



Indiana Arts Commission Cultural Districts Evaluation Criteria for Fiscal Year 2027

About Indiana Cultural Districts

Program Overview: The Indiana Arts Commission Cultural Districts Program certifies communities that meet statewide standards for arts and cultural identity, leadership, planning, and community impact. Certification connects districts to IAC funding and resources and to the Indiana Cultural Districts Consortium — a statewide network of peer districts.

Program Goal: Strengthen Indiana's cultural infrastructure by certifying and supporting communities that use arts and culture as a driver of economic development, quality of life, and community identity.

Program Outcomes:

- Certified cultural districts demonstrate strong arts and cultural identity, planning capacity, and measurable community impact.
- Indiana's network of cultural districts anchors local economic development, supports quality of life, and serves as destinations that draw visitors and investment to their regions.
- There is broad recognition of arts and creativity's value for Indiana.§

[§ IAC 2024 – 2028 Long-Term Strategic Framework Impact](#)

Review Criteria

1	Arts & Cultural Identity	
	Stage 1: Letter of Intent	Stage 2: Full Application
	• District has a named, authentic arts and cultural identity	• Year-round arts and cultural programming is documented and diverse in type
	• Identity is connected to local history, traditions, or community character	• The district is recognizable to both residents and visitors
	• Applicant can describe the district's identity clearly and specifically	• Identity is reflected in branding, signage, or community reputation

2 Cultural Development & Leadership		
	Stage 1: Letter of Intent	Stage 2: Full Application
	Active artists are working in the district	Artists are visibly and regularly engaged — not just featured at events
	Arts and cultural organizations are operating in or connected to the district	Cross-sector partnerships are active and documented
	Municipal government engagement is evident	Organizations empower residents and visitors to participate in and create arts and culture

3 Community Development		
	Stage 1: Letter of Intent	Stage 2: Full Application
	A community development plan exists that references the district or quality-of-life goals	The plan includes specific quality-of-life goals relevant to district residents and workers
	Planning has included input from residents, artists, and diverse community voices	The district is treated as a defined unit in community planning

4 Economic Development		
	Stage 1: Letter of Intent	Stage 2: Full Application
	Local economic development or tourism strategy acknowledges arts and culture as an asset	The economic development plan includes specific strategies that build on district assets
	Artists are involved in or connected to economic planning efforts	Creative-sector data (businesses, jobs, visitors) is being tracked

5 Planning & Management		
	Stage 1: Letter of Intent	Stage 2: Full Application
	A designated management entity is identified by name	A long-range Cultural District Plan (3–5 years) is submitted with the application
	The management entity has a staff role or equivalent capacity responsible for district activities	The plan aligns with the READI Regional Arts and Culture plan where applicable
	A guiding team or coalition with cross-sector representation is described	The management entity has an operating budget and evidence of financial sustainability