



# THE JOYCE AWARDS

## Joyce Awards 2026 Self-Nomination Guidelines

These are the guidelines for artists interested in self-nominating for the 2026 Joyce Awards, a program that supports artists and culture bearers based in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin whose visionary creative practices meaningfully impact and advance racial equity in their communities.

**Please read the eligibility requirements, award criteria, and our FAQs below. Self-Nominations can be submitted via the [online nomination form](#).**

Please reach out to our team with any questions at [initiatives@unitedstatesartists.org](mailto:initiatives@unitedstatesartists.org).

### Overview

The Joyce Awards provide direct, catalytic support to Great Lakes-based artists and culture bearers through unrestricted awards of \$100,000, paired with a \$40,000 grant to an eligible organization selected by the artist to help realize, expand, or deepen the impact of the artists' work in the region. United States Artists (USA) will administer the Awards in two cycles. Eligibility will rotate by state: artists based in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin will be eligible in 2026, while artists in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio will be eligible in 2027. Following a nomination, application, and panel review process, four Awards will be awarded in each year.

**Artists and culture bearers working in *Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin* are invited to submit self-nominations now through May 4 for the 2026 cycle.** Eligible nominees must be working in the visual arts, performing arts, film and media, multimedia, literary arts, or other traditional, interdisciplinary, or community-based cultural practices. The Joyce Awards support artists whose visionary creative practices explore issues related to racial equity and deeply engage their communities through collaborative approaches.

## Timeline

Self-Nomination Portal Opens	<b>April 14, 2026</b>
Self-Nomination Portal Closes	<b>May 4, 2026 at 5:00 PM CDT</b>
Application Opens	<b>May 7, 2026</b>
Application Closes	<b>June 30, 2026</b>
Application Review Period	<b>July–August 2026</b>
Awardee Notification	<b>September 2026</b>
Public Announcement	<b>November 2026</b>

## Expectations

### Confidentiality

We kindly ask that you keep your self-nomination confidential, so that we can maintain consistency of an undisclosed nominee pool overall.

### Integrity

To maintain integrity in this process, we ask that you represent yourself accurately and ensure that your artistic practice meets the eligibility requirements and aligns with the evaluation criteria of the award program.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for the 2026 Joyce Awards, you must:

- Be 21 years of age or older;
- Live and work in Michigan, Minnesota, or Wisconsin;
- Be eligible to receive taxable income in the United States;

- Have a dedicated artistic practice in the visual arts, performing arts, film and media, multimedia, literary arts, or other traditional, interdisciplinary, or community-based cultural practices;
- Have demonstrable experience producing public-facing artistic and cultural projects that collaboratively engage Great Lakes communities and people on issues related to racial equity;
- Be able to nominate an organizational partner in your community or region with whom you have either an established relationship of past support or a relationship in its early stages to receive an organizational grant to help realize, expand, or deepen the impact of your work;
- Have not previously received a Joyce Award as an individual artist.

*Please note that United States Artists (USA) reserves the right to make final eligibility determinations on a case-by-case basis. USA will vet all submitted nominations for eligibility. Eligible nominees will then be invited to submit an application via SlideRoom, an encrypted application platform. Self-nominating does not guarantee eligibility or an invitation to apply. All eligible candidates will be notified with instructions on how to submit their application.*

## Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria. Please be sure that your artistic practice embodies the following:

- **Vision:** Does the applicant have a distinct vision that reflects their artistic and field expertise? Is the vision relevant and responsive to the place and communities they are engaging?
- **Engagement:** Does the applicant demonstrate thoughtful and compelling approaches to engaging community members or publics through their work – for example, through collaboration, co-creation, reciprocity, or other meaningful forms of connection?
- **Racial Equity:** Does the applicant’s work meaningfully advance racial equity within or in relation to the specific community, place, or context in which they work?

- **Timing & Impact:** Would the award significantly advance the applicant’s artistic development, professional trajectory, or ability to realize their vision – and expand the impact of their work?
- **Organizational Partner:** Is it clear that the organization would meaningfully support or advance the applicant’s vision, practice, or community impact?

## FAQs

### **What is new for this cycle of the Joyce Awards from previous years?**

The new Joyce Awards center Great Lakes artists and culture bearers by providing \$100,000 unrestricted artist awards and other resources to support artists’ flexibility, growth, and community partnerships, including a \$40,000 organizational grant. The new cycles are no longer structured as project-based commissioning awards. Eligibility has expanded *statewide* in six Great Lakes states, including major cities as well as rural and tribal communities. The 2026 cycle will provide awards to eligible artists based in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The 2027 cycle will provide awards to eligible artists based in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. For each award cycle, United States Artists will solicit nominations from leaders in the field and open a public, online portal for artists to self-nominate.

### **Who is the award intended to support?**

The 2026 Joyce Awards supports leading artists and culture bearers living and working in Michigan, Minnesota, or Wisconsin who have demonstrable experience producing artistic and cultural work that meaningfully engages communities and people on issues related to racial equity. Joyce Awards artists are rooted in communities most impacted by systemic racism and other inequities. Their work involves thoughtful, compelling, and relationship-based approaches to engaging community members and publics – such as collaboration, co-creation, reciprocity, or other meaningful forms of connection. The application will require artists to provide narrative descriptions and work samples about relevant past projects and experience, what social issues they addressed, and how they engaged community members.

### **What kinds of artistic practices does the award support?**

Eligible candidates have a dedicated artistic practice in the visual arts, performing arts, film and media, multimedia, literary arts, or other traditional, interdisciplinary, or community-based cultural practices. We understand that many artists work across disciplines or in interdisciplinary ways. Please reach out to us if you have any concerns about the eligibility of your practice.

**How do you define artistic work that advances racial equity?**

Artistic and cultural work that advances racial equity centers the lived experience, histories, and cultural expressions or traditions of people or communities that have been historically marginalized, excluded, or impacted by systemic racism and other structural inequities. This work may take many forms – such as performances, exhibitions, installations, storytelling initiatives, visual interventions, community practices, workshops, or participatory projects – but should demonstrate a clear connection between the artist’s practice and efforts to strengthen inclusion, representation, community voice, or agency. This may include countering historical erasure, fostering healing, elevating underrepresented perspectives, or contributing to more equitable narratives and futures.

**Are artist duos, collectives, or collaboratives eligible?**

The Joyce Awards are open to individual artists or culture bearers, as well as artist duos or collectives who have an established practice of producing work together. Collectives must have a majority of their members based in the eligible geographic area, and the majority of the collective's work should also be conducted in that area. Artist duos and collectives must submit one nomination form and one application form, naming one member as the lead contact. Also, please note that if a single award of \$100,000 is awarded to a duo, collective, or collaborative, they can determine how to split the funds, but the award will still total \$100,000.

**Does the award support organizations or businesses?**

Please nominate yourself as an individual artist. Individuals may work for organizations or businesses; however, please specify yourself as an individual rather than an entity you may represent. As part of the subsequent application process, you will identify one organization to receive a \$40,000 grant to support your vision, work, or impact in the community, should you be selected as a Joyce awardee. These organizations can be community organizations, arts/cultural organizations, or

businesses and must be based within one of the six Great Lakes states: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, or Wisconsin. Artists may not nominate an organization with whom they are a founder, current staff, or have fiduciary responsibility, which includes being a board member.

**Do artists have to be U.S. citizens?**

No. However, to receive funds, you must be able to receive taxable income in the United States and will be asked to provide a W9 and Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

**How do I confirm (in)eligibility based on being a past recipient of a Joyce Award?**

Individuals who were recognized and received support as a lead commissioned artist as part of a past Joyce Award are not eligible to be nominated, apply for, or receive a Joyce Award in 2026. This does not include artists who may have collaborated on a past Joyce Award commissioned project. If you are unsure about this eligibility criterion, please contact us.

**Is financial need a factor in the award selection process?**

Financial need is not a factor in the selection process. However, we understand that the award will make a significant impact. Awardees will receive an unrestricted award of \$100,000. Should you be awarded, USA will work with each artist on the financial aspects of the award.

**What is a recommendation statement?**

The recommendation statement is a required field in the nomination form for a short explanation about why you would be a good candidate for the award. This information will only be used internally by our staff and will not be shared with the panel. This statement helps us better understand your self-nomination from a more personal perspective.

**Can I tell people that I nominated myself?**

We kindly ask that you keep your self-nomination confidential, so that we can maintain consistency of an undisclosed nominee pool overall.

**How are the awardees selected?**

Eligible nominees will be notified and invited to submit an application via SlideRoom. Applications will be reviewed in a two-tier selection process. First, a group of external readers – recruited for their field expertise regionally and nationally – will determine a list of semifinalists for the award. The semifinalists will then be reviewed by a four-member panel of regional and national arts leaders to determine and recommend finalists for the award.

**What is the award selection timeline?**

In early May, eligible nominees will be invited to submit an application. The two-part review process will take place in July and August. All applicants will be notified in September 2026. The awardees and the reviewers will be announced publicly in November 2026.

**Can I provide feedback on the nomination and grant-making process?**

Yes! We are excited to learn and improve our process based on feedback from everyone we engage with. The Joyce Awards is a collaborative partnership between the Joyce Foundation and United States Artists to invest in and support individual artists and culture bearers and the sustainability of the arts ecosystem of the Great Lakes region, and we're grateful for your help in the process! Please feel free to reach out to the USA team at [initiatives@unitedstatesartists.org](mailto:initiatives@unitedstatesartists.org) with thoughts, comments, or concerns.

**The 2026–2027 Joyce Awards are supported by The Joyce Foundation.**