

READI Arts & Culture Grant Application Countdown

A lot of folks are still ruminating about how large (or small) their ask should be.

It's next to impossible to predict the best gameplay for a completely new process like this. The best we can do is try to put ourselves in the shoes of the reviewers and the deciders. That's what I do here.

If I were a reviewer or decider looking at the size of a grant request, I would think about a couple of things.

1. **The gift was \$65 million.** Presumably \$1.5 million or so has already been spent on planning. That leaves \$63.5 million and 15 regions. In a world where the gift was equally divided, that would be just shy of \$4.25 million per region. We don't live in that world, but I'd think about the math when looking at the larger grant requests.
2. From the outset, the gift and initiative have been described as "**a first-of-its-kind statewide arts and culture initiative to advance regional creative transformation.**" I lean on "first-of-its-kind" and "creative transformation" when I read that. While transformation hasn't been defined, and the current guidelines don't mention it, in my heart, transformation is still the goal. I'd think about this when looking at the smaller grant requests.

Where does that lead me?

It leads me to a few questions at the top and bottom of a possible request range.

1. **For Requests Over \$5 million —**

- Does the spirit of the gift support awarding that much to a single project (or region)?
- If it is new infrastructure, has feasibility been tested? Should the applicant ask for a study first?
- If it is a new program or organization, is the request already "at scale" when it should be a pilot?
- Is this so big that 10 years from now the project will be struggling with operating costs?
- Could funding this create a supply problem, especially if similar projects cluster geographically?

However, I probably think differently about a project with multi-region or statewide implications.

2. **For Requests Under – Gosh, this one is harder.** What are some benchmarks? IAC's project support provides up to \$4,000 per cycle, and its organizational support grants range from \$4,000 to \$25,000. Patronicity's Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper Challenge Grants provide up to \$5,000, and its CreatINg Places matching grants provide \$5,000 to \$50,000. Add to that all of the smaller grant opportunities provided by cities, community foundations, and corporate sponsors.

So maybe for Requests Under (say) \$50,000 —

- Is this "first-of-its-kind" initiative the right place for a request that fits existing programs?
- Can this project impact be sustained if other sources can't or won't cover efforts of this size?
- Is the thinking too small for a project that could have greater impact at a different scale?
- Is the requested project putting a Band-Aid on something that needs stitches or more?

Again, I might adjust my thinking if I saw related proposals that tell a stronger story when read together.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again.

I can't speak for the IEDC, predict the future, or make guarantees.

I can wish you all the best of luck!

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