



UPPER PENINSULA
**ARTS &
CULTURE**
ALLIANCE



Creative Community Catalyst

Grant Awards

Fiscal Year 2026 Guidelines

Program Description

The Upper Peninsula Arts & Culture Alliance's grant program provides awards of up to \$4,000 in federal pass-through funds from the National Endowment for the Arts to support arts and culture projects with meaningful community impact across the Upper Peninsula. Funding is intended for **highly visible, inspiring** projects that **engage the public, tell compelling stories, celebrate local culture**, and strengthen the communities they serve.

Eligible projects must be produced by a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization physically located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and may include performances, exhibits, public programs, creative placemaking efforts, heritage initiatives, and other arts and cultural activities that foster connection, creativity, and community pride.

The Application Deadline is August 31, 2026 at 11:59pm Eastern Standard Time

The applicant portal opens July 1, 2026

<https://upacalliance.com/creative-catalyst-grants>

The period of performance for projects receiving funding is

October 1, 2026 to September 30, 2027.

Projects must be completed and all grant monies expended by September 30, 2027

Questions and assistance with the application:
Contact Upper Peninsula Arts & Culture Alliance

Philip Rice, Executive Director: philip@upacalliance.com

Who is eligible?

- Only 501(c)(3) Charitable Nonprofit organizations are eligible. Eligible organizations must be in good standing with the federal and state government and possess a valid EIN number. The applicant must be properly registered as an active nonprofit organization within the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and have completed a 2025 Annual Report filing.
 - New organizations formed after October 2025 who have not filed an annual report may submit Articles of Incorporation and an IRS determination letter showing 501(c)(3) status.
- Applicant organizations must possess a valid Unique Entity ID (UEI) from the federal government, and the UEI must be set to “public viewing” on SAM.gov. The organization does *not* need to have an *active* SAM.gov registration, but it must have been assigned a UEI at some point in its history. Organizations can easily obtain a UEI for free by visiting SAM.gov and registering the organization.
- Applicant organizations must be physically located in the 15-county region known as the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and provide (or will provide) services in the Upper Peninsula that are open to the public.
- Each project may only receive one Creative Community Catalyst grant. If multiple organizations are collaborating on a project, only one organization will be considered for funding that project.
- Applicant organizations in border communities in Eastern Wisconsin and Northern Lower Michigan may be considered at the discretion of the Alliance. Organizations in border regions will only be considered if a significant portion of the project takes place in or benefits communities in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Eligible Projects

Any project of an artistic or cultural nature that is open to the public may be considered for funding. The definition of “arts and culture” is up to the applicant, and will be subject to review by the Alliance when applications are considered for funding. See Funding Priorities on p. 3 for more details on how applications will be scored. Some examples of eligible projects include *but are not limited to*:

- Educational programs with a focus on creative expression
- Public art installations
- Public performances and presentations in music, theater, dance, spoken word/poetry, storytelling, puppetry, folk and traditional arts, cultural heritage performances, and other audience-facing performing arts experiences
- Film creation, music recording, radio or TV broadcast, or other original media
- Festivals and events with an artistic or cultural focus
- Publications of media such as books or magazines
- Exhibits of artwork or other types of media that are open to the public
- Other types of artistic or cultural events or projects
- Only non-commercial projects with a demonstrated benefit to public good will be considered.

Allowable expenses

The following expenses are allowable and may be paid for with grant monies. All expenses must be directly related to the specific project specified in the grant application/award, and cannot be used for general operations.

- Administrative, programming, production, and artistic fees
- Salaries, wages, or stipends for services rendered
- Travel to, from, or within the Upper Peninsula
- Marketing costs
- Transportation costs
- Facility rental
- Supplies and equipment
- Documentation such as photography, story & content creation, polling, etc.

Unallowable expenses

The following expenses are not allowable and cannot be included in the grant budget.

- General operating costs not related to the project
- Travel entirely outside of the Upper Peninsula (i.e. from one location outside the U.P. to another location outside the U.P.)
- Startup costs for creating a new organization or business
- Awards such as prizes, scholarships, conferred in recognition of merit alone
- Fines or litigation costs
- Fundraising costs such as gala events, or development work
- Purchase of real estate
- Purchase of vehicles
- Any other expenses determined not eligible by the Alliance.

Additional considerations

The following may warrant additional questions or paperwork from the applicant. These do not disqualify an applicant, but if present in a project proposal the applicant should be prepared to provide additional details. If considered for funding, projects in the following categories will be required to complete an additional form and may be subject to additional review prior to receiving funding.

- Projects that physically alter a historic building. Examples include:
 - Murals on buildings more than fifty years old
 - Facility improvements more than fifty years old
 - Events or ongoing programs that include installation of permanent fixtures or signage
 - Other projects that take place in or utilize historic buildings
- Projects that physically impact on the land or environment. Examples include:
 - Festivals or outdoor events that use tents requiring staking
 - Festivals or outdoor events that use portable stages
 - Events or activities taking place in natural habitats
 - Permanent installation of outdoor artwork
 - Other projects that physically alter the outdoor environment in any way

Cost share match

This award has a 25% cost share match requirement. For example, if the applicant requests \$4,000 in funding, they must show \$1,000 of other income on the budget.

The cost share match may be provided in cash *or* in-kind (i.e. donated goods, volunteer time, or other items with fair market value). NOTE: if in-kind is used to meet the cost share match, the awardee must provide documentation demonstrating the fair market value of the in-kind and proof that it was received as part of the project.

Funding Priorities

Any project of an artistic or cultural nature that is open to the public may be considered for funding. The definition of “arts and culture” is up to the applicant, and will be subject to review by the Alliance when applications are considered for funding. The following scoring criteria will be used when evaluating applications for funding approval:

1. **Community Impact.** How will the community (i.e. the general public, or a specific target audience) be enriched by the project? Is there a demonstrated need for the project in the community? (40 points)
2. **Visibility.** How will the general public discover the project, or find out about it? (20 points)
3. **Administration: Timeline & Documentation.** How effectively will the outcomes of the project be measured and recorded? After the project is over, will there be a story to tell? What is the timeline for the project? (20 points)
4. **Feasibility & Need.** How is the success of the project tied to the funding? How likely is the project to succeed given the information provided? How well has the applicant secured other funding, or is likely to secure other funding? (10 points)
5. **Artistic Excellence and Merit.** How does the project involve or prioritize qualified and experienced partners, artists, talent, etc.? How are excellence in artistic outcomes be measured and/or encouraged? How will artistic value contribute to the project’s success? (10 points)

NOTE: The review may include additional components as determined by the Alliance.

Application Process

Applicants will be required to provide the following information:

1. Basic contact information (address, phone number, email, name of the organization, etc.)
2. Name of the Project
3. EIN number
4. UEI number
5. Project budget (using a provided budget form)

Applicants will be required to answer the following questions:

1. **Narrative.** Describe the project (approx. 300 words or less)
2. **Community Impact.** Describe how will the community (i.e. the general public, or a specific target audience) will be enriched by the project. Describe any evidence to show there is a demonstrated need for the project in the community. (approx. 100 words)
3. **Visibility.** Explain how the general public will discover and engage with the project (approx. 100 words)
4. **Administration: Timeline & Documentation.** Describe how the outcomes of the project be measured and recorded. Provide a timeline for the project with major deadlines for deliverables (approx. 100 words)
5. **Feasibility & Need.** Explain whether or not the is the project is likely to succeed with or without funding from this grant. List any other sources of funding (already secured, or prospective) (approx. 100 words)
6. **Artistic Excellence and Merit.** Describe how the project involves or prioritizes qualified and experienced partners, artists, talent, etc. If excellence in artistic outcomes are measured and/or encouraged, explain what metrics are used. (approx. 100 words)

Applicants will be given the option to upload supportive documents such as photographs, PDF files, links to videos, or other materials demonstrating the scope of the project as desired.

Applicants will be required to provide assurance of the following in the form of a legally binding compliance document signed by the authorizing official

Note: The authorizing official cannot be the same person as the grant manager (i.e. the person submitting the application). An authorizing official is an individual, most often an official board member or an executive staff member, who has authority to execute grant applications, contracts, and reports on behalf of the applicant/awardee.

1. The project will be accessible to the public following ADA guidelines
2. The project will comply with all applicable federal nondiscrimination policies including the following:
 - a. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended
 - b. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended
 - c. The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended
 - d. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended
 - e. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
3. The project will comply as requested with requirements set forth in the following:
 - a. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA)
 - b. The National Historic Preservation act of 1966, as amended (NHPA)
4. If funded, the applicant will review and agree to comply with the NEA General Terms and Conditions.
5. The applicant has never been convicted of, or subject to civil judgment for, the commission of fraud, embezzlement, theft, forgery, or making false statements, or any other offense indicating a lack of business integrity or business honesty that seriously and directly affects your present responsibility, or any other cause of so serious or compelling nature that it affects an organization's present responsibility.
6. The applicant maintains a drug-free workplace and employees who are involved in the project have been made aware that the workplace is to be drug-free, and if a violation of a criminal drug statute occurs, the Alliance will be notified immediately.
7. The applicant will not conduct any political lobbying within the grant-supported project.
8. If your project includes Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and/or objects of cultural patrimony, you will consult with lineal descendants, Indian Tribes, or Native organizations on the appropriate storage, treatment, and handling of such remains or cultural items, and make a reasonable and good-faith effort to incorporate and accommodate the Native American traditional knowledge of lineal descendants or Indian Tribes, and obtain free and informed consent from them prior to allowing any exhibition of, access to, or research on human remains or cultural items.
9. The application contains the complete scope of work for which the grant funds will be used.
10. The information in the application is accurate and complete to the best of the applicant's knowledge.