

READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Initiative Application Guidance

We have been back on the ground, supporting your work as you build your grant applications. It's been delightful, but there are a lot of questions. This compiles the answers we've been giving. Here's a [link to more details and tools](#), and holler if you need help. Now go get 'em! → Best, Sara & Paige

FRAME A COMPELLING ASK.

1. Lead with Arts & Culture, and Back it up with Impact.

Projects should be arts centered. An application that describes a facility or park investment where arts is one of many components is fundamentally different from an arts investment that activates a beloved local park. The first is a project (with art). The second is centered on arts and culture.

Clearly articulate impact. Tell reviewers *“what will change”* vs. *“what you will do.”* What local challenges does this project address or prevent? What will be different after? Go beyond outputs (i.e., events, attendees, added space) to describe the impact for your community, county, region.

2. Put Your Project in Context.

Think like a reviewer who is looking for alignment with the regional plan, connections to other investments (more bang for the buck), along with lasting regional impact. At the same time, assume that reviewers don't know your communities or your regional plan. Then:

- Describe how your project fits into the regional picture (even if it is in a town of 200).
- Directly copy language from the regional arts and culture plan for obvious linkages.
- Connect the dots to existing plans (e.g. downtown improvement, county comprehensive plan), projects, and goals (e.g. quality of life) so that reviewers don't have to.
- Explain how your project builds on momentum and investment – the opportunity is now.

3. Highlight Authentic Partnerships and Community Engagement.

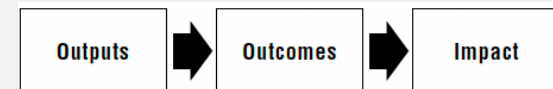
IEDC prefers projects that are built on partnerships and demonstrate community engagement. Both indicate local relevance and buy in. Reviewers are good at seeing through partners-on-paper that aren't partners-in-real-life. So, describe your relationships with community, peers, artists, etc. And make it genuine.

REMEMBER...

This intends to *“unleash regional creative transformation”*. The state rebooted the process to ensure we all led with arts, engaged urban and rural communities, and gave the creative sector an influential voice. Tell a compelling story.

USE CAPITAL AS A TOOL, NOT YOUR GOAL

Don't lead with a physical need or project (e.g., repair a roof, renovate a building, or create a pocket park). Instead, lead with clear purpose – the need a capital project can address. What can't you do today that you will be able to after the project? Why does that matter? What happens next? Buildings and infrastructure are outputs that support your work, but they shouldn't be the outcome or impact.



USE LETTERS OF SUPPORT STRATEGICALLY

Applications have character limits, so you will need to be concise. Letters of support from your consortium partners can provide valuable space for clarifying their roles.

4. Plan Ahead to Show Readiness and Sustainability.

Unless yours is the rare application for a one-time project, you need to demonstrate future thinking (what will happen after the grant period ends – specific plans, not “here is a list of what we could do”). If you can’t articulate what comes next and who will carry it forward, Reviewers are unlikely to see your project as ready for a grant much less sustainable.

LAST NOTE: If you applied for the same project in 2024, make d*** sure each item above is front and center in your revised submission today.

DUCK, DUCK, MATCH ?

1. Does IEDC require a match for READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Grants?

The bottom line is NO. These grants DO NOT REQUIRE A MATCH.

The Guidelines even say: “Applicants may request up to 100% of eligible project costs.” *

But showing other funding will help you. (So, looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, maybe it’s a duck.) The good news is that IEDC says it will give credit for most relevant sources within a certain date range (e.g., grants, donations, earned revenue, [in-kind](#) contributions).

2. But it says that “projects that adhere to or exceed the READI program... match will be given priority”!

Reviewers aren’t asked to consider it in grading. (Some might anyway.) **However, IEDC will use any match you show to prioritize its recommendations.**

Our advice? Don’t worry about it or let it deter you from applying. Think of it as a bonus question. And, if your organization is active... If your application builds on work you’re already doing... You already have funding sources to support your case. Demonstrate whatever progress you have toward the 4:1 (read “four to one”) match IEDC requires in their other READI programs.

Here’s the formula. IEDC specifically looks for:

- 1) 1:1 match from local public (aka government) funding,
- 2) 3:1 match from private and philanthropic sources, and
- 3) A total budget with at least 60% from private dollars.

(If we were in charge, we’d count earned income too, but no such luck.)

* This quote is on page 20 of the Guidelines. Here are other places IEDC mentions matching:

Application & Evaluation Rubric. There is no mention of matching in this documentation.

Program Guidelines Pages 20 & 21

- Projects that include committed partners and matching funds will be prioritized in review...
- ...not required. However, private and philanthropic support... displays a higher... readiness.

ANSWER THE NEXT QUESTION(S)

The ones that look to the future or broaden impact:

- How will a mural create opportunity for local artists?
- How will your trail connect to the regional system?
- Who will program and care for a pocket park?

WHAT IS A MATCH?

Grantmakers use “[match](#)” specifically to refer to funding provided in response to a grant award – I give you a grant of \$10; someone else matches that gift with their own \$10. Often, not making a match means that you either get a partial award or lose the grant completely.

Some programs are strict, excluding in-kind, internal funds, and specific sources. Others are looser (e.g., counting dollars already received). Match formulas rarely count general operations funds.

HERE’S THE FORMULA AT WORK

\$	20	READI Grant
	20	1:1 Public Funds (1x READI)
+	60	3:1 Private Funds(3x READI, 60% min.)
=	\$100	(READI Grant) + (4x that amount) = 4:1

Frequently Asked Questions Pages 3 & 4

- ... no hard match requirement ... However, projects that adhere to or exceed ...priority during review.
- It is not required; however, projects that adhere to ... will be given priority during review.
- Can internal organization resources count as match? Only if [they] are directly in service of the project.
- Does a county board of tourism match count toward public or private funds? Public.
- Can land be used as a match? Yes, so long as the transaction of acquiring the land ...
- However, priority in review will be given to projects that demonstrate strong match and sustainability

3. Why does the budget require OTHER FUNDING sources?

We see at least 3 good reasons.

Shared Investment. IEDC and the Lilly Endowment (like most funders) traditionally shy away from being the first or only project funder.

Application Strength. If we were the reviewers, we'd view every dollar going toward your project as an indication of:

- **Feasibility & Readiness** Is your project feasible without other funders? Are you ready to execute if you are looking for funding?
- **Sustainability** Can you sustain the project without other funds? What will happen after READI?
- **Partner & Community Support** Does the community support the work if they haven't put dollars there?

Initiative Evaluation. After the grant funded project is complete, this information will help evaluate the Arts & Culture Initiative. It will help IEDC, IAC, and the field understand what actually happened, who else supported the work, and how the Lilly Endowment's investment leveraged other resources.

4. How should we CATEGORIZE the "status" of other funding sources?

Here's how we would use the status categories IEDC gives you:

- **Secured** = Support (funds or in kind) you have already received or spent
- **Pending** = Support you've been promised but haven't yet received
- **Under Review** = Grants you've applied for but don't know outcome of

We also see how IEDC's categories may not cover every situation or funding source. Here's how we'd handle it. Depending on your certainty that funds will come through, we'd use "*pending*" or "*under review*" for grants you plan to apply for, support projected from history, and income you might earn as part of the project.

RIGHT-SIZE YOUR BUDGET.

1. HOW MUCH should we ask for?

First, build a budget that presents a full picture of project expenses including project-related personnel and overhead expenses, including in kind – regardless of reimbursement eligibility by type. (Don't include expenses excluded by date – *next page*.)

Because there are no minimum or maximum amounts for your request or award, and this READI Initiative has something close to \$65 million to spend, the possibilities seem endless. Practically speaking you have internal limitations. Build your budget and request for an amount that realistically anticipates:

- **Feasibility** Only propose projects you can complete within the 18-month grant period. Realistically, plan for 15 months.
- **Cash Flow Capacity** As reimbursement grants, you'll have to float expenses. For safety, plan for that window to be 3-6 months.
- **Quacks like a Duck or, um, Match?** This matters. Projects with funding in addition to your READI request amount should do better.
- **Partial Award** There are likely to be partial awards. Your project needs to be flexible enough to accommodate that.

2. What expenses are REIMBURSABLE?

While the guidelines do not specify items that can be included in the budget (a few exceptions such as the date of the expense), **this doesn't mean that everything will be reimbursable**. If funded, IEDC will ask you to submit new budgets using their reimbursement rules as part of the contracting process.

Ask your regional development agency contact what the IEDC usually treats as reimbursable to help you plan.

3. Can you clarify the program DATES?

We're told that the lookback goes to 2023 (despite 2/16/ 2024 in FAQs). You should confirm this with IEDC.

Expenses become reimbursable on the date your contract is signed, NOT 7/1/2026.

Act fast on IEDC requests for contract info. 18 months go faster when you start late.

CHEAT SHEET		
BUDGET PERIOD	DATE CHANGE MARCH 2023	The first day you can count other funds toward "match" prioritization, and the first day you can incur budgeted – <i>but not yet reimbursable</i> – expenses
GRANT PERIOD	JULY 1, 2026	IEDC can begin executing grant contracts
	BUT BEWARE	Your reimbursement clock starts on the GRANT CONTRACT DATE not July 1
	DEC 31, 2028	The last day to incur reimbursable expenses – <i>no extensions for late starts</i>
NEITHER	Post 2028	Ongoing activities/expenses can't count toward the budget or grant amount

ACE YOUR REVIEW.

1. Can you clarify the REVIEW PROCESS?

The process has four steps.

STEPS	DATES	DETAILS
1. ELIGIBILITY SCREEN	On April 15 Deadline	IEDC staff screen applications for ELIGIBILITY . Ineligible applications don't proceed.
2. REGIONAL REVIEW	April 15 through May 5 – interim admin –	The regions grade ALIGNMENT of applications to the plan. They don't sign off on projects. State staff review regional input and prepare for the state panel review.
3. STATE PANEL REVIEW	May 15 through end of May – interim admin –	Reviewers grade eligible applications using the FULL RUBRIC . State staff review grading, calculate scores, rank/prioritize applications for award recommendations.
4. BOARD APPROVAL	TBD late June	The IEDC Board of Directors makes FINAL AWARD decisions.

Here are a few more details to keep in mind:

- Applicants won't be able to revise applications after the deadline, unless specifically asked to do so by IEDC.
- Regional Review will be done by your regional development agency's (RDA) contact.
- State Panel members will review applications independently. There won't be a meeting, and the list won't be public.
- IEDC Board approval will be done during a public meeting.
- Staff (IEDC & IAC) will be able to see everything submitted, but reviewers should only have access to the sections necessary to their task.

IEDC Retains Full Discretion. This is our best advice, but we aren't IEDC. We can't speak for them, predict the future, or make guarantees.

2. How will the RUBRIC be used to EVALUATE applications?

The purpose of a “rubric” is to standardize evaluation. (See page 6.) It provides transparency, fairness, and reviewer guidance. It does this in 3 ways.

First, a rubric defines the areas to be graded.

Applications will be graded on items B-F (p. 6) as well as their alignment with the regional arts and culture plan. Successful applications will clearly address each.

Second, it defines how grades will be assigned.

The READI 2.0 Arts & Culture Initiative has 2 (similar) grading scales. One will be used for the regional review, and the other will be used for the state panel.

Finally, a rubric shows how scores are calculated.

The reviewer’s score for your application is the sum of the 0-4 grades given on items B-F multiplied by 5. That means B-F are each worth 20 points for a total score up to 100.

After that, we assume IEDC will average reviewer scores, rank the results, and then develop award recommendations based on IEDC priorities and available funds.

SCORING MATH

The Reviewer assigns number grades (0-4) in 5 areas.
IEDC turns those grades into scores.

- Reviewer = Sum of 5 Grades (Each x 5)
- Final = Average of Reviewer Scores

3. Will SECTION 7 of the application be graded?

This section of the application asks 3 questions and says that they won’t be graded. Really? **Yes and No.**

The **Technical Assistance** (aka TA) question **WILL NOT** be graded!

This question asks for and outline of “any TA you anticipate needing to strengthen this project – such as artistic mentorship, fabrication support, curatorial or interpretive planning, audience development, evaluation, business operations, or other creative-sector expertise.”

**BE CANDID — REVIEWERS
WON’T SEE TA ANSWERS!**

Candor here is critical for the
future of our field in Indiana.

IEDC explained the question and its purpose with this: “Describe any outside expertise or support that would help strengthen your project. Focus on the types of assistance that would improve planning, implementation, or long-term success (e.g., help navigating permitting or approvals, strengthening partnerships, or developing sustainability strategies) and explain why that support would be valuable at this stage. [It] will be used by the IEDC team for internal planning only... Responses will inform future TA, resource development, and capacity-building support for applicants and the broader arts and culture field.” IEDC backs this up when it asks regional reviewers to highlight projects for further exploration or TA.

But reviewers **WILL** (probably) see and grade your **EVALUATION** and **KPI** answers.

We have a hard time believing that your plans for Project Evaluation and connections to READI’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) won’t be seen or scored. When we asked IEDC, they seemed to agree with us, suggesting that both of these questions will be part of the review.

4. Read everything and take a deep breath. We’re learning together as part of an incredibly exciting opportunity for Indiana.

We want to stress that you should be looking at the guidance embedded in each question of the application (repeated in more detail in the Guidelines) AND the numbered items in the rubric itself. Why? *The rubric sometimes asks reviewers to grade you on content that isn’t specifically asked for in the application.* (For example, the evaluation rubric specifically asked reviewers to consider item #3 (p. 6), but it is not in the application itself.)

THE FULL RUBRIC

Put everything together on 1 page, and this is what it looks like.

(FYI: We've converted questions in the rubric into affirmative statements – items 1-17 – to help you draft your application.)

FIRST REVIEW : REGIONAL ALIGNMENT <small>0-4 grade</small>					
GRADE →	0	1	2	3	4
DEFINITION →	NOT ALIGNED OR RELEVANT Information is Missing, Unclear, or Not Addressed	NOT ALIGNED Doesn't Address Priorities, <i>BUT potential for exploration or TA</i>	SOMEWHAT ALIGNED Connections are Limited and Underdeveloped	MOSTLY ALIGNED Addresses Identified Priorities with Minor Gaps	EXEMPLARY ALIGNMENT Advances Key Priorities or Strategies
"A" WILL BE GRADED		REVIEWERS USE ITEM 1 AS THEIR CRITERIA FOR GRADING "A"			
A. ALIGNMENT <small>0-4 grade</small>	1. The application is aligned with the region's Arts and Culture Plan				

SECOND REVIEW : STATE PANEL <small>0-4 grades combined for 100-pt scores</small>					
GRADE →	0	1	2	3	4
DEFINITION →	ABSENT Information is Missing, Unclear, or Not Addressed	EMERGING Early Concept, Limited Detail, Minimal evidence	MODERATE Adequate Information, Some Gaps Remain	STRONG Clear, Detailed, Feasible	EXEMPLARY Highly Detailed, Evidence-Based, Fully Aligned, Ready to Go
"B-F" WILL BE GRADED & SCORED		REVIEWERS USE ITEMS 2-17 AS THEIR CRITERIA FOR GRADING "B-F" AS GROUPED			
B. DESCRIPTION <small>0-4 grade x 5 = 20-pt score</small>	2. The application provides sufficient and thoughtful detail about the nature of the project; 3. Demonstrates understanding of the cultural landscape – locally, regionally, or nationally; and 4. Clearly communicates how the READI funds will be used within the context of this project.				
C. IMPACT <small>20 pts</small>	5. The application clearly addresses a community need; 6. Demonstrates a thoughtful and feasible solution to that need; and 7. Engenders impact beyond the applicant – contributing a broader community, cultural, or regional benefit.				
D. PARTNERSHIPS & ENGAGEMENT <small>20 pts</small>	8. The application demonstrates responsiveness to community needs and feedback; 9. Demonstrates depth and quality of community engagement in both planning and implementation; 10. Demonstrates artist, resident, youth, governing body, and underrepresented group engagement; 11. Defines substantive roles for partners contributing to the project.				
E. MANAGEMENT & SUSTAINABILITY <small>20 pts</small>	12. The application demonstrates capacity to responsibly manage and steward project funds, and 13. Demonstrates capability to raise or earn funds beyond the grant to support the project's success.				
F. OVERALL <small>20 pts</small>	14. The application constitutes a thoughtful, feasible, and impactful project. 15. The applicant(s) (organization or consortium) appear capable of undertaking the proposed project. 16. The application meaningfully considers regional context and impact, and 17. Provides evidence of community need, engagement, and support.				

ATTENTION: Before hitting submit, **RE-READ EVERYTHING** to ensure that **ALL 17** items are **CLEAR & STRONG**.