America250 Public Art Grant

a mini-public art glossary & MAC America250 FAQs

This nine-page document has two sections. The first section is a mini-public art glossary of 29 key terms and definitions specific to the public art discipline. The second section are 12 FAQs to assist eligible applicants in navigating the MAC America250 Public Grant.

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This is a working document subject to change as we navigate the world of public art.

mini-public art glossary

ADA Accessibility: ADA accessibility refers to the accessibility standards established under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which apply to places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and state and local government facilities. ADA Accessibility Guidelines

- Sources
  - https://www.ada.gov/
  - https://www.access-board.gov

- MAC's working definition for accessibility: Making sure everyone can take part in arts and cultural activities. This can mean removing barriers and making changes so everyone can join in. It can include the public in planning and reviewing a project. Any steps should match what each organization can afford and manage, since every organization is different.
  - MAC Accessibility Resources

For questions or concerns about your project's accessibility plans, please contact MAC's Arts Industry Director and Accessibility Coordinator, Victoria Meek, at 601.359.6031 and vmeek@arts.ms.gov.

Built Environment: A broad term describing an environment made by humans versus a natural environment. For example, a city skyline or a downtown main street economic area.

Community Engagement: A multi-layered strategic process that provides opportunities for the public to be informed and participate in the decision-making of the artwork.

Commissioned Work (also known as "a commission"): A formal agreement between an artist and an organization, funder, or private patron to create a specific work.

Concept Proposal: A written and visual presentation outlining an artist's initial idea for a public art project.

Cross-Disciplinary (also known as multidisciplinary): Cross disciplinary art forms can be performance art, interactive works, multimedia performances, and other artistic collaborations that go beyond the boundaries of a traditional art form.

Cultural Stewardship: The responsibility to honor and protect the cultural and historical integrity of a community through art.

Digital Art (also known as Technology-Based Art): Art created or presented through digital technology. Examples include, but are not limited to, digital painting, types of photography, AI, virtual reality, and 3D modeling.

Fabrication: The process of producing a visual artwork, which may include the use of paint, metal, including the direct process of working with these mediums.

Functional Art: Art that serves a practical purpose as well as having a significant aesthetic.

In-Kind: a distribution, or the substitution of goods or services in lieu of money.

Installations: Artwork that is embedded into a space.

Integrated Artwork: Artwork that is built into a designated site, such as a tile mosiac on the side of a biking tunnel.

Interactive Art: Art that depends on human interaction in order for the artwork to be considered complete.

Interpretive Materials: Texts, signage, or digital content that help the public understand the meaning, context, or process behind an artwork.

Land Art (or Earth Art; is part of the larger concept of Environmental Art): Artwork made directly into the landscape and often use natural materials found in the landscape. Examples include Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, Walter De Maria's The Lightning Field, Richard Long's A Line Made By Walking.

Maintenance Plan: A document that explains how a visual public artwork should be cleaned, maintained, repaired, and cared for over a period of time.

One-to-One Match (also known as 1:1 or dollar-for-dollar): a nonprofit contributes a match to the amount contributed by the funder. For example, if the funder states that a $10,000 grant is a 1:1 cash match, the nonprofit must raise $10,000 in order for the funder to match it. The total amount raised would then be $20,000.

Permanent Art: Artwork intended to remain in place indefinitely, often requiring long-term maintenance.

Placekeeping: The active care and maintenance of a place and its social fabric by the people who live and work there.

Placemaking: A collaborative process to transform public spaces into vibrant, meaningful places that encourage community connection and activity.

Public Art: There is not one way to define public art, but there are elements that many can agree on. Here are few ways that public art can be addressed:

- Mississippi Arts Commission's working definition of public art: Public art is the intentional presentation of any artistic discipline in a public space with free public access, designed to activate the space and foster community dialogue.

- Americans for the Arts: "Simply put public art is art in public spaces. The term "public art" may conjure images of historic bronze statues of a soldier on horseback in a park. Today, public art can take a wide range of forms, sizes, and scales—and can be temporary or permanent. It often interprets the history of the place, its people, and perhaps addresses a social or environmental issue. Public art can include murals, sculpture, memorials, integrated architectural or landscape architectural work, community art, digital new media, and even performances and festivals!"

Public Art definitions continue on page four.

- Association for Public Art: "Public art is not a singular art 'form.' Its size can be huge or small. It can tower fifty feet high or call attention to the paving beneath your feet. Its shape can be abstract or realistic (or both), and it may be cast, carved, built, assembled, or painted. It can be site-specific or stand in contrast to its surroundings. What distinguishes public art is the unique association of how it is made, where it is, and what it means. Public art can express community values, enhance our environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions. Public art is a reflection of how we see the world—the artist's response to our time and place. In a diverse society, all art cannot appeal to all people, nor should it be expected to do so. To some degree, every public art project is an interactive process involving artists, architects, design professionals, community residents, civic leaders, politicians, approval agencies, funding agencies, and construction teams. As our society and its modes of expression evolve, so will our definitions of public art. Materials and methods change to reflect our contemporary culture. Public art is a part of our public history, part of our evolving culture and our collective memory." Adapted from Public Art in Philadelphia by Penny Balkin Bach (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1992).

- National Endowment for the Arts: "Perhaps a better term for public art would be community art—by, for, and of the community in which it is presented. Sometimes the art can be practical, integrated within stormwater management systems for example, or a health-related public space. But it doesn't even have to be visual art. Citywide sings are public art, as are dance performances in national parks, or orchestras playing in local bars. Public art also can be a source of community healing."

Public Space: Shared areas for the public that encourages interaction, helps design community identity, and is intentionally built for all people to have access to. Examples are, but not limited to: national and state parks, rivers, downtown squares, streets and sidewalks, community centers, libraries, playgrounds, community gardens, cemeteries, public pools, farmers' markets.

Site-Specific: Refers to when an artform is intentionally created through meaning, form, and function to be inseparable from its surroundings. If artform is removed and placed elsewhere, it loses its meaning. Site-specific art does not have to be permanent. Architecture and landscape architecture theories, techniques, and methods tend to play a bigger role within this field. Examples include The Washington Monument, Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Gee's Bend Quiltmakers, James Turrell's Skyspace: The Way of Color.

Social Practice: an art form that integrates artistic creation with social interaction, community involvement, and collaboration, emphasizing change and dialogue

Temporary Artworks (also known as Ephemeral Art): Artworks that are non-permanent, such as theatre performances, dance recitals, music performances, and temporary installations.

Third Spaces (also known as Third Places): Termed by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, third spaces are spaces that is not your home (first space) or your job (second space). A third space is a neutral space for people to gather and participate in shared activities. Can also be referred to as the community space, "the spot", gathering spot, "the meet-up", etc. These spaces are essential to American socializing and combating against isolation. Another way of looking at third spaces is a place where neighbors are neighborly.

- It can look like a place where you have to spend money to be present and engage, such as a restaurant, coffee shop, or bingo hall.
- It can look like a place where folks ritually gather because it is trusted, such as a front porch, place of worship, an alleyway, and house basement dance parties on Friday evenings.
- It can also overlap with a public space especially if it is a site that community frequently gathers in for shared activities. There is currently a movement to save, preserve, and identify third spaces.
- Source: The University of Chicago | English Language Institute

Unveiling: Revealing a finished artwork to the community intended to deepen project impact and expand audiences while acknowledging community participants and partnerships.

Sources:

- Steps Public Art | stepspublicart.org/
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC, Boston) | artsandplanning.mapc.org/
- NEA | arts.gov/sites/default/files/Presenting_fact_sheet_nov2016.pdf

MAC America250 FAQs

May I use both a Mississippi Arts Commission America250 Public Art Grant and a Mississippi Humanities Council America250 Grant for the same project as a cash match?

An eligible applicant may not use both a MAC grant and an MHC grant as a cash match for the same project.

We encourage you to consider applying for an MHC America250 grant if you have a separate project that complements or supports the broader goals of your public art project. You might also consider partnering with other nonprofits whose projects align with your overall vision, and encourage them to seek MHC funding.

Please note that the MHC America250 program does not fund 2D or 3D visual public art projects. MHC-supported projects should demonstrate a well-informed approach, reflecting some degree of scholarship or expert knowledge about the subject matter. "Expert knowledge" is interpreted broadly and may include academic, professional, or community-based expertise.

When can my project take place?

All expenses towards the creation of your public artwork must be incurred between March 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026. It may then be shared with the public anytime after your public art has been created.

Public sharing can take many forms, such as an unveiling, festival, ceremony, parade, free workshop, online talk, or even a public exhibition documenting the creative process.

Whether or not you receive a MAC America250 Public Art Grant, we'd love to keep a record of your America 250 semi quincentennial event. Please send any relevant event information to Simone Cottrell, MAC Special Initiatives Director at scottrell@arts.ms.gov.

Additionally, we encourage you to send any of your events to Visit Mississippi for their events calendar. https://visitmississippi.org/event-submission/

When does the grant portal open and close?

The MAC America250 Public Art grant application portal opens November 17, 2025, 12:00 AM CST and closes on January 15, 2026, at 11:59 PM CST. We will not accept late applications.

Please make sure that you have created an E-Grant account with MAC to access your application.

arts.ms.gov/apply

What are the two grant types?

$12,000 grant is for eligible applicants whose FY26 operating budget is more than $250k.

$8,000 grant is for eligible applicants whose FY26 operating budget is less than $250k.

Though various entities are eligible to apply, MAC America250 Public Art Grant prioritizes Mississippi arts and culture nonprofits.

MAC believes that every corner of Mississippi has a story to tell. For the MAC America250 Public Art Grant, we aim to award one of each grant type to the five Mississippi regions – The Gulf Coast, Capital-Rivers, The Pines, The Hills, and The Delta.

Is there a required cash match?

Yes. For both MAC America250 Public Art grant types, there is a 1:1 match.

There is a requirement of a minimum 10% cash match, while the remaining 90% can be in-kind.

Can artists' fees count as in-kind contributions?

Artists' fees cannot be used for in-kind contributions to the project budget.

Can these grants fund a pre-existing project?

Yes, as long as they adhere to the MAC America250 Public Art grant guidelines. Specifically, the expenses for the public art project must be incurred between March 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026.

Who are not eligible for a MAC America250 Public Art grant?

- Individuals
- For-profits
- Organizations that are not Mississippi-based
- Organizations that have received a cumulative total of $30,000.00 or more of MAC grant awards in FY26.

What is the grant review process like?

MAC staff reviews grant applications for eligibility. A review panel of professional artists, creatives, and arts administrative professionals will review and score all eligible grant applications. Administered by MAC staff, the panel meets to review scores and discuss proposals. Ten (10) grants will be awarded, five (5) for the $12,000 grant and five (5) for the $8,000 grant. MAC aims to have each of the five major Mississippi regions represented through one of each grant type. Major Mississippi regions include are The Gulf Coast, Capital-Rivers, The Pines, The Hills, and the The Delta. Scores are assigned based on the criteria for MAC's America250 Public Art Grants:

- Project is strongly aligned to one or more MAC America250 Public Art Grant themes (20 points)
- Reasonable and responsible project budget (20 points)
- Artistic quality (30 points)
- Community ties, collaborations, and partnerships (30 points)

Can I use AI?

Mississippi Arts Commission: Working Guideline on Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use in the Arts

The Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC) recognizes artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool that can support and enhance human creativity.

MAC acknowledges the value of generative AI in improving accessibility and supporting individuals of varying abilities who wish to engage arts and culture, both creatively and administratively. MAC maintains that human authorship and creative intent must remain at the core of all artistic and administrative processes.

Answer continues on page nine.

Can I use AI?
Mississippi Arts Commission: Working Guideline on Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use in the Arts
FAQ Continued

For grant applications, a human applicant must develop, review, and enter all required data. In the creation of artworks, a human artist, creative, or collective must serve as the primary author and creative force behind the work.

The final result must reflect human authorship and intent, rather than generative AI-generated work (e.g. lacking a personal voice, specific details).

If I'm awarded a grant, do I have to use the America250 and America250 Mississippi logo?

Yes, both the America250 and America250 Mississippi logos must be used for awardee's materials. The Mississippi Legislature designated funds for the America250 Mississippi grants program to engage as much of the state as possible in marking this important anniversary in our nation's history and, importantly, Mississippi's contributions to our national story. By using the America250 Mississippi logo consistently and prominently with your funded programs and communication, you help create a unified visual identity that connects local projects to this larger national commemoration. The logo serves as a recognizable symbol of Mississippi's role in America's 250-year journey, strengthening awareness, credibility, and pride in the initiatives supported by the grant. It also ensures audiences recognize how individual stories, events, and programs are part of a coordinated effort to honor history, foster reflection, and inspire participation in this once-in-a-generation milestone.

Still have questions? We'd love to help!

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