

Iowa Cultural & Entertainment District designation recognizes well-identified, walkable, mixed-use, compact areas of a city or county in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor. These districts are attracting residents and tourists who support adjacent businesses such as restaurants, lodging facilities, retail stores and entertainment venues. The program goals are to distinguish those districts which have created unique cultural centers and prioritized visitor experiences; promote the districts and their supported activities; and provide technical assistance and professional development opportunities.

The program, defined in Iowa Code 303.3D, is administered by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, pursuant to the authority of Iowa Administrative Code Section 221, Chapter 9.

Timeline

March | Informational Webinar

An informational webinar will outline the requirements of the designation process.

May | Application Deadline

The deadline to submit an online application to the program is May 1, 2018 at 11:59 PM.

June | Designation Notification

Applicants will be notified of designation decisions by June 29, 2018.

Designation

Iowa Cultural & Entertainment Districts Designation

Iowa was the second state in the nation to initiate a state certification program for Cultural & Entertainment Districts. Recognizing that a thriving creative sector is an important asset, state designation of districts fosters a supportive climate for cultural activities; enhances the visibility of vibrant, authentic places; and encourages the preservation of irreplaceable historic properties. To be designated, a Cultural & Entertainment District must already be an area where arts and cultural activities thrive. Designation by the state is an achievement, intended to formally recognize that a particular locale is an acknowledged cultural destination. State designation is not the first step in creating a cultural district; rather, it is the culmination of arduous effort.

A designated Cultural & Entertainment District is readily recognized. It is a gathering place, filled with cultural facilities, arts organizations, individual artists or arts-based businesses, as well as an array of other uses such as office complexes, restaurants, retail spaces or residences. It has well-defined boundaries: people can sense when they have arrived at this unique place. Before a Cultural & Entertainment District becomes designated by the state, it must be an established district that is widely viewed as a hub of cultural activity. The presence of arts and cultural opportunities enhances property values, the profitability of surrounding businesses and the tax base of the region. These districts attract a diverse and well-educated workforce – a key incentive for new and relocating businesses.

Once designated, the State, through the efforts of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, shall endeavor to promote projects and initiatives implemented by the Cultural & Entertainment Districts through established networks. Designated Cultural & Entertainment Districts are provided an “Iowa Cultural & Entertainment District” sign. These signs serve to market and promote the district. Designated Cultural & Entertainment Districts are encouraged to use the “Iowa Cultural & Entertainment District” logo in marketing efforts. Additionally, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs staff will provide technical assistance to Cultural & Entertainment Districts, including communication on grant opportunities, professional development workshops and best practices from other Cultural & Entertainment Districts.

Annual Report

Following designation, Cultural & Entertainment Districts are expected to submit an annual report to the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. The report will document the status of the Cultural & Entertainment District, including documentation on the number of new businesses, activities and promotional efforts within the past year.

Re-Designation

Per statute language, all designated Cultural & Entertainment Districts are required to apply for re-designation every ten years. The re-designation process will include information updating the cultural district identity, operations and programming information, Cultural & Entertainment District assets, goals for the next ten years, accomplishments from the previous ten years and economic impact.

Applicant Requirements

A single entity must be selected to serve as the primary applicant for designation, while incorporating collaboration between a consortium of partners. The selected entity must meet the definition of eligible applicant. The applicant will be responsible for submitting the annual report and will be the entity legally obligated to the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding if awarded designation. Partners and collaborating entities are not subject to the eligibility requirements.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must be one of the following types of entities. Entities who do not meet these requirements are not eligible to apply.

- Federally tax exempt 501(c)3 nonprofit organization incorporated and physically located in Iowa
- Unit of local, county or federally-recognized tribal government physically located in Iowa
- For-profit or commercial entity located in Iowa

Physical location is defined as maintaining a current home office and registered agent address in Iowa defined by Iowa Code [490.501](#) as well as maintaining a primary staff presence physically located and working in Iowa.

Ineligible Applicants

- Individuals
- Unit of state or federal government
- School or institution of higher education
- Religious organization, labor union, political party or national service/professional organization
- Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs grantees who have an outstanding final report or who have been placed on a department funding moratorium

Online Application Submission

Applicants must submit applications via the Iowa Arts Council's SlideRoom, an online application portal. Applications will not be accepted in any other format. Late, incomplete or ineligible applications will not be accepted. Applicants can access the current online application requirements at iowaartscouncil.slideroom.com. Applicants must create a login to view the full application requirements for the program. Applicants can visit the [SlideRoom Help Desk](#) for technical assistance related to the online submission.

Designation Review Process

Department Eligibility Review

Full applications will be reviewed by staff for completion, eligibility and adherence to published guidelines. Applications are reviewed as submitted. New application information or subsequent application clarification submitted after a program deadline is not considered. Staff will also review an applicant's record of compliance and good standing with the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, State and Federal government. Applications or applicants determined by staff to be ineligible will not move forward to panel review and are specifically denied any appeals process.

Panel Review

Eligible applications will be referred to a competitive review by a panel of Iowa arts and culture professionals with appropriate expertise commensurate to the purpose of the designation program. Designation recommendations will be submitted to the Director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs for consideration and approval. The applicant's authorized official will receive designation notification. All decisions are final and may not be appealed due to dissatisfaction. Applicants may review the department appeals policy for information on grounds for appeal and the appeal process.

Scoring Rubric

Application Review

The Cultural & Entertainment Districts Scoring Rubric will be used to evaluate applications. Each section has criteria and corresponding point values to ensure a fair review process. The application rubric is on a scale of 39 points.

1 - DISTRICT CHARACTER: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
District has strong cultural and historic character, diverse attractions and enthusiastic support for new cultural institutions and individuals.	Community has cultural and historic character, citizen involvement and an expressed potential for growth.	Community has minimal identified cultural and historic character, low citizen involvement and lack of expressed interest in growth.

2 - DISTRICT PARTNERS: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
The Cultural & Entertainment District is supported by multiple, diverse partners.	The Cultural & Entertainment District is supported by partners.	The Cultural & Entertainment District is supported by minimal partners.

3 - DISTRICT BOUNDARY: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Cultural & Entertainment District boundary is clearly defined and well supported by the presence of a wide variety of amenities, venues and cultural structures. The District is widely accessible and prioritizes pedestrian activity.	Cultural & Entertainment District boundary is defined and supported by the presence of a variety of amenities, venues and cultural structures. The District is accessible and supports pedestrian activity.	Cultural & Entertainment District boundary is not defined nor supported by the presence of a variety of amenities, venues and cultural structures. The District is not accessible and does not support pedestrian activity.

4 - DESIGNATION TIMING: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
The Cultural & Entertainment District is well prepared for designation and has strong implementation plans for capitalizing upon the benefits of designation.	The Cultural & Entertainment District is prepared for designation and has plans for capitalizing upon the benefits of designation.	The Cultural & Entertainment District is not prepared for designation and has no plans for capitalizing upon the benefits of designation.

5 - COMMUNITY SUPPORT MATERIAL: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Community support material is highly relevant to the Cultural & Entertainment District, of high quality and clearly supports the District's designation. Contains a minimum of five support letters from local government representatives, community organizations, non-profits and local businesses.	Community support material is relevant to the Cultural & Entertainment District and of average quality. Contains a minimum of two support letters from local government representatives, community organizations, non-profits or local businesses.	Community support material is not relevant to the Cultural & Entertainment District, of poor quality or does not support the District's designation.

6 - PUBLIC ACCESS: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Target population for Cultural & Entertainment District is well-defined. Public access to District is strong with clear and deliberate plans for increasing accessibility and promotion of the District to target population.	Target population for the Cultural & Entertainment District is identified. Public access to District is satisfactory with plans for accessibility and promotion.	Target population for the Cultural & Entertainment District is unclear. Public access to District is inadequate.

7 - LOCAL INCENTIVES: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Local incentives provide excellent support to existing and emerging cultural organizations and individuals. Incentives will clearly encourage future growth of the Cultural & Entertainment District.	Local incentives provide support to existing and emerging cultural organizations and individuals. Incentives will potentially encourage future growth of the Cultural & Entertainment District.	Cultural & Entertainment District does not provide local incentives to support existing and emerging cultural organizations and individuals.

8 - DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Confident that the Cultural & Entertainment District goals and objectives will be successfully realized through strong implementation plans and partnerships. District included excellent plans for transportation, housing, cultural spaces and programming.	Cultural & Entertainment District goals and objectives will be realized through implementation plans and partnerships. District included plans for transportation, housing, cultural spaces and programming.	Concerns about achievability of the Cultural & Entertainment District goals and objectives. District lacks plans for transportation, housing, cultural spaces and programming.

9 - VARIETY OF ASSETS: 9 points possible		
1	1	1
Proposed District includes one or more artist live/work spaces.	Proposed District includes one or more museums.	Proposed District includes one or more libraries.
Proposed District includes one or more performance halls.	Proposed District includes one or more studios.	Proposed District includes one or more galleries.
Proposed District includes one or more arts-related retail shops.	Proposed District includes one or more music or media production houses.	Proposed District includes one or more arboreta.

10 - MEDIA SUPPORT MATERIAL: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Support material is highly relevant to the Cultural & Entertainment District, of high quality and clearly supports District's excellence.	Support material relates to the Cultural & Entertainment District and is of average quality.	Support material is not relevant to the Cultural & Entertainment District, of poor quality or does not support the District's excellence.

11 - CASE FOR DESIGNATION: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
The application is clear, concise and well-composed. Case for designation is exemplary and merits recognition from the State.	The application is clear. Case for designation is adequate.	Application is unclear or poorly composed. Case for designation is inadequate or does not merit state recognition.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Applicants should refer to the [glossary](#) for clarification of program terms and definitions.

Contact

Potential applicants are encouraged to review all published material and contact Iowa Arts Council staff, Liesl Voges at 515-242-6195 or liesl.voges@iowa.gov, with questions well in advance of application deadlines.