



# USArtists International

## Updated Program Guidelines for 2026

### APPLICATION DEADLINE

My Engagement(s) is/are Taking Place	Deadline to Apply	Engagement Invitation Letters Due	Applicants Notified of Funding Decisions By
Between June 1, 2026 and June 30, 2027	February 25, 2026 11:59 PM ET	March 4, 2025 11:59 PM ET	May 20, 2026

### ACCESSIBILITY

These guidelines are available in a PDF or Word file at [our website](#). To request accommodation during any phase of your application process, reach out to Program Director, International Andrew Alness Olson at [andrew@midatlanticarts.org](mailto:andrew@midatlanticarts.org).

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Support for the presentation and touring of performing artists is central to the work of Mid Atlantic Arts. USArtists International® (USAI) supports in-person performances by individual U.S. artists and U.S. ensembles across all performing arts practices and disciplines at international festivals, global presenting arts marketplaces, and other eligible engagements outside of the United States.

USArtists International is designed to encourage the presence of U.S. performing artists on international stages and seeks to support international tours that:

- develop and expand the careers and artistic goals of U.S. performers by providing connections with presenters, curators, and fellow artists
- include more than one engagement abroad, thereby maximizing the tour's effectiveness when considering the environmental impacts of touring
- promote cross cultural exchange through performances or additional activities and workshops
- elevate traditions, aesthetics, art forms, and/or voices that have been historically underrepresented

### MATCHING REQUIREMENT

Grants from the USArtists International program must now be matched by the grantee on a 1:1 basis. For more details on the match requirement and what counts as matching funds, see [Grant Funds and Required Match](#).

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Your application to USAI must meet eligibility criteria in each of the following areas:

1. Artist Eligibility
2. International Tour Eligibility
3. Engagement Eligibility

## 1. ARTIST ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible:

- you must be an ensemble or individual artist(s) working professionally in dance, music, or theater
- you must be
  - designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
  - OR
  - apply as an Individual artist
    - Applicants who represent an artistic team, ensemble, or band must apply as an individual on behalf of the group. Such applicants, by applying, acknowledge their role in the project proposal as the individual legally obligated to comply with the terms of the grant agreement.
    - If applying without 501c3 status, the applicant must be a named performer in the ensemble seeking support. Managers, agents, or other types of businesses like LLCs cannot receive grant funds on behalf of artists they represent.
    - USArtists International grant awards are taxable income to individual recipients and reportable to the IRS. All grant recipients that do not have 501c3 status will receive a 1099 from Mid Atlantic Arts. Payment cannot be issued to for-profit entities or to fiscal sponsors due to updated requirements from the National Endowment for the Arts, who funds this program. [Sign up for this webinar](#) to learn more about how grants can impact your taxes as an individual.
- you and all performers included in the project must be 18 or older and must not be participants from instructional programs, teaching programs, or academic institutions
- you must currently reside in the U.S. or its territories
- At least half of the *performers* in the project (including international collaborators or accompaniment) must be U.S. Citizens or permanent residents (green card holders).
  - As an example, if you have been invited as an individual dancer to perform abroad with a French dance company, you are not eligible for this program as the above criteria is not met. Similarly, a 5-person band with only 2 members that have US citizenship or a Green Card would not be eligible.
- you must not be involved in the curation/programming, administration, or management of the festival, performing arts market, or engagement for which you seek funding; festivals and/or curators cannot apply on behalf of U.S. artists;
- you must be in good standing with Mid Atlantic Arts, with no overdue or outstanding required reports and/or grant documents
- you must have not received a USAI grant within the last 12 months. If you have received a USAI grant recently, the Grant Award Date as listed in your Grant Award Agreement must be at least 12 months prior to the application deadline date
- you must show that requested grant funds will be matched, dollar for dollar, as outlined in [Grant Funds and Required Match](#)

## 2. INTERNATIONAL TOUR ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applications will include:

- a minimum of one and up to three engagements
  - If your tour includes more than three engagements, you can still apply, but you will need to consider the application review criteria when deciding which three engagements to specifically include in your application for review by the review panel
  - At least one of the engagements must be at an international festival ([see definition](#)) or international performing arts market ([see definition](#)) engagement which is curated or juried
  - If including more than one engagement, the other two can be at festivals, performing arts markets, or standard (non-festival) performance engagements that meet the engagement eligibility criteria listed in section 3 below.
  - Tours with more than one engagement must be continuous, with no travel back to the U.S. between engagements

### 3. ENGAGEMENT ELIGIBILITY

All engagements included in the application must:

- pay you an artist fee, unless you are performing at a Performing Arts Market ([see definition](#))
- be organized primarily by a non-U.S. based organization that is financially and curatorially responsible for the engagement
- have confirmed dates
- take place outside the U.S. and its territories; due to federal requirements engagements *cannot* take place in embargoed countries including Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia, or Syria
- not require registration fees, application fees, performance fees, venue or rehearsal rental fees, marketing fees or any other fee paid by performers exceeding USD \$250
  - if seeking support for a fringe festival, see [definitions](#)
- be open and marketed to the general public, unless you are performing at a [performing arts market](#)
- be for performances of at least 20 minutes in duration, which may be comprised of single or multiple works or excerpts from longer pieces
- provide you with a signed **Letter of Invitation or Contract** on festival, market, or venue letterhead that includes:
  - the artist/ensemble's performance dates (if known)
    - and if the engagement is at a festival or performing arts market, the confirmed dates of the festival or market
  - the number of performances (if known)
  - the dollar amount of the required performance fee provided to you, the artist
  - and a description of all additional financial (dollar amount of support must be included) or in-kind support offered by the festival/venue toward eligible project expenses as identified in the USAI guidelines such as hotels, flights, ground transportation, or per diems
  - In addition, letters must be in English, or if the letter is not in English, a translation (Google Translate is acceptable) must be provided with the original letter.

### REQUIRED APPLICATION MATERIALS

To apply, visit our online application portal at <https://midatlanticarts.smartsimple.com>. The application will open in December 2025. Applications must be submitted on or before the published deadline at 11:59 PM Eastern Time. Applications that are late or incomplete will not be considered. The application includes Applicant Information, Project Details, Project Narrative, Two Work Samples (see [Work Sample Preparation Guide](#)), Application Narrative, Biographies of the Principal Artist(s), Participant List, Budget, and Signed Letter(s) of Invitation for each engagement.

If the signed letters of invitation or signed contracts are not available at the time the application is submitted, you may add them to the grant application portal by March 4, 2026.

## REVIEW CRITERIA

USAI works to promote the full range of United States performing arts abroad and strives to represent the breadth of America's artistic traditions, perspectives, and regions. All applications are reviewed for artistic merit and artistic excellence, in alignment with National Endowment for the Arts requirements, using the criteria below.

- ARTISTIC MERIT:
  - Potential impact of the engagement(s) and additional activities abroad on the artist's professional/artistic career
  - Potential impact of the proposed engagement(s) and additional activities on the community, including its likelihood to foster cultural exchange, understanding, or collaboration
  - Potential for voices, traditions, aesthetics, and/or art forms that have been underrepresented to gain exposure abroad
  - Consideration of the number of confirmed engagements in the application
- ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE:
  - Applicant's creativity, execution, and artistic rigor (as demonstrated in work samples)
  - Applicant's impact on their field, locally and/or nationally

## GRANT AMOUNTS AND ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

You can request from \$1,000 to \$11,000 in grant support. Grant recipients must demonstrate that they will have additional funding going toward project expenses from other sources (artist fees, organizational/personal funds, other grants, etc.) that will be equal to or greater than the USAI funding request.

We estimate that we will be able to fund around 17-23% of applicants. Selected applications are usually funded at 90-100% of their grant request amount. Expenses not listed in the USAI budget are not eligible for support. Funding awarded by Mid Atlantic Arts is restricted to the specific, direct costs of the project, as detailed below, and may not be used for indirect costs. Eligible expenses are:

- lodging
- per diem
- shipping
- visa fees
- performance fees
- travel (see [Airfare and the Fly America Act](#) for limitations)
- agents' fees related to participation in the international engagement
- registration/application fees up to \$250

## Grant Funds and Required Match

Grants must be matched on a 1:1 cash basis. This means that an applicant's share of project costs is 50%

of eligible project expenses up to the maximum grant limit, plus all remaining costs not met by the grant. The required match can include:

- Confirmed artist fees from festivals/engagements to you, the applicant, that you will then spend on project expenses
- Additional funds from festivals/engagements being paid to you that you will use for flights, per diems, or lodging (Dollar amounts must be included in offer letters)
- Personal or organizational funds to be used toward eligible project expenses
- Funds from other funders or non-federal grants to be spent on eligible project expenses

The match may not include Federal funds or in-kind (non-financial) contributions, and the required match may not be used to match other Federal funds, whether they are received directly from a Federal agency or indirectly, such as through a state agency or other entity.

Grantees will report on actual expenditures of grant funds and their match in the final report.

**Example:** In order to request an \$11,000 grant from USArtists International, you must show you have \$22,000 in eligible project expenses, and that you have enough matching funding on your own to cover the remaining \$11,000 in expenses not covered by the grant. One way the match could be met is if you will receive a \$6,000 artist fee from the festival that you will spend on eligible expenses, an additional \$2,000 payment from the festival to you that you will spend on lodging, and contribute \$3,000 of your own funds toward expenses. The total eligible expenses in this example would be \$22,000: \$11,000 paid for from the USArtists International grant and \$11,000 from the required match.

If funded, funder requirements stipulate that if the project does not take place, the entirety of the grant award would need to be returned to Mid Atlantic Arts.

### **Airfare and the Fly America Act**

USAI is subject to Federal travel guidance. USAI can only support airfare equivalent to economy class rates, purchased at least 14 days prior to departure date. Any foreign air travel funded through USAI, including the cash match provided by the grantee, must be done on an approved U.S. flag air carrier as part of the Fly America Act, or a foreign air carrier under an air transport agreement with the United States, when these services are available. So, depending on where you are flying to, you may not be able to buy the cheapest flight available. More information will be provided to you if you are awarded a grant, or you can request it to make sure you comply. Tickets purchased through U.S. carriers but ultimately operated by a foreign carrier through a codeshare agreement would comply with the Fly America Act. Fly America Act guidelines can be found at: [Fly America Act](#).

### **ELIGIBLE GRANTEES**

Grants made through USAI will only be awarded to U.S. dance, music, or theater ensembles and individual artists designated as nonprofit organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or to an eligible individual performing artist that has applied on behalf of themselves or their ensemble, and is both a US Citizen or green card holder and a US resident.

USArtists International grant awards are taxable income to individual recipients and reportable to the IRS. All grant recipients that do not have 501c3 status must submit a W-9 to Mid Atlantic Arts with their social security number, and will receive a 1099 from Mid Atlantic Arts. Payment cannot be issued to for-profit entities or to fiscal sponsors due to updated requirements from the National Endowment for the Arts, who funds this program.

## **PAYMENTS AND FINAL REPORTS**

If awarded, 100% of the grant amount is paid by ACH transfer or, if necessary, by check to the grantee approximately 45 – 60 days prior to the engagement following the review and signing of a grant award agreement. In addition, a final report for the funded project is required no later than 30 days after the project completion date. The final report, made available in the online portal at the time the grant is awarded, requires brief descriptions of the completed project, evidence of funder crediting, copies of executed contracts between artists and engagements, and an accounting of expenditures of the funded activities, including proof of the required 1:1 match. Final report instructions are included with grant award documents when grantees are notified of the award. Grantees that do not submit final reports will be ineligible for future grant awards from Mid Atlantic Arts.

## **RESOURCES**

[Mid Atlantic Arts website](#) includes a number of resources including: an FAQ document; a regular schedule of webinars; a work sample preparation guide; and a [database](#) of dance, music, and theater festivals. You are also welcome to contact Program Director, International Andrew Alness Olson at [Andrew@midatlanticarts.org](mailto:Andrew@midatlanticarts.org) with questions.

## **PROGRAM FUNDING**

USAI continues the important tradition in the United States of the public and private sectors working collaboratively to support the arts. USAI is a program of Mid Atlantic Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. Support for grantees traveling to the Baltic States, Central Asia, Central, East, and Southeast Europe, and Mongolia is provided by Trust for Mutual Understanding. Applications are submitted to Mid Atlantic Arts.

USArtists International is supported by:



# Appendices

## DEFINITIONS

**Festivals:** For this program, a festival is defined as an event, consisting of live public performances by multiple international performing artists/ensembles in dance, music, or theater that takes place within a continuous period of three months or less. A festival must demonstrate a consistently high level of activity for its entire duration, including public performances and/or ancillary activities, such as workshops, lecture/demonstrations, public presentations, etc.

**Fringe Festivals:** Artists who wish to apply for a fringe festival engagement should email [andrew@midatlanticarts.org](mailto:andrew@midatlanticarts.org) to confirm eligibility before applying. USAI seeks to fund engagements that are artistically and financially beneficial for artists, and many fringe-festival engagements require substantial fees from, or significant financial risk borne by, performers. Because of this, most fringe engagements are ineligible for grant support. However, engagements that are part of fringe festivals may be eligible for USAI support if the engagement meets all the eligibility criteria for festivals. Fringe festival engagements are only eligible for consideration if *all* the following are true:

- the fringe festival venue is curated
- artists/ensembles are not self-produced or self-selected
- artists/ensembles receive support from festival toward eligible expenses and a confirmed artist fee
- and artist/ensembles are not required to pay **any type of fee** or amount exceeding USD \$250 to participate.

**Performing Arts Markets:** For this program, a performing arts market is defined as a curated or juried event with a maximum duration of two weeks featuring showcases of performing artists marketed primarily to performing arts industry professionals and, in some cases, general audiences. The intent of a performing arts market is to provide artists and performing arts industry professionals with opportunities to develop and deepen professional relationships. Performing arts markets are frequently accompanied by panels, symposia, and workshops related to the marketing and promotion of the performing arts for industry professionals. Some examples of international performing arts markets are Performing Arts Market Seoul, CINARS, and the Australian Performing Arts Market. If you have questions regarding performing arts markets, contact [andrew@midatlanticarts.org](mailto:andrew@midatlanticarts.org) to verify eligibility.

## WORK SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

### Work Sample Submission:

- **Is it a needle in a haystack?** In the Work Sample portion of [the application](#), applicants submit work samples via a link/web address/URL to their video or audio samples. These links should go directly to a specific sample, and not to a folder or website containing multiple recordings or videos.
- **Is it queued up?** The application requires two work samples that are each no more than ten minutes in length. The link/URL you submit for the work sample should take panelists directly to the point in the video you wish them to start viewing. Cueing to timestamps via URL is expected. Here are instructions on how to do this for videos posted to [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#), and [Google Drive](#).

Panelists review each work sample to the extent required to evaluate the work. Work samples may not be viewed in their entirety.

- **Is it accessible?** It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure links remain public and accessible during the review period. Double check permission settings on links, and test them before submitting. If the work sample must be password protected, provide the password for panelists to access it. If your work sample contains flashing or strobing lights, be sure to mark this in the application.

#### **Tips for Work Sample Selection:**

- **Is it relevant to the application?** If possible, include samples of the work to be performed at the proposed engagements.
- **How do the samples connect to the engagement?** Use the work sample description fields in the application to describe how your work samples connect to your proposed activity. This can be especially helpful if you do not have a sample of the work to be performed at the proposed engagement. You can also use this space to provide additional context to the panel about your work sample, what they are seeing, and how it relates to your application narrative.
- **Who is featured?** If the performers in the work sample and those going to the proposed engagement are not the same, please include a brief explanation in your note about the work sample.
- **Are they too similar?** Since two work samples are required, it is helpful for panelists to see contrasting samples, or samples pulled from two separate pieces of work.
- **Is it heavily edited?** Work samples should not be short clips edited together to show every aspect of a performance, but rather uninterrupted selections that show what it would be like for an audience member attending your performance.
- **Is it current?** When possible, samples should not be more than three years old.
- **Did you phone a friend?** It can be helpful to get feedback from friends or colleagues before submitting work samples.
- **Is it a promo?** Mid Atlantic Arts will not accept the submission of marketing videos or sizzle reels as they do not provide an adequate representation of an artist/ensemble's work.
- **For dance or theater artist/ensembles, work samples must be videos and document a live performance.** As heavy editing can detract from panelist viewing, it is discouraged.
- **For music artists/ensembles,** it is allowable to include work samples that are audio only, but panelists prefer to see video work samples of a live performance, rather than a studio session. If you need to include an audio only sample, it is recommended that your second sample include video.
- **Does it show you at your best?** Work samples should represent the work of the applicant and should be of the highest quality possible as panelists both familiar and unfamiliar with the artist/ensemble will be judging artistic excellence.