MULTI-YEAR PARTNERSHIP

The success of this partnership relies heavily on regular communication and clearly defined expectations for each partner. As the authorizer and funding source for the partnership, the Arts Council will hold the selected organization to the standards of reporting and accountability required of Arts Council grantee organizations. With the intention of annual support for five years, pending availability of funds and good standing of the partnership, the Arts Council and selected partner will work collaboratively to define the specific plans each year and assess progress made the year prior. The selected organization will be expected to help strategize the most effective ways to reach specific goals in order to maximize the positive impact and outcomes for the partnership in the short- and long-term.

Individual Artist Fellowship Program

Given the long history of this program, the role of the Arts Council in its implementation is well-defined. While a new administrative partnership will likely lead to an evolved set of expectations, the Arts Council will, at minimum, remain the primary authorizer and funder of IAF. Designated Arts Council staff will manage the grant with the partner organization and oversee the structure, processes, direction, and viability of the IAF program. The partner organization will be expected to develop and drive the agreed upon administrative processes and elements from start to finish each year, with Arts Council support throughout. Ultimately, Arts Council staff is responsible for developing and advancing Fellowship award scenarios to be reviewed and approved by the Arts Council's Grants Committee and finalized by the full Arts Council. Additional details regarding IAF program deliverables and roles are below.

Statewide Artist Service Organization Feasibility Study

The Artist Service Organization feasibility study and needs assessment will be led by the partner organization with support from the Arts Council. Designated Arts Council staff will work with the partner organization to outline a strategy, timeline, budget and division of labor to support both partners in contributing the appropriate resources. The Arts Council intends to not only provide funding, but also communications, outreach, field connections, and available data to assist in the work. A five-year plan will be developed together, and may include engaging consultants, surveys, interviews or other possible avenues of research. The partner organization will need to provide administrative support, as well as direct project management in addition to thought-partnership and other agreed-upon roles.

RFP ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this partnership grant from the State Arts Council, an organization must be:

- a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, or other entity that is tax-exempt by determination of the Internal Revenue Service; eligible organizations would include, but are not necessarily limited to, arts missioned organizations, service organizations, advocacy organizations, etc.
- registered in the federal System for Award Management and have its CAGE and UEI codes (See the System for Award Management guidance section below for help on how to secure your organization's registration.);
- in compliance with all pertinent state and federal regulations including but not limited to: Fair Labor Standards, the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988; and Section 1913 of 18 U.S.C. and Section 319 of P.L. 101-121. Apart from all other provisions of law, particularly the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which bear upon all Council grantees, those grantees whose Council grant is composed all or in part of funds derived from the National Endowment for the Arts will be required to be in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 at the time of and as a condition of receipt of the grant under penalty of rescission and any others set forth under law;
- in existence and providing public programs or services for at least two years prior to the application;
- an entity with the infrastructure to manage \$2 million in grant awards to potentially 200+ artists annually, or the willingness to scale up capacity to meet that need;
- able to demonstrate a history of sound fiscal management, and willingness to undertake a Project Scope Audit each fiscal year. *Council funds can be allocated to pay for this audit; and,*
- able to provide services during Eastern Standard Time business hours and occasional evening hours for artist programs.

PERIOD OF SUPPORT

The multi-year grant period for this partnership runs annually from July 1 - June 30, beginning July 1, 2026 (FY27). The grant will provide a five-year commitment of annual funding, pending availability of funds and the partnership's good standing. The partnership is anticipated to be maintained through FY31, with an opportunity to continue work together pending appropriate circumstances.

In the first year, the partnership will prepare to administer the IAF program and then, in the following four years, execute the IAF program in-full. Annually, the success of the IAF program and the partnership will be assessed. The outcomes of the Statewide Service Organization Feasibility Study undertaken during the multi-year grant period will guide future planning for the partnership's work on the Service Organization project beyond FY31.

INDIVIDUAL ARTIST FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM SCOPE OF WORK

To ensure there is no break in support for artists, the first year of the partnership (FY27) is transitional. In FY27, IAF awards will be administrated by the Arts Council's existing partner, while planning and set up for the FY28 IAF program is underway with the new partner organization. With the FY27 grant, the Arts Council will provide the new partner funding for the initial planning of the FY28 IAF program and to begin work of the Artist Service Organization Feasibility Study.

Under the advisement of and in partnership with the Arts Council, the new partner organization will launch the FY28 IAF program instructions, manage application intake, the panel process, and post-award processes, including the necessary technical support to artists and panelists throughout. Arts Council Staff expect to work with the partner organization to determine the best options for program components and processes. While we have provided details below based on the current structure, we expect the partner organization to help develop thoughtful changes that can result in administrative efficiencies while maintaining the integrity of the program.

Applications: IAF applications are submitted via an online application software (currently Smart Simple, but the Arts Council is open to other options). The partner organization will manage the software procurement, set up, online application intake, and panel review process each year. The IAF cycle begins with the collaborative revision of the IAF Rules and Instructions. The Rules and Instructions are released online in coordination with the Arts Council and promoted by both entities and should prioritize accessibility. During the application period, technical assistance is provided for prospective applicants to assist them in preparing their best applications and ensure fewer ineligible applications. This includes at least one publicized, recorded application assistance webinar. The partner organization will manage the intake of applications, screening them for completeness and eligibility. All application data collected through the application process (number of complete/incomplete applications, etc.) is

reported to the Arts Council once the application period closes.

For context, the scope of the two most recent application cycles is as follows:

FY26 IAF Cycle

- Disciplines (six) - Film/Video, Digital/Electronic, Interdisciplinary, Painting, Prose, Printmaking/Drawing/Book Arts
- 893 applications were submitted by the final deadline
- 870 applications were eligible for panel evaluation
- Awards to be recommended upon completion of the current application process- in February 2026- for context, recent awards range from \$3,000 to \$27,000

FY25 IAF Cycle

- Disciplines (seven) - Choreography, Crafts, Music Composition, Photography, Playwriting/Screenwriting, Poetry, Sculpture
- 956 applications were submitted by the final deadline
- 939 applications were eligible for panel evaluation
- [107 Fellowship and 109 Finalist awards](#) were approved by the Council (\$2 Million)

Panel Process: Panelist recruitment, contracting, training, facilitation, and stipend payment is managed by the partner organization but strategized and developed in collaboration with the Arts Council. Panels should be designed to include a variety of artistic viewpoints and discipline expertise, as well as diversity of background and demographics while limiting the number of applications being reviewed per panelist to a manageable number to ensure a thoughtful and fair review.

Panel breakdown for the FY26 IAF cycle for the above-mentioned disciplines:

- 24 Panelists were engaged to evaluate applications
- Eight individual panels made up of three panelists each
- Two of the six categories required two separate panels (due to the volume of applications)

Panel breakdown for the FY25 Fellowship cycle for the above-mentioned disciplines:

- 36 Panelists were engaged to evaluate applications
- 12 individual panels made up of three panelists each
- Five of the seven categories required two separate panels (due to the volume of applications)

Award/Post-Award: This includes the artists' notifications, verification of NJ residency, artist agreements (contracts), processing award payments, the intake of final reports, intake and management of Fellow's publicity materials for the IAF showcase catalog. All payments should follow

the procurement standards of the partner organization, and the process should include ample support for awardees. Artists may seek feedback from the panel review, which is provided upon request. Included in the post-award program annually is the publishing of the IAF showcase catalog, which is currently outsourced to a full-service design firm. It is intended that the partner organization, in collaboration with Arts Council staff, will manage the design and publication of the catalog with a design/print or other appropriate contractor.

Technical Assistance: Providing support to artists for each stage of their engagement with the program is a high priority. This includes, but may not be limited to, general program information, application assistance, award acceptance, participation in showcase opportunities, and completing final reports. Additionally, technical assistance will be required for guiding panelists through their process.

INDIVIDUAL ARTIST FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM ACTIVITIES/TIMELINE

The following timeline reflects the IAF program's current schedule and accounts for the transition year activities. *Proposed adjustments will be considered to accommodate the partner organization.*

- Planning and Implementation to Launch Program: July 2026 – March 2027
- Prepare Rules & Instructions and Online Application: March 2027 – May 2027
- Application Intake Period: June 2027 – Mid-July 2027
- Application Screening: July 2027 – Mid-August 2027
- Panel Prep and Orientations: July 2027 - Early September 2027
- Panel Meetings (virtual): Late October 2027 – Late November 2027
- Final Panel Scores and Comments due to Arts Council: Mid-December 2027
- Awards Scenario provided by Arts Council to partner organization: Mid-January 2028
- Awardee Announcement (including Artist Notifications): Mid-February 2028
- Awardee Agreements: Mid-February – March 2028
- *Release of award funds follow the execution of agreements and may continue through April.*
- Program Cycle Debrief and Program Cycle for FY29 Begins: March 2028
- Final Report intake from FY28 Fellows: December 2028

STATEWIDE ARTIST SERVICE ORGANIZATION FEASIBILITY STUDY SCOPE OF WORK

Artist Service Organization Feasibility Study DRAFT

Plan to be finalized in collaboration with the partner organization.

With the FY27 partnership grant, funds will be allocated specifically to strategize and begin the feasibility study work. An agreed-upon budget line for the project may fluctuate each year over five years, as the partners determine what funding is needed (and available) for the work planned to be executed in a given year. Arts Council staff assigned to the project will help ensure that budget conversations are aligned with internal timelines for funding. It is expected that allocated staff costs and other baseline costs would carry over year to year during the project, but other expenditures, such as engaging consultants, may require more funds in some years than others.

FEASIBILITY STUDY ACTIVITIES/TIMELINE - DRAFT

Year one: Working together with Arts Council staff to lay out the strategy, timeline, and necessary resources for the required research. Onboard potential new staff if needed. Formulate needs assessment questions and the plan to do the research.

Year two: Ongoing work with Arts Council staff develop research methods and plans for implementation. Review existing data sources and determine what additional data may be needed.

Year three: Ongoing work with Arts Council staff implementation of research and the intake of data from the field and begin assessment of executed research and collected data. Collect new data and analyze data from year two, plus year three as timing permits. Potentially, launch initial efforts to provide services to artists, if appropriate.

Year four: Ongoing work with Arts Council staff; finalize research efforts and begin to build an action plan. Analyze all data, develop findings report and strategies for implementation of the learnings. Undertake SWOT analysis (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats) and identify potential partners for implementation. Continue or launch offerings of services to artists, if appropriate.

Year five: Ongoing work with Arts Council staff; make final decisions with Arts Council staff regarding next steps to implement the design of a statewide Artist Service Organization, based on research findings, SWOT analysis, available resources and desired outcomes. Make decisions and potentially begin full roll out of services to individual artists.

RFP TIMELINE

- December 17, 2025 – RFP Released
- January 12 and 16, 2026 – Technical Assistance via Open Office Hours - details on page 17.
- **February 5th, 2026, at 12:00 NOON ET – Deadline to request the application be placed on your SAGE task list (see submission instructions, below)**
- **February 12, 2026, 12:00 NOON, ET – Deadline to Submit Proposal in SAGE**
- March through May 2026 – Review Panel Deliberations; Online interviews with select applicants will be scheduled between April 13 and 24, 2026 via emails sent out on April 8, 2026
- June 2026 – Grants Committee review and recommendation
- July 21, 2026 – Council Votes on Cosponsor Award Recommendation at Annual Meeting; all applicants notified of outcomes
- August 2026 - Preliminary meetings and work begins

RFP SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

The [System for Administering Grants Electronically \(SAGE\)](#) is the state of New Jersey's grant management system. To access and submit an application, an organization must be registered first in the SAGE system. This system requires authorization by the Arts Council for initial access. If you do not have an existing SAGE username and password, please contact our *Operations Unit (details below)* to request an account be set up for you.

Note: Access and approval of registration is not automatic. It may take up to 48 hours to approve/validate your organization's registration by a system administrator. **Therefore, please do not wait to create a new account.**

Once your SAGE account is approved, or if you have a pre-existing SAGE Account, *please contact our Operations Unit to request the application for this RFP be placed on your SAGE task list.* In order to ensure applicants have the time needed to complete the application process in SAGE, **the deadline for this step is February 5th, 2026, at 12:00 NOON ET**, which is 1 week prior to the application deadline.

For technical assistance in SAGE, to set up a new account and add the application to your SAGE task list, please contact our Operations Unit:

- Doug West at doug.west@sos.nj.gov or call 609-300-6951 (NJ Relay 711)
- Robert Worshinski at robert.worshinski@sos.nj.gov or call 609-633-1049 (NJ Relay 711)

All application materials will be submitted by uploading documents in the application in SAGE. Please prepare pdf documents of each of the required materials listed below and include the name of your organization at the top of each document. All materials must be submitted in English.

Narrative responses: The Narrative Topics are the framework for responding to this RFP. Compose narrative responses that will provide a reviewer, who may not know your organization or its capacity, the ability to understand them in relation to the Arts Council's evaluation criteria. If you have unusual or unique circumstances that are not specifically queried, present them in the appropriate section(s). If some of the questions posed are not directly applicable to your organization, please note that and why, and use the narrative space to elaborate on the portions of the topical prompts/questions that are applicable.

Use the required support materials to reinforce specific narrative topics.

Please respond to the following narrative prompts, *using approximately 500 words (about one page or less) for each response* (minimum font size 11, please use a basic font). Type your responses in a document, using the narrative prompt numbers (1., 2., etc.) and save the entire narrative response document as one pdf for uploading. Remember to include the name of your organization at the top of the document.

1. Mission/History/Collaboration

Briefly describe your organization. State the organization's mission and briefly articulate its goals as adopted by the board and detailed in the long-range strategic plan. Link to your organization's strategic plan, if it's online. Otherwise, provide it as an uploaded support material.

- Tell us how your organization collaborates with those you serve, your community, others in your field, or in other ways.
- What experience does your organization have with partnership? Describe a partnership that has been successful for your organization and how. Have you experienced challenges in partnering with other entities? Describe ways you've overcome challenges or worked to make change within or through partnerships.
- Describe your organizations' history of success in other projects and programs, and particularly in those that serve individuals.

2. Participation and Engagement

Describe in geographic and demographic detail the communities currently served by your organization.

- Describe the organization's established goals for broadening, deepening and/or diversifying the participation and reach of the organization.

- Describe any efforts your organization undertakes to eliminate barriers to participation and to increase access for underrepresented communities, including but not limited to persons with disabilities.
- Describe how partnership with the Arts Council and the ensuing engagement with New Jersey artists will impact the organization and align with your organization's engagement and participation goals.
- If the organization is not currently a NJ-based organization, describe the plan to connect with and serve NJ artists.

3. Program Implementation: Individual Artist Fellowship Program (IAF)

Fully describe the organization's vision for the IAF program and how the program will be administered under the organization's leadership.

- How would IAF exist within the context of your organization's overall strategic plan and advance the mission and goals of your organization?
- Detail your organization's plan to intake applications from individual artists. What software platform is proposed?
- What staff will be engaged with Arts Council funds to undertake the full scope of this work, (technical assistance for applicants, application review, panel engagement and management, grant award processes, etc.).
- With a focus on accessible and equitable service, describe specific ways that your organization will assist artists to access the IAF program.
- Describe methods of outreach and communications your organization will use to engage with NJ artists and ensure they are aware of the IAF program, deadlines, etc.
- Please discuss the organization's proposed approaches to providing technical support for applicants and awardees.
- Describe your proposed process to pay awards to Fellows. Will you need new auditing, fiscal management, software, staffing or other changes?
- By what measurable outcomes will your organization determine the success of IAF in terms of the partnership with the Arts Council? Discuss how IAF could grow or change over the next three years as it is implemented through a new partnership. Clearly identify and explain strategies to achieve shared goals. Identify potential challenges and strategies to overcome them through a collaborative approach.

4. Program Implementation: Artist Service Organization Feasibility Study

Fully describe your organization's vision for implementing this work.

- How would undertaking this fieldwork exist within the context of your organization's overall strategic plan and advance the mission and goals of the organization?

- Outline the plan to undertake a five-year study in partnership with the Arts Council to assess the needs of artists and the feasibility of an artist service organization in the state. How do you propose to begin the work together and continue advancing it?
- What staff will work on this project? What resources are/will be needed? How will they be obtained?
- The artist service organization study may require engaging consultants, undertaking surveys and other research, and assessing data. How will the organization ensure continuity of the research work, and who will be assigned to lead the project?

5. Establishing an Artist Service Organization

Understanding that potential partners in this work may or may not have an interest in leading an artist service organization, please describe how contributing to the establishment of one could benefit your organization, those you currently serve, and what process you imagine for establishing one would align with your organization's mission.

- Would your organization consider establishing an artist service organization? Are you aware of other organizations that may be well-suited to launch an artist service organization in New Jersey?
- What strategies could the Arts Council deploy in partnership to support potential collaborators to consider and engage in this work?
- Does your organization offer current programs for artists or individuals that could contribute to the work of understanding the challenges of serving artists?
- Are there advisory boards or other stakeholder groups to help carry out the work of the Arts Council's IAF and the artist service organization fieldwork? If so, describe how they would be engaged.

6. Organizational Capacity

Describe how your organization's current processes, timelines, and overall capacity will be impacted by this partnership with the Arts Council. What challenges do you identify, and how do you propose to overcome them? Do you have specific needs you would request from the Arts Council, or another outside sources, to undertake the work described in this RFP?

- IAF requires technical tools and software to support its implementation. Discuss the organization's current tools used for email marketing, database management, website maintenance, survey tools, and online form development; and the organization's ability to integrate IAF into its workflow. Does the organization have existing access to technology, platforms or other tools to use to support IAF? Will new software license(s) be required? Will the integration of needed technology upgrades align with the timeline to support the program?
- In what ways will a partnership with the Arts Council help support your organizational capacity? How would you anticipate the Arts Council's resources of staff time and expertise, communications

outreach, or other non-monetary resources, could help to support the partnership's work, your organization's mission, or overall capacity?

- What percentage of individual staff and leadership time will be dedicated to the management of these two projects? Please be specific and align budget allocations with staff hours and rates as noted in your narrative answers.
- If key staff positions are currently vacant, or your organization plans to hire new staff to undertake the work, explain the organization's process and timeline for filling those positions.
- How will organizational leadership be engaged in these projects?

7. Fiscal Soundness/Financial Resources

Provide information that gives the panel an honest assessment of the organization's current financial picture.

- What are the organization's current annual expense budgets from the last three years?
- Describe the percentage of your annual income that comes from earned sources, government grants, foundation grants, individual giving and other sources.
- What are the organization's policies and procedures for ensuring sound fiscal controls?
- How will providing quarterly budget updates and engaging in open dialogue about the project budget with Arts Council staff work for your organization? What particular staff members will need to dedicate time to standing budget and project update conversations?

SUPPORT MATERIALS

Please prepare pdf uploads for each of the below requirements. Be sure to include the organization's name on each of the documents.

- **Brief Bios of key staff:** Executive/Artistic Director, Development Director, Marketing/Communications Director, CFO, Program Director, etc. Please upload one pdf document with a brief paragraph or so bio of each key personnel who would be assigned to this program.
- **Programs and Services currently offered:** Please upload at least one document that includes links and/or descriptions to current (or recent past) programming and services for artists, or related programming and services for individuals. This could include short videos or other media. Please include a brief description to accompany each link summarizing what the program is, who is served, and any relative information to help RFP reviewers contextualize the support material. Include your organization's website. If you prefer to upload program materials other than links, please do so. *However, limit your total uploads to five documents, with only one document containing links.*
- **Letters of Support:** Two letters of support from current collaborators/partner organizations. Upload these as one pdf document with two letters.
- Link or upload of organizations' current **long range strategic plan**.

- Upload the organizations' most recent **audit** (or 990).
- A **budget** template is linked below; Please download, complete it, and save it as a pdf with your organization's name in the title. Upload the document in SAGE.
- Please fill in the **requested award amount** for year one in the appropriate box on the SAGE uploads page. SAGE will not allow you to submit the application if you haven't provided this information.

BUDGET

Please complete the required budget template and include it with your application materials. There is **no** matching requirement. However, if the proposed project costs are more than the amount requested, the proposal must clearly demonstrate your organization's explanation for additional costs. [A template has been provided.](#)

The project budget should contain ***all costs directly attributable to the project***, including the portion of staff costs allocated to the project work with commensurate percentage of benefits, any additional costs for an audit scope *above that which the organization normally encumbers* as well as a Project Scope Audit, any consultants to be engaged, fees for project-specific software, materials, travel, accessibility services, etc. Please be clear and descriptive in completing the budget form, using the provided sample entries to guide the information that you enter.

The initial project administrative budget expectation for this RFP is up to \$300,000 for year 1. It is understood that start-up costs, administration of the IAF process, feasibility study consultants, etc. may shift the overall project budget each year over the multi-year grant period. Applicants are encouraged to keep this range in mind as they prepare a proposal budget to ensure alignment in expectations. Because the budget for artist fellowship awards may vary each year based on available resources, administrative budgets should be drafted ensuring coverage of the actual administrative costs, rather than as a percent of the anticipated grant award.

As an agency of New Jersey state government, the Arts Council remains committed to allocating State funds appropriately. Budget transparency and alignment are part of the evaluative criteria for this project. Arts Council staff expect to meet regularly with the partner throughout the grant period to discuss, update and re-allocate budget lines (as necessary). Partnership on this project includes regular budget review, and updates should be expected by both partners to ensure appropriate resource allocation.

Please see [linked budget form](#) for application budget format and instructions.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Please review and reference the Evaluation Criteria in preparation of the narrative responses.

Successful narratives are clear and convincing and are supported by detailed budgets and relevant support materials. Reviewers will look for evidence of solid program planning and implementation in accordance with the following criteria:

- Alignment of the Arts Council's IAF program to the organization's mission.
- Organization's expressed interest and mission alignment for creating fuller, more comprehensive support for New Jersey's artists through the IAF program and the service organization feasibility study.
- Evidence of the organization's ability to reach and serve individual artists from all areas of the State through communications, outreach, and services.
 - including the strength of the organization's strategies for accessibility
- Soundness of the organization's infrastructure to efficiently carry out the responsibilities of the partnership including:
 - clear strategies to undertake the work that reflect an understanding of the capacity needs the projects require
 - engaging qualified personnel with appropriate expertise to be assigned to the project(s)
 - appropriateness of the budget, transparency on costs, and the ability to increase organizational capacity, if needed, to undertake the work described in this RFP.
- Capacity and willingness to collaborate closely with the Arts Council throughout the cycle of the IAF program, as well as to undertake the feasibility study planning and implementation together.
- Evidence of experience with collaborative approaches to strategies for program sustainability and innovation.
- Organization's potential for a successful long-term partnership with the Arts Council, as demonstrated by the organization's history of success in other partnered or collaborative projects and programs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

There are opportunities to receive live assistance with an Arts Council program officer in three ways. Three open office hours are scheduled, and program staff noted below remain available to answer your questions by telephone or email. Open Office Hours provide the opportunity to meet virtually with Council Staff and ask questions:

Monday, January 12, 2026, 2:30 PM (ET) | [REGISTER HERE](#)

Friday, January 16, 2026, 10:30 AM (ET) | [REGISTER HERE](#)

Staff are available by phone or email:

Danielle Bursk (she/her), Director of Community Partnerships and Artist Services
609-633-1184 | danielle.bursk@sos.nj.gov

Stephanie Nerbak (she/they), Artist Services Manager
609-292-4474 | stephanie.nerbak@sos.nj.gov



Closed captioning will be available for all Virtual Office Hours.



If you require additional accessibility services, please contact the Council's Accessibility Coordinator, Lindsay Dandeo, two weeks prior to the workshop at Lindsay.Dandeo@sos.nj.gov or 609-984-7020 ([NJ Relay 711](#)).

END OF RFP