

CITY OF LA CROSSE ARTS BOARD

AGENDA ITEMS, MAY 2025 MEETING

1. LIMITATIONS ON REPEAT FUNDING

Proposed addition to the Eligibility Section of the Annual Grant Program Submission Guidelines (p. 3):

To promote broad community impact and equitable distribution of funding, grant recipients must wait X years after receiving an award before applying for additional funding. This restriction applies both to individual applicants and to individuals serving as a lead artist, primary organizer, or major collaborator on a new application submitted by another organization. The Arts Board will determine whether an applicant's involvement in a new project is substantial enough to be subject to this restriction.

2. BUDGET SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Current Language:

The project budget must be a detailed list of expenses that justify the requested funding. It should include materials, supplies, rental fees, honoraria, and other anticipated costs. Please disclose other funding or in-kind donations besides the amount in this grant request.

Proposed Updated Language:

The project budget must be a detailed list of expenses related specifically to the funding requested from the Arts Board. Budgets should include materials, supplies, rental fees, honoraria, and other anticipated costs that the requested grant amount will directly support. Applicants should not submit full operational budgets unrelated to the specific funding request. Project budgets must only include expenses that will be incurred after grant funds are awarded; Arts Board funding cannot be used to reimburse costs incurred before the grant award date or for projects or events that have already been completed. Other funding sources or in-kind donations supporting the broader project or event may be disclosed separately in the project description.

(Note: The updated language will be adapted slightly as appropriate for each grant type.)

3. ADJUSTMENT OF GRANT AWARD AMOUNTS AND AWARD FREQUENCY

Several board members have expressed concern that the \$2,500 Creative Development Grants are too small to meaningfully support significant projects, and that limiting application opportunities to twice annually restricts artists' ability to access funding in a timely way. To address these concerns without increasing the overall grant program budget, the following changes are proposed:

- Reduce the maximum Community Impact Grant award from \$12,000 to \$10,000.
- Use the \$4,000 in savings to increase individual Creative Development Grant awards.
- Raise the maximum Creative Development Grant award from \$2,500 to \$3,500.
- Change Creative Development Grant deadlines from twice per year to quarterly submissions (January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1).
- Maintain the number of Community Impact Grants awarded annually (2 awards per year).

4. UPDATE TO GRANT APPLICATION EVALUATION RUBRIC

The current evaluation document has been helpful for guiding grant application reviews, but it lacks the clarity and consistency of a true rubric. Each of the four scoring categories is worth 25 points, but there are an inconsistent number of subcategories under each, resulting in unclear and uneven scoring. To create a more transparent, equitable, and easy-to-use evaluation system, we propose refining our evaluation criteria. Under the revised structure, each of the four major categories will contain five subcategories, each worth up to 5 points, for a total of 25 points per category and 100 points overall. This change will help reviewers evaluate applications more consistently and ensure that applicants clearly understand how their proposals are assessed.

PROPOSED UPDATED EVALUATION RUBRIC:

Vision, Artistic Goals, & Educational Merit (25 Points Total)

1. Potential to advance the quality of arts in La Crosse (5 points)
2. Vision and innovation as outlined in the project description (5 points)
3. Artistic quality as demonstrated by submitted work samples or portfolio (5 points)
4. Advancement of applicant's artistic capacity and professional development (5 points)
5. Originality, relevance, and timeliness of the proposed project (5 points)

Demonstrated Project Planning & Feasibility (25 Points Total)

1. Evidence of careful event planning and timeline management (5 points)
2. Accuracy and clarity of the project budget, with specific use of Arts Board funding clearly identified (5 points)
3. points)
4. Disclosure of other funding sources and ability to manage project resources (5 points)
5. Organizational capacity to successfully complete the project (5 points)

Community Importance (25 Points Total)

1. Value to City of La Crosse residents and the identified target audience (5 points)
2. Explanation of how the project fills an identified community or cultural need (5 points)
3. Contribution to advancing the availability and accessibility of the arts (5 points)
4. Inclusion of underserved, diverse, or underrepresented communities (5 points)
5. Alignment with the Arts Board's mission to foster community vibrancy and cultural impact (5 points)

Public Access (25 Points Total)

1. Inclusion of a significant and clearly defined free public event, performance, or exhibition (5 points)
2. Evidence of partnerships and collaboration to strengthen community reach (5 points)
3. Plan to promote public engagement and participation (5 points)
4. Timing of public access opportunity (must occur after grant award and project completion) (5 points)
5. Accessibility considerations to ensure inclusive participation (physical, economic, cultural) (5 points)

5. REVIEW PROCESS FOR BOARD-INITIATED PROJECTS

Arts Board members have expressed interest in developing internal projects that advance the Arts Board's mission, funded outside the normal external grant cycle. While this idea has merit, it is important to establish a clear and transparent process for submitting, evaluating, and approving board-initiated projects to ensure fairness, mission alignment, and responsible stewardship of public funds.

PROPOSED APPLICATION STRUCTURE:

To mirror the process used for external grant applications, the following framework is proposed:

Submission Process:

Board members proposing a project must submit a formal written proposal (1–2 pages) including:

1. Project description and goals
2. How the project aligns with the Arts Board's mission and values
3. Estimated budget and itemized expenses
4. Timeline for project completion
5. Plan for public access, community engagement, or public benefit
6. Disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest

Review and Evaluation Process:

Submitted proposals will be reviewed at a regular Arts Board meeting, one month after the project has been submitted. Proposals will be evaluated based on criteria similar to external grant applications, including:

1. Vision and alignment with the Arts Board's mission
2. Planning, feasibility, and budget transparency
3. Community importance and anticipated public benefit
4. Public access and accessibility
5. A simple rubric (e.g., 5 points per category, 25 points total) can be developed for internal review if needed.
6. Approval will require a majority vote of board members present at the meeting.

Funding Limits, Board Notification, and Reporting

1. Funding for board-initiated projects will be capped annually at a predetermined amount, set during the Arts Board's annual budget planning process.
2. Board members who wish to propose an internal project must first notify the full board to invite other members to participate in the planning process early on, to ensure transparency, collaboration, and broad involvement.
3. Funded projects must submit a brief final report upon completion, including a financial summary and a public impact statement.