



# Washington State Arts Commission Creative District Certification Application Guidelines (FY 2018 – 2019)

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## About ArtsWA

Established in 1961, the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) and staff work together to support communities, organizations and individuals in bringing art and creativity into the lives of all those who live in Washington State. ArtsWA administers a number of programs in support of our mission to be a catalyst for the arts, advancing the role of the arts in the lives of individuals and communities throughout the state.

## Washington Creative Districts Certification Program

The mission of the Washington Creative Districts Certification Program is to help communities throughout the state thrive by bolstering their creative economy, enhancing their vitality, and raising their standard of livability. The program will support a town or area's ability to grow jobs, and increase economic, educational, and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors.

In 2017, the Washington State legislature passed a bill to fund the Creative Districts program. Sponsored by Rep. Joan McBride (D-Kirkland) and Senator Hans Zeiger (R-Puyallup), in companion bills, the legislation tasked ArtsWA with the creation of a new program to promote and support economic development and placemaking opportunities in communities dedicated to growing their arts-related economic sectors.

The Creative Districts program is designed to help communities to:

- Attract visitors, creative entrepreneurs and artists
- Infuse new energy and innovation, and enhancing economic and civic capital
- Create hubs of economic, artistic, social and entrepreneurial activity
- Enhance the designated district area so that it is an appealing place to live, visit, and conduct business
- Grow jobs and economic opportunities for all citizens
- Set the stage to improve or redevelop historic assets
- Celebrate and strengthening a community's unique identity
- Find opportunities around all income housing, live/work, and maker space
- Empower designated districts to evolve and strengthen their economic presence in Washington State through investments in staff, community partnerships and strategic planning.
- Proactively and sustainably develop their long-term future

## Creative Districts Defined

Districts will go through a rigorous and fair application and certification process in order to become a Certified Washington Creative District. They must meet a number of criteria, including:

- Comprise a contiguous, geographic area
  - Be the site of a concentration of artistic, cultural or creative economy activities, with 1 -2 identified primary arts or creative-economy industries
  - Possess a clearly defined, unique arts, culture or creative economy identity and/or brand
  - Be walkable and/or accessible, and attractive to locals and visitors alike
  - Active promotion of local arts, culture, creative economy and tourist activities
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- Be distinguished by unique resources that clearly contribute to the quality of life of the community, including its cultural, economic and workforce development
- Consider all income / affordable housing / maker space for creatives and artists working in, and inhabiting the district as needed to ensure their creative presence
- A strategic plan / business plan to guide the district forward once certified

## Program Benefits and Opportunities

In addition to providing designation and official recognition by the State of Washington, the program provides support for Certified Creative districts. Benefits and opportunities include (but are not limited to):

### Funding:

- Newly Certified Districts will receive a cash grant of \$5,000 (one-to-one cash match required, match can include in-kind donation up to \$2500)

### Marketing

- Promotion of Creative Districts as appropriate – sharing stories and successes with our audiences, both regionally and nationally
- In partnership with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), wayfinding/place making signs will be placed on state highways in and/or near certified Creative Districts to complement a district's own signage efforts. (All signage must recognize the State Arts Commission's supportive role with agreed-upon language and / or logo).

### Data and Impact Analysis

- Districts will compile and collect data that will enable ArtsWA to demonstrate the economic and quality of life impacts of creative districts. This will be used to help leverage more investment in Creative Districts, and will support districts locally in their efforts to obtain public sector, corporate, grant and foundation monies
- ArtsWA will contract with the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) to provide access to the Creative Vitality suite, an online platform for comprehensive creative economy data. ArtsWA will support districts in leveraging data to demonstrate impact and track progress
- ArtsWA will report annually on the collective impact of certified Creative Districts
- Individual districts will be required to file interim and year-end annual reports with ArtsWA

### Funding to Support Economic Growth

- ArtsWA will provide a flexible, technical and professional assistance fund available to districts that have been certified for one or more years. These funds will be awarded for projects and activities that advance strategic goals, and will require a local match from the community.

### All income /Affordable Housing for Creatives / Maker Space

- ArtsWA is researching the tools of real estate development around possibilities for the creation of affordable, appropriate places for artists and creatives to live and work in and around the districts. In



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partnership with ArtSpace™, districts and communities will be assisted in ways to support more stable, healthy communities anchored in existing assets.

## Networking, Collaboration and Ongoing Technical Assistance

- ArtsWA will facilitate access to technical assistance for Districts as needed, and facilitate a learning and supportive community among Districts

## Applicant Eligibility

Applicants for Washington Creative District Certification must be:

- A structured entity representing a community located in Washington, such as a municipal, county or tribal government, a designated downtown authority or economic development agency, a 501(c)3 or 501(c)6 or;
  - A structured entity representing an area formally recognized as a creative, arts or cultural district
- AND
- An organization with a minimum \$20,000 cash annual operating budget or that can demonstrate the ability to effectively manage a district, handle grants and oversee other fiduciary responsibilities
  - If not a municipal entity, an organization operating in partnership with the local government or tribal authority

## Application Process

**Step 1:** Review the Community Readiness Workbook and Pre-Application checklist to ensure community meets minimum requirements. If community meets these requirements, move to step 2.

**Step 2:** Submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) to the Washington Creative Districts Certification Program. A site visit of the potential district by Creative District program staff must be scheduled before Letter of Interest is submitted.

**Step 3:** If Letter of Interest is approved, submit full application within 60 days of approval. Site visit must take place before full application is submitted.

### Online Application submission

All applications must be submitted via ArtsWA's [online application form](#), with all attending documents uploaded via this system. Applications will not be accepted in any other format, including via email or hard copy.

### Step 1: Creative District Certification Pre-application Checklist

Communities interested in submitting a letter of interest for Washington Certified Creative District Certification should meet the following minimum requirements:

- Designated, contiguous geographic area recognized by local municipal entity
- Area is walkable and/or easily navigable
- Clearly defined concentration of artistic and/or cultural activities and/or minimum of 1-2 primary arts-related industries occurring in region
- Clearly defined arts and culture identity, and brand



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- Structured entity formally recognized by local government designated as district administrator, with assigned staff role to carry out Creative District activities
- Administrative entity has a minimum \$20,000 total annual operating budget
- Demonstrated broad community buy-in for designation as Creative District
- Partnership agreement amongst entities, to help guide activities in district
- Creative District strategic / business plan (covering 3 - 5 years of activity)
- Site visit to proposed district by Creative District program staff has been scheduled or completed

## Step 2: Letter of Interest

If your community meets the criteria listed in Step 1, you may submit a Letter of Interest. The letter, which should be no longer than 2 pages, should address the following:

- A brief overview of the proposed district: its general geographical area, and key highlights of activities that take place in it
- The district administrator role and their intended work plan duties
- Describe partnerships, and/or members of the community who support or participated in the planning process
- Briefly describe the vision of the proposed Creative District and how it will benefit your community
- Include full contact information for key individuals / personnel who will lead the process towards certification

## Step 3 Creative District Certification Application

The following criteria and weights will be used by the review panel to evaluate proposals

- Creative District Information (30%)
- District Characteristics (40%)
- Community Partnerships and Buy-In (30%)

The bulleted items below will help guide you to complete the online application, where you will answer the narrative questions and provide support documents required for Certification.

### CREATIVE DISTRICT INFORMATION

- What is the name of the Creative District?
- Upload a map (or provide a link to a map) of the Creative District
- Please describe the Creative District's organizational and/or governance structure (501(c)3, 501(c)6, local government, Business Improvement District, Main Street organization, other?)
- Is there a governing board that provides oversight of the Creative District? If so, please provide a list of names and the affiliations of those involved
- Describe the designated staff liaison role for the Creative District. How will this role incorporate Creative District activities into its annual work plan? How much approximate time will be spent per month by this person on Creative District activity?
- Describe additional paid, and or volunteer staffing and support of the district.



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- How is the District funded, and what is the source of funds? What is the Creative District's annual budget? Do you have a plan for financial sustainability?
- Upload a budget showing cash and in-kind line items separately. Budget does not need to adhere to a specific format.
- Does the District have a membership structure? If so, how many members are in, or projected to be in the district, and what is the membership dues structure?
- Upload the Creative District strategic program / business plan document.
- Please provide the top three (3) short-term and top three (3) long term goals you have for your Creative District.
- What do you see as your district's biggest challenges, and how do you anticipate overcoming them?
- How do you see certification as a Creative District advancing your district and community?
- Upload a completed W-9 for the managing entity that will receive district funds.

## DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

- Please describe your Creative District's unique competitive advantage – the (one) thing(s) that sets your District apart from the others. What is your unique niche, and key differentiators?
  - Describe the unique cultural or historical heritage of your district. How does this story relate to the current activities and future plan of your District?
  - Describe the accessibility of your creative district. Is it walkable or otherwise easy to navigate? Is it accessible to those who use alternative transportation, such as bike or walking paths, public transit (if available in the region)
  - Describe how your district engages with the community. Does your district have any signature events or activities? Do these events appeal to a broad cross-section of the population?
  - Describe how your district has established a unique physical sense of place. Do you have wayfinding or signage? Distinguishable streetscape? Public art?
  - Describe the mix of uses within your district (is it primarily retail/commercial, residential, industrial, mixed use). What other types of businesses or activities exist in the District than can support or bolster District activity?
  - Please provide the following information related to the creative industries within your district. Please describe the data source and collection method for each data set:
    - Number of creative establishments within the District currently. Please include the definition(s) of the types of establishments counted
    - Number of creative-sector jobs in the District. Please include definition(s) of jobs counted.
    - Estimated number of annual visitors to your Creative District, and the reason(s) for these visits (are they event driven, venue driven, other)
    - Estimated number of children and youth directly benefitting through Creative District activities. Please describe activities.
  - Describe any existing or proposed all income / affordable, live-work, creative maker space in the proposed district
  - Please provide any other meaningful data that you have collected for your Creative District (property value trends, sales tax revenue data, occupancy rates, etc.)
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## COMMUNITY BUY-IN

- Please upload a local government ordinance and/or planning documents that provide evidence of local government endorsement of the Creative District
- Upload letters of recommendation that support efforts to apply for Creative District certification from the following sources. You may upload as many as you feel appropriate, but no more than 30 letters total. All letters must be consolidated into one PDF file. Letters of support are required from the following entities:
  - Mayor or county representative, city administrator or director of planning; or tribal executive or council member (if District is to be situated on tribal lands)
  - Community or economic development agency or workforce development agency
  - Local downtown development authority, business district association or chamber of commerce
  - Local tourism association or board
  - Local arts commission (municipal or non-profit) or cultural affairs liaison
  - At least one local community agency that focuses on underserved populations
  - At least two creative entrepreneurs, such as an artist or business owner that lives or works in the District
  - At least one business owner from a non-creative-sector company that endorses the District

*Additional letters of recommendation from community stakeholders that support Creative District certification are strongly encouraged.*

- Please describe outreach activities to promote or elicit feedback about the Creative District certification that were inclusive to the community at large. How did you reach out to the various groups within your District?
- Please describe how the Creative District will interface with economic development and/or workforce development plans that may currently exist in the community. Do these plans reflect the activities of the Creative District? Does the Creative District plan include a path toward creation of jobs or investment in business growth or entrepreneurialism the region?

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Certified Creative Districts will be required to submit interim and year-end annual reports to ArtsWA. Failure to do so will make the District ineligible for further support and may jeopardize a District's certified status.

ArtsWA has the right to withhold, reduce or cancel funding and/or Certification status if an applicant fails to do the following:

- Adhere to deadlines for reporting
- Notify ArtsWA of changes in project collaborators or other significant management changes
- Comply with terms of any awards
- Demonstrate adequate financial management and oversight
- Properly credit ArtsWA's support



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## APPEAL PROCESS

Applicants whose certification application is denied may appeal the Commission's decision under the ***Appeal procedure*** – ***[Request for review of denied applications](#)***, per our rules ([WAC 30-12-036](#)).

## STAFF CONTACT

Prior to submitting an application, applicants should read the guidelines thoroughly and review all Community Readiness tools on the website.

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