



SPRINGFIELD AREA ARTS COUNCIL

City Arts

Springfield Area Arts Council  
Sarah Beuning, Board President  
Bella Szabo, Executive Director

# City Arts

Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2026  
Deadline: April 17, 2026

Springfield Area Arts Council acknowledges support from the City of Springfield.



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## Accessible Guidelines

To request accommodation or obtain an alternate format of the guidelines and application, contact the Springfield Area Arts Council’s Executive Director.

Bella Szabo

Phone: +1 (217)753-3519

Email: [director@springfieldartsco.org](mailto:director@springfieldartsco.org)

## Springfield Area Arts Council Contact

For specific information on the grant, contact:

### **Bella Szabo**

Executive Director

Phone: +1 (217)753-3519

Email: [director@springfieldartsco.org](mailto:director@springfieldartsco.org)

# CITY ARTS GRANT DETAILS

## Overview

With funding from the City of Springfield, the City Arts (CA) grant aims to assist practicing Springfield artists by developing their craft while adding to the cultural vitality of the city of Springfield. This initiative provides assistance to artists across all artistic disciplines, including Performing Arts, Visual Arts, and Literary Arts.

CA grants support special projects, programs, events, and opportunities occurring between **May 10, 2026, and November 10, 2026.**

Projects must serve or benefit the Springfield community. They must be open and accessible to the public and should be family friendly.

Grants are awarded to three individual artists. Individuals may not apply for more than one project or program in the FY 2026 City Arts grant cycle. There is no fee to apply.

This program is funded by the City of Springfield.

We welcome applications from a variety of eligible artists, including first-time applicants. All first-time grant applicants must contact the program staff to discuss the project and determine eligibility or attend a Grant Writing Workshop. Grant Writing Workshops are offered to all applicants. SAAC does not limit its CA grants to members.

## Nondiscrimination Policies

The Springfield Area Arts Council is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and fostering mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all individuals and groups.

Projects may focus on reaching a particular group or demographic, such as gender, disability, economic status, race, color, or national origin; however, they may not be exclusionary.

## Program Requirements

- Adhere to SAAC's Policies and Priorities (see page 6).
- Projects must have a public presentation or community service component.
- Recipients of grant funding are required to make reasonable efforts for programs to be accessible to the public. For further information and resources, see the [Accessibility Resources](#) page on the Illinois Arts Council website, a resource for all Illinois residents.
- Applicants must disclose if they have applied to another granting agency for funds for the same project.

- Projects cannot begin before May 10, 2026, and must be completed by November 10, 2026.

## **Award Information**

Grant requests are not to exceed \$3,000. Applicants may receive less than the requested amount.

No cost-matching is required; however, the project should show feasibility by including enough funds available to complete the project or showing a plan to accrue the remaining funds.

Applying for the CA grant does not guarantee funding. Grants are allocated at the discretion of SAAC.

## **Eligibility**

Individual artists with proof of Springfield residence are eligible to apply. Three artists will be awarded: one literary artist, one performing artist, and one visual artist.

Individuals who are readers, advisory panelists, or Board members of SAAC are eligible to apply. However, a reader, panelist, or Board member may not be the authorizing official signing any documents relating to a grant award and must recuse themselves from all discussions which could be deemed a conflict of interest.

Projects taking place outside of Springfield, Illinois are ineligible.

Organizations and businesses are not eligible to apply.

## **Artistic Disciplines**

The CA grant will fund projects based on the applicant's artistic discipline or field. Applicants must apply to a specific discipline area:

- Visual Arts
- Performing Arts
- Literary Arts

Select the discipline that most closely aligns with your project activities. Contact SAAC if you have any questions about which discipline is most appropriate for your project.

## **Grant Writing Workshops**

Virtual workshops are offered **March 25 at 12 PM and April 3 at 1 PM.**

Please contact the office at (217) 753-3519 or [director@springfieldartsco.org](mailto:director@springfieldartsco.org) to register.

## **Deadline**

The FY26 CA Grant deadline is **April 17, 2026**. Applications must be submitted by 11:59 P.M. CT to [SAAC's online submission system](#), emailed to the SAAC Office at [director@springfieldartsco.org](mailto:director@springfieldartsco.org), or mailed to Springfield Area Arts Council, 420 S 6<sup>th</sup> St, Springfield, IL 62701.

Late, ineligible, and incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

In the event of an emergency, SAAC may adjust application deadlines for affected applicants. If the deadline is extended, an announcement will be posted on our website.

## **Application Review**

Applicants will be reviewed based on artistic merit, community involvement, and impact of the proposed project.

Applications which have been ruled ineligible or incomplete will not be reviewed.

After processing by our staff, acknowledgement of an eligible application is given after the grant deadline has passed and will include a grant number to be used in all future correspondence. An individual whose application is ineligible or incomplete will receive notification.

Applications are reviewed by advisory panelists based on the evaluation criteria (see page 8). The panel is composed of a diverse group of arts experts and other individuals. Panel members change regularly.

The final recommendations are presented to the SAAC board for their consideration and approval.

A record of the review process is maintained for all reviewed applications; applicants are encouraged to call for review feedback after receiving decision notification.

## **Notifications**

All applicants will be notified of funding decisions once SAAC has finalized award decisions. Applicants approved for funding will receive, via email, instructions regarding requirements to accept and claim the grant (see Grant Acceptance section below). Once all documents have been returned via email or mail to the SAAC Office and all requirements met, including the completion and filing of all previous fiscal year Final Reports, the grant will be processed, and the payment voucher will be submitted to SAAC's Bookkeeper. Once the payment voucher has been received, payments can take two to eight weeks.

## COMPLIANCE

### Grant Acceptance

For awards to be processed, all grant acceptance documents must be submitted to the SAAC Office. Grant acceptance is a multi-step process that requires email exchanges. It is the responsibility of the applicant to read all emails carefully and follow the instructions. The documents to be submitted include:

- Completed and signed W9 form
- Grant Agreement signed and dated by the grantee

Applicants approved for funding will be requested to email a W9. Following the receipt of this document, the grantee will be sent the Grant Agreement to sign.

### Final Reports

The Final Report is due two weeks after completion of the project or no later than **November 10, 2026**, as stated on the grant agreement.

Before a grant is awarded, applicants must have submitted acceptable Final Reports by the due date(s) for all previous grants through SAAC.

The Final Report will report on activities that occurred during the grant period specified in the Grant Agreement. Failure to submit complete final reports will impact the awarding of any subsequent grant.

### Crediting Requirements

Grantees must credit SAAC and the City of Springfield in all public notices and promotion material in the following manner:

*"This program is partially supported by a grant from the Springfield Area Arts Council through city funds provided by the City of Springfield."*



When possible, include the SAAC logo and City of Springfield logo. You may download the SAAC logo and City of Springfield logo from our [website](#).

### Policies and Priorities

## *Priorities*

1. SAAC recognizes the crucial role our state's artists, arts organizations, and the cultural creative sector play in society. Priority is therefore given to those programs involving Illinois artists and arts organizations.
2. Priority will be given to those arts activities that provide economic opportunities for Illinois artists.
3. SAAC is supportive of arts activities that serve under-resourced communities.
4. SAAC recognizes that increasing public understanding of, and access to, the arts through comprehensive arts education at all age levels is one way to create support for the arts. SAAC supports arts activities with a public component that complements school curriculum and creative youth development.

## *Policies*

1. Individuals must be residents of Springfield, Illinois for at least one year prior to applying to grants program.
2. Individuals must be twenty-one years of age at the time of application.
3. Individuals must be able to supply proof of age and residency at the time of application.
4. Individuals receiving grant funds retain the responsibility to file the appropriate documentation with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
5. SAAC recognizes the importance of Illinois' rich heritage and supports the art forms of all communities.

CA grants cannot support:

- payment of any debts.
- professional development.
- fundraisers, benefits, receptions, or other functions where arts and artists are not the primary focus.
- inherently religious or political activities.
- projects taking place outside of Springfield, Illinois.
- subsidizing an individual's academic study.

## **Changes in Projects**

Applicants must notify SAAC immediately of any significant changes in their project that occur after applying. If the project or the individual's capacity to carry out the project changes significantly before an award is made, then SAAC may revise or withdraw the funding recommendation.

Grantees are expected to carry out a project consistent with the proposal approved for funding by SAAC. If project changes are required, the grantee must submit a request with justification for the change(s) for review by SAAC. Approval is not guaranteed.

## APPLICATION OVERVIEW

SAAC utilizes an online submission form to accept applications. The CA online application consists of form field components and the uploading of required documents. Alternatively, applicants may submit their completed applications with required information via email or mail. Each component must be completed and submitted in the required format by the deadline.

### How to Apply

- Verify eligibility.
- Contact SAAC Staff if you are a first-time grant applicant.
- Attend a Grant Writing Workshop if you are a first-time applicant or as needed.
- Prepare all required supporting documents (see page 6) and save them as PDFs.
- Go to SAAC [online submission system](#)
  - Upload all required attachments.
- Successfully submit the application.

### Supporting Documents

All listed documents are required. Templates are provided as applicable with their respective requirements specified.

1. Application Form
2. Narrative
3. Project Budget
4. Work Sample(s)
  - a. Provide at least one example of your work in the format best-suited to the display of your talent. Portfolios are also acceptable.
5. Letter of Reference
  - a. Submit a letter of reference from someone who knows your work and / or has witnessed your work in the community.
6. If a returning applicant: a set of up to 3 pieces of materials crediting SAAC and City of Springfield for previous City Arts Projects - a copy of a webpage may be submitted as evidence
7. Proof of age and residence

All documents must:

- Be saved as PDF files
- Be 8 ½ " x 11" with at least a 1" margin
- Use a 12-point or larger black type on a white background
- Have sequentially numbered pages with the applicant's name and attachment title on the top of each page. It is suggested to use the header/footer feature and page numbering tool in your word processor software.

- Be organized using the bold-face headings listed for each attachment
- Be named as follows: applicant last name, with name of attachment. Example: Smith\_Narrative.pdf

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

A grant panel of five artists and community members, including a panelist from SAAC’s Board of Directors, will review all applications and make funding recommendations to the SAAC Board. SAAC’s Board President is an *ex officio* member of the panel and serves as the panel chairperson. The Board of Directors will ratify the recommendations, and organizations will be notified of the grant award decision (pending receipt of funding from the City of Springfield).

### **Areas of Particular Interest**

SAAC seeks to support projects that have one or more of the following impacts:

- uniting the community of Springfield
- reflecting the diverse population of the City of Springfield
- reaching and being accessible to varied audiences
- enlivening public spaces
- taking place in nontraditional arts spaces
- addressing timely social and cultural issues of relevance to our community
- actively engaging the community
- serving the public good

The following points will be considered when reviewing applications:

### **Objective Criteria**

- If the individual received prior funding, then did they adhere to the agreement regarding acknowledgment of the Springfield Area Arts Council and the City of Springfield in their publicity
- Number of people directly affected by this project
- Opportunities for Illinois artists in the project
- Evidence of cash support for the project to show feasibility.
  - Including the grant amount, enough funds will be available to complete the project. If not, show a plan to accrue remaining funds.
  - What financial resources does the individual offer to support this project?
  - What would be the effect on the project if it receives little or no grant funding?
- Evidence of in-kind support for the project

## Subjective Criteria

- What is the need in the community for the proposed project? Community need can be demonstrated in the following ways (the below is not an exhaustive list):
  - Demographic or statistical data showing disparities or needs
  - Direct input from community, partners, or stakeholders of need
  - Absence of similar programs, projects, or events
  - Identification of barriers to access
  - Alignment with local, cultural, or community values or identities
- What is the artistic quality and merit of the program? Quality and merit can be demonstrated in the following ways (the below is not an exhaustive list):
  - Clear, realistic goals and outcomes
  - Detailed feasibility plan
  - Evidence or assessment of impact
  - Capacity of the applicant to execute the project
  - Inclusion and accessibility strategies
  - Effective outreach, audience, and/or community engagement
- Is the project unique or innovative? Unique and innovative projects can be measured in the following ways (the below is not an exhaustive list):
  - First of its kind in the region or community
  - Addresses a previously unmet or under-addressed need
  - Uses novel delivery methods or formats
  - Integrates uncommon collaborations or cross-sector partnerships
  - Adapts or repurposes existing models in a new context
  - Demonstrates creative use of limited resources
  - Incorporates community in the creation process (co-creation)
  - Uses emerging technologies or techniques
  - Demonstrates measurable impact differentiators
  - Influences or inspires systemic change
- Does the project develop new audiences for the arts?
  - Who is the target audience?
- Are special or underserved populations affected by this project?
  - Does the project promote or preserve art forms from diverse cultural traditions?

## Resources

Statistics on demographics to aid your application can be found on the United States Census Bureau's website: [Illinois - Census Bureau Profile](#). Please note, statistics and data can be found through other resources besides the one provided here.