



COLORADO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Creative District Certification and Recertification Guidelines

About Colorado Creative Industries

Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) is a division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. Established to capitalize on the immense potential for our creative sector to enhance economic growth in Colorado, the mission of Colorado Creative Industries is to promote, support and expand the creative industries to drive Colorado's economy, grow jobs and enhance our quality of life. www.coloradocreativeindustries.org

About Creative District Certification

Arts and culture are a vital component of [Colorado's economic and cultural vitality](#), playing an important role in community resiliency and recovery. The mission of the Colorado Creative District Program is to recognize districts that are contributing to Colorado's economy through creativity, culture and the arts. The program supports these districts in their endeavors to bolster investment, job growth and local incomes through supporting strategic investments in the development of creative places.

CCI administers the Colorado Creative District Program. The Creative District enabling legislation passed in 2011 (HB11-1031) offers vetted districts access to marketing, data, funding and other support. CCI supports the development of Creative districts around the state in order to:

- Attract artists and creative entrepreneurs to a community, infusing new energy and innovation, which in turn enhances the economic and civic capital of the community
- Create hubs of economic activity, thereby enhancing the area as an appealing place to live, visit and conduct business, as well as create new economic activity
- Attract visitors
- Revitalize and beautify communities
- Provide a focal point for celebrating and strengthening a community's unique identity
- Showcase cultural and artistic organizations, events and amenities
- Contribute to the development of healthy communities. CCI sees a healthy community as one with good social, as well as economic capital; which implies a commitment to equity. In a healthy community, all residents benefit from economic and community development.
- Improve the quality of life of Colorado's residents

Creative Districts Defined

Districts must go through a rigorous application and certification process in order to become a Certified Colorado Creative District. Certified Creative Districts must meet a number of important criteria:

- Clearly define their unique place and niche, and identify what sets them apart. This includes being specific about the district's demographic makeup and identifying how its diverse residents, businesses, and organizations contribute to the district's distinct cultural identity.
- Comprise a geographically contiguous area
- Be distinguished by physical, artistic or cultural resources that play a vital role in the quality of life of the community, including its economic and cultural development
- Be the site of a concentration of artistic and cultural activity, a major arts or culture facility, arts and entertainment businesses, arts and cultural activities or artistic/cultural and creative sector production
- Be engaged in promotion, preservation and educational aspects of arts and culture; provide interpretive, education or entertainment uses.

Program Benefits and Opportunities

In addition to recognition by the State of Colorado, the program provides support for Certified Creative Districts. All financial awards are subject to availability of CCI funding through annual state appropriation funding. Benefits and opportunities include (but are not limited to):

Funding

- Newly Certified Districts will receive a cash award of up to \$10,000 (cash match required)

Marketing

- In partnership with the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO), CCI facilitates a Creative District marketing strategy to support tourism and bring Colorado's Creative Districts to a national audience.
- In partnership with OEDIT's Chief Marketing Officer, CCI will develop and pitch content and news about how creativity is changing Colorado through the work of Creative Districts.
- In partnership with CDOT, two standard highway signs will be placed on state highways near Certified Creative Districts

Data and Impact Analysis

- CCI will collect and distribute statewide economic data on the impact of creative districts. This information will be used to help leverage more investment in

Creative Districts, and will support districts locally in their efforts to obtain public sector, grant and foundation monies

- CCI will contract with WESTAF to provide access to the Creative Vitality Suite, an online platform for creative economy data. CCI will support districts in leveraging data to demonstrate impact
- CCI will report out on collective impact of Certified Creative Districts

Funding to Support Economic Growth

- CCI 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

Facilitation of Shared Learning Community

- CCI will facilitate access to resources and facilitate a learning community among Districts. Learning will include contemporary ideas and best practices for community and economic development; understanding and addressing inequities; understanding how to engage property owners, residents, and cultural groups in the strengthening of the community's culture and identity.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants for Colorado Creative District Certification must be:

- A structured entity representative of a community located in Colorado (e.g. municipal or county government, a registered neighborhood organization, downtown or economic development authority, 501 (c) 3 or 501 (c) 6 or other)
- An entity representing an area formally recognized as a creative or arts district
- A creative district or organization with a mission reflecting a commitment to arts and culture and/or creative placemaking
- An organization with a minimum \$10,000 cash operating budget
- An organization with paid staff to manage the activities and reporting requirements of the district

Creative District Pre-Application Checklist

Communities applying for Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) Creative District Certification should meet the following minimum requirements:

- Formally recognized organization by local government
- Broad community support and buy-in (by organizations, property owners, residents-including renters, and representatives of all demographic sectors)
- Sustainable funding source(s)

- Paid staff to manage the activities and reporting requirements of the district (this can be a dedicated percentage of time)
- Strategic plan (preferably covering 3-5 years) Strategic plan should include goals related to equity, including a working definition for equitable economic development and strategies for providing equitable support and representation to diverse cultural assets.
- Advisory or governing board
- Easily recognized for creative assets (have authentic story or creative brand)
- High concentration of creative organizations, businesses, venues, etc
- Walkable and/or easily navigable
- Minimum \$10,000 operating budget

Communities that do not meet the minimum requirements or do not wish to commit to the full program can access resources at www.callyourselfcreative.org and join the CCI mailing list to stay updated about additional opportunities.

Application Process

Creative District Certification is for a period of five years. The 2021 districts applying for re-certification are:

- Breckenridge Creative District
- Carbondale Creative District
- Crested Butte Creative District
- Fort Collins Creative District
- Golden Triangle Creative District
- Mancos Creative District

Applications for recertification are the same as new applications and should be reviewed using the same criteria.

New Applicants

New applications are accepted by invitation only. If your community meets the criteria listed in the pre-application checklist please contact Christy Costello, Christine.costello@state.co.us to learn more about the invitation process.

Deadline & Timeline

April 2021 Thursday June 3, 2021 June 2021 June/July 2021 July 2021	Grant information and support staff available Online application submit deadline – 4:00 p.m. Review panels evaluate applications In person and/or virtual site visits Recommendations approved by CCI council
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Review Criteria and Procedures

The following criteria and weights will be used by reviewers to evaluate and rank applications (See **APPENDIX A – APPLICATION OUTLINE**)

- **Creative district information (30%)**
 - Documented concentration of artists and creative sector workers
 - Arts and cultural institutions located within the district
 - Economic data provided such as sales tax, visitors, maps, other
 - Budget including sustainable funding and staff resources
 - Strength of strategic planning process, plan and goals
 - Strength of strategic plan and goals in addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- **District characteristics (40%)**
 - Character, authenticity, sense of place, “it” factor
 - Attractiveness of district for visitors
 - Amenities including brand recognition, signs, community spaces, access to open space and outdoor amenities
 - Schedule of activities, including authentic and unique offerings
 - Livability, including support services and complimentary retail activity
 - Walkability and alternative transportation, such as bike paths or public transportation
- **Community buy-in and leadership (30%)**
 - Board structure and community representation
 - Consistent leadership on board and staff
 - Strategic investments by district and local agencies
 - Inclusion of district in community planning documents such as comprehensive plan, infrastructure, housing, zoning, economic development plans
 - Local leadership and vision for how district will evolve in the future
 - Broad participation and input from residents and people living within and adjacent to the District. Strong evidence of engagement of individuals and groups mirroring the demographics of the community.

Online Application Submission

This document contains program guidelines only. New users will need to register for an account on the CCI Grants Portal (<https://co-cci.smapply.org>).

All users are required to log into the portal and complete the online application. All support materials are uploaded into the online system. No hard copies or emailed copies of the application or support materials will be accepted. We recommend that applicants register in the portal and review the online grant system with plenty of time before the deadline to allow staff proper time to assist with any questions or issues. Each organization has a Primary

Administrator for their organization's portal account. This is the only person who can add members to the organization's account. (See **APPENDIX C – GRANT PORTAL**)

Reporting Requirement & Cancellation

- Creative Industries has the right to withhold, reduce or cancel awards if an applicant does any of the following:
- Misses deadlines for reports
- Does not notify the CCI of significant management changes or instances of fraud or embezzlement
- Fails to comply with the terms of the grant award requirements
- Demonstrates inadequate financial management and oversight
- Does not properly credit CCI support
- Fails to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the previous section of this document

Appeal Process

Applicants may appeal the Council's decision concerning a grant application.

However, dissatisfaction with the denial is not sufficient reason for an appeal. Grounds for appeal are evidence that:

- The stated review process was not followed; or
- The Council's Conflict of Interest policy was violated.

A written appeal, describing the grounds for appeal and a desired remedy, must be sent to the Chair of the Colorado Creative Industries no later than three (3) weeks from the date of the notification of denial. The Council will reconsider its decision at its next regularly scheduled meeting after receipt of the written appeal.

Other Conditions of Funding

As a condition of the grant, Colorado Creative Industries requires the recipient of public funds to comply with all state and federal laws and regulations. Those terms and conditions can be found here: [state terms](#), [federal terms](#), and [grant terms](#).

All material submitted regarding application for grant funds becomes the property of the State of Colorado and is subject to the terms of Colorado Revised Statutes 24-72-201 through 24-72-206, Public Open Records. The State of Colorado has the right to use any or all information/material presented in reply to the Announcement, subject to limitations for proprietary or confidential information. Disqualification or denial of the application does not eliminate this right. Any restrictions on the use or inspection of material contained within the proposal shall be clearly stated in the proposal itself. The contents of the application will become contractual obligations if the project is funded.

Credit/Acknowledgment – Grantee agrees that a current CCI logo will be included in all announcements and promotional materials and efforts will be made to publicly credit CCI support in any public events related to the funding program and activities. Recipients may also use the current National Endowment for the Arts logo if desired.

Grantee agrees to send a letter to their state legislators, informing them of the importance of State funding.

APPENDIX A – APPLICATION OUTLINE

CCI believes that a healthy community is one in which social as well as economic capital is built—meaning that community members benefit from increased economic opportunity, as well as stronger networks and social bonds that bridge and benefit from diverse experience and knowledge. For this to happen, any property or business owner, resident or tenant should have a voice in the planning and execution of their creative district. Because building social capital implies that the district must demonstrate a commitment to cultural equity and preserving the shared heritage of a place, we will seek evidence of this throughout your application as it is relevant to creative district information, district characteristics and community buy-in.

Cultural equity embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.

Narrative Questions

Each narrative question in the online application allows for 350 words. You should prepare answers to the narrative questions in a word processing or notepad document, check the word count and then cut-and-paste into the online application

CREATIVE DISTRICT INFORMATION

- What is the name of the Creative District? (This is how the district is commonly known in the community and in marketing efforts; it does not have to match the legal managing entity name.)
- Please upload a map of (or provide a link to a map) of the Creative District. (Attachment)
- What is the Creative District's organizational and governance structure e.g. 501(c)(3), 501(c)(6), partnership with local government, Business Improvement District, Registered Neighborhood Organization, other?

- Who provides oversight of the Creative District (i.e. a working group, a board of directors)?
- Please upload a list of the names and affiliations of those involved in the oversight group named above, as well as the length of time each has served. (Attachment)
- Describe the Creative District organizational structure including the paid staff and role of the volunteers. How many, what are their roles, and how long have they been involved? What is the budget for staff salaries and/or consultants? If the Creative District has in place any policies or practices designed to promote diversity, equity, or inclusion in the hiring of employees or for the recruitment of board members or other leadership positions, please describe.
- How has the Creative District engaged stakeholders and invited business owners, residents, artists, and others to participate in planning and decision making?
- What is the Creative District's budget? How is the District funded and what are the sources of funds? Do you have a plan for financial sustainability?
- Does the Creative District have a membership structure? If so, how many members are in the Creative District and what is the membership dues structure?
- Upload the Creative District strategic planning document. (Attachment) Make sure that the plan addresses the building of social capital, as well as economic outcomes. How will or does your Creative District promote both economic development, as well as a stronger and more inclusive community? How will your Creative District reflect the history and heritage of the place; as well as the people, both present and past, who live, work, and play there?
- Please provide a working definition of "equitable economic development" as it relates to your district and describe the district's equitable economic development goals and strategies. (See Policy Link's article ["Creating Change Through Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development: A Policy Practice Primer"](#) for case studies and an examination of this topic)
- Please provide the top 3 short-term and top 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? Make sure that you address challenges of social capital-building and addressing inequities (for example, demographic groups that may not have been involved in the planning for the District to date)
- How do you see certification as a Creative District advancing your district and your community?
- Upload job description(s) for paid staff (Attachment)
- Upload a sample promotional tool (e.g. brochure, guide, advertisement, poster, etc.) (Attachment)
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- For re-certification only, please describe 2-3 successes, challenges or lessons learned during the initial certification period (OPTIONAL).

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

- Describe the demographics of your district: population, age groups, median household income level, relative populations of groups of varying cultural backgrounds, relative makeup of commercial and residential property, % of properties owned by absentee owners. Which groups have been there the longest and who are the most recent?
- Please define the unique cultural heritage story of your district. In particular, share how your district's history relates to its present story and future plans. See the cultural assessment self-study forms under resources.
- How has your district established a unique physical sense of place? Do you have district wayfinding and signage? Streetscape? Art?
- What does cultural diversity mean in your community/district? Do you have businesses or organizations that attract or showcase certain groups or cultural heritage?
- What is the one thing that sets your district apart from other Creative Districts? In other words, what is your unique niche and what are your key differentiators?
- Please provide the number of creative establishments and/or the number of creative workers within the Creative District currently. Describe the data source, collection method and the definition of the types of establishments and/or workers.
- Please provide the number of creative sector jobs in the Creative District. Describe the data source, collection method and the definition of jobs counted.
- Please provide the number of children and youth directly benefiting through Creative District activities (Including students, participants & audience members). Please describe the activities through which they are receiving benefit.
- Estimated number of visitors to your Creative District annually and reason for these visits (i.e. is it primarily event driven, venue driven, other)
- What is the mix of other businesses and uses within your district? I.e. is your district primarily retail/commercial, residential, industrial, etc.?
- Please provide other meaningful data you have collected for your Creative District (e.g. Property value trends, sales tax data, occupancy rates, rental rates, crime statistics, etc.)
- If appropriate, please upload a document with photos showing the unique sense of place described above. (Attachment)
- Does your district have any signature events? What other ways does your district engage with the community? (Attachment)
- Upload a document with up to 3 images that capture the essence of the district. (Attachment)

- Upload a short community profile based on section 4 of the Cultural Assessment self-study (Attachment)

COMMUNITY BUY-IN

- Upload a local government ordinance or planning documents that provide evidence of local government endorsement of the Creative District. (Attachment)
- Upload a letter of recommendation from your mayor, city manager or director of planning, community/economic development or cultural affairs supporting your efforts to apply for Creative District certification. (Attachment)
- Upload a letter of recommendation from your CVB, Chamber of Commerce or Tourism Association supporting efforts for Creative District certification. (Attachment)
- Upload a letter of recommendation from a creative entrepreneur such as an artist or business owner who works and/or lives in the District. (Attachment)
- Upload short letters of recommendation, consolidated into a single pdf, from property owners, business owners, residents (including tenants), and other stakeholders supporting Creative District certification. Letters of recommendation should represent the diversity of stakeholders residing and doing business within the district and help reviewers to understand the full breadth of benefits that the district provides/will provide.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- Upload a simple line-item budget showing cash and in-kind revenue and expenses separately. Budget does not need to adhere to a specific format. (Attachment)

APPENDIX B – RESOURCES

- Call Yourself Creative, callyourselfcreative.org
- Webinar: [Cultural identity, Creating a Competitive Position for your Creative District](#)
- [Cultural Self-Assessment](#) tool
- Policy Link, “Creating Change through Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development: A Policy and Practice Primer,” 2018. <https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/arts-culture-equitable-development>
- Dare to Reimagine, <https://www.daretoreimagine.org/>

APPENDIX C – GRANT PORTAL

Each organization should have only **one organization account** assigned to a Primary Administrator. This admin can add members to the organization and give access to applications. If registering for an account in the grant portal for the first time, there are 3 steps to complete:

- Register as an individual or organization

- Verify your email address
- Complete the eligibility quiz

Each time a user logs into the portal, the system defaults to the individual account. If you are trying to access organization applications, you will need to switch to the organization account by selecting your name in the upper left corner. (additional [grant portal instructions](#))

To successfully submit your application, all tasks must be completed and then the submit button will be available. A confirmation email will be sent upon a successful submission.

Staff Contacts

Applicants seeking assistance are advised to contact CCI staff well in advance of the application deadline. Prior to contacting a staff member, applicants should read the guidelines thoroughly.

Colorado Creative Industries
1600 Broadway, Suite 2500
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: 303-892-3840

Email: oedit_creativeindustries@state.co.us

Website: <https://oedit.colorado.gov/colorado-creative-industries>

For questions about the Colorado Creative District Certification application:

Christy Costello
303-892-3724
Christine.Costello@state.co.us

For General questions and assistance in using the online grant system:

Sami Wells
303-892-3822
Sami.Wells@state.co.us