THE SPARK AWARD FOR OREGON ARTISTS
2024 PROGRAM GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation believes that the arts connect us to each other in powerful and surprising ways and help us make sense of our world. We celebrate the vital role artists play in enriching community life and the lives of all Oregonians and recognize that artists are essential to our state’s vitality.

For over two decades, the Foundation has funded the arts throughout Oregon, primarily through supporting the work of arts organizations and programs. We are now pleased to introduce our new Spark Award program to provide direct support to working artists in Oregon. This is a three-year pilot program during which the Foundation expects to support 60 individual Oregon artists in total (20 per year) across artistic disciplines with a grant of $25,000 to each.

The goal of this program is to sustain and advance the practice of working artists in Oregon. We see this as an important investment in both artists and the communities throughout our state who will continue to benefit through engaging with these artists’ work into the future. Just as Miller prioritizes general operating support for organizations rather than programs, we are proud to expand our grant offerings with this new funding initiative that aims to invest in an artist’s overall creative development instead of a specific project. This approach takes into consideration the entirety of an artist’s needs, from living expenses to research to material support.

WHO THIS PROGRAM AIMS TO SUPPORT

This program is intended to sustain working artists who are entering or are at a midpoint of their career: applicants should be 30 years or older and able to demonstrate at least seven years (not including schooling) of a sustained art practice with likely future contributions in their discipline(s). This funding is intended to support artists during a crucial phase of their creative development and help address a range of barriers that might get in the way of sustaining and advancing their practice beyond its current stage.

This program is not focused on supporting artists who are in an advanced stage of their careers (i.e. artists who have experienced ongoing professional recognition and success over many years).

This program is for individual artists rather than artistic teams.
We define a **working artist** as someone with *an individual artistic practice* that is *current and ongoing*, and whose work is *accessible to and engages with the community*. We do not expect that working artists have a practice that necessarily supports them as their primary source of income. Participation in or completion of a creative or other degree program is *not* a prerequisite for applying to this program.

*If you have questions about your eligibility, contact us at [artists@millerfound.org](mailto:artists@millerfound.org).*

**FLEXIBLE FUNDING**

The Foundation recognizes that working artists have a wide variety of needs in pursuing their creative and career development, from the creation of an art object or performance to covering living expenses that allow them to pursue professional arts opportunities. This funding is *intended to provide a flexible source of funding* that can advance an artist’s creative practice in any number of ways. The funding is *not* intended to support a specific project. The funding may be used to support any activities that will remove barriers to creative development and to sustain artistic practice.

It is our intention that this funding provide artists with time to explore, reflect, connect, or create work at a particularly important moment in their artistic development. Some artists might use the funding for living expenses such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, childcare or healthcare, for example. Others might choose to cover the costs of studio space, travel, materials and equipment, development of their skills as a teaching artist, or professional services.

There are two types of expenses that these funds cannot support:

1) Tuition toward a college degree program; and

2) Compensation for work an artist is doing as an employee of a nonprofit organization with an arts-based mission. We would like to ensure that organizations who receive funding from the Miller Foundation to support their staff and operations are not receiving duplicate support through this program (i.e. supporting the creation of a single work with Miller organizational support AND a Spark Award).

**DISCIPLINARY FOCUS BY YEAR**

Each year of the pilot program will support working artists in a particular set of disciplines.

**2024: Performing Arts**

Individual artists creating original work in the performing arts: dance, music, theater, and other
performance practices, traditional and folk performance, culture-bearers, and interdisciplinary artists whose work includes the performing arts as one of the primary forms

2025: Literary and Media Arts
Individual artists creating original work in the fields of literary art and media arts: narrative film, video, or new media, traditional and folk artists, culture-bearers and interdisciplinary artists whose work includes the literary or media arts as one of the primary forms

2026: Visual Arts
Individual artists creating original work in the visual arts: two-dimensional, three-dimensional, non-commercial photography, non-narrative/experimental digital video or film that is presented in exhibition or installation context, traditional and folk artists, culture-bearers and interdisciplinary artists whose work includes the visual arts as one of the primary forms

Applicants will be asked to select their discipline category and provide a short discipline description that details their practice (i.e. Category: Music and Description: I’m an opera singer; Category: Theater and Description: I perform original spoken word pieces, etc.).

Interdisciplinary artists should apply in the year where they think they would be most competitive based on the primary discipline represented in their practice.

If you have questions about whether your work is eligible or which year you should apply, please reach out to us at artists@millerfound.org.

ELIGIBILITY
To be eligible for this grant program, applicants should be individual artists who meet the following criteria:

- **7+ years of active practice** in their primary artistic discipline or combination of disciplines (not including schooling)
- have **presented their work to audiences/the community** on a regular basis
- practice involves creating **new work** (rather than interpreting, translating, arranging, or copying the work of others)
- entering, or at a **midpoint** of their art career (“midpoint” is defined here as an artist able to demonstrate a sustained artistic practice of 7+ years, with likely future contributions in their discipline/s)
- **30 years or older**
• have been a resident in the state of Oregon for the last five years and at the time of application and anticipate staying in residence for the next year. This includes enrolled members of tribal communities situated in the state. A “resident of Oregon” is a person who would be required to file a resident Oregon income tax return.

• not currently enrolled in a creative degree program (Associate, low residency, undergraduate or graduate)

• not be a family member of an employee or board member of the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation, or the Foundation's namesakes (Family member is defined as a spouse, domestic partner, parent, child or sibling.)

The Miller Foundation does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.

**APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS**

A panel of artists, curators and arts professionals will review applications and make recommendations to the Miller Foundation Board of Directors for final approval each year. The Foundation will award 20 awards of $25,000 annually. The one-time, $25,000 award can be paid in either a single installment or in multiple installments within 13 months of first installment. Award recipients will not be eligible to apply again during the three-year pilot program.

Applications will be screened first for eligibility.

**Program Timeline – Year 1**

*Guidelines available:* July 2024

*Application period opens:* July 2024

*1:1 Spark Support:* September 17 & 18, 2024 (For more info [visit our website](#))

*Open Support Session:* September 25, 2024 (For more info [visit our website](#))

*Application deadline:* October 2, 2024 by 5pm

*Award announcements:* Early 2025

*Awardee Report:* Approximately a year after awards are announced, recipients will be asked to provide a narrative report, in written form or through an interview with Foundation staff, describing how this funding has supported their creative development and/or advanced their artistic career to date. We will not require a presentation of new artistic work created as a result of Award funds.
**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Panelists will consider the following criteria when evaluating applications in the performing arts category:

- **Originality:** Artist’s work demonstrates a distinctive vision and voice, communicates unique perspective/s. *(Artist Statement, Work samples)*

- **Skill:** Artist demonstrates strong technical skills and craft in the execution of their work and shows an ongoing commitment to working in this form. *(Work samples)*

- **Community:** Application demonstrates sustained audience/community engagement with applicant’s artistic work. *(Resume/CV, Work samples)*

- **Timing and Potential:** Application provides compelling evidence that funding will have a significant impact on the artist’s creative development at this juncture in their career and will support their artistic potential. This could be by removing barriers to sustaining and advancing the artist’s practice or serving as a catalyst to a new stage of artistic development. *(Narrative questions, Resume/CV)*

*Please note:* Italicized text in parentheses indicates which application materials are most relevant to the evaluation of those particular criteria.

**APPLICATION PREVIEW**

**IMPORTANT:** The questions are provided here *for reference purposes only.* Individuals **must** submit their application through the Grants Portal. **Applications submitted by email will not be considered.**

**Profile Questions:**

- Name
- Preferred pronouns
- Email
- Phone number
- Mailing address
- Residence address (if different than mailing address)

**Eligibility Questions:**

- **Minimum Age:** Are you 30 years of age or older (by 12/31/24)?
- **Artistic Discipline**: Are you a working artist currently creating performing art that aligns with this year’s funded disciplines listed above?

- **Oregon Resident**: Have you been a resident of Oregon for the last 5+ years, and do you anticipate remaining a resident for the next year?

- **Career Stage**: Applicants should be individual artists able to demonstrate the following:
  - At a midpoint of your professional art career
  - Have been a practicing artist for 7+ years (not including schooling) creating original work in your chosen artistic discipline or combination of disciplines
  - Have a practice that involves creating new work (rather than interpreting, translating, arranging, or copying the work of others)
  - Have been presenting your work to audiences/your community in Oregon on a regular basis

  Do you have a resume/CV and samples of original artistic work that demonstrates the criteria above?

- **Employee of an arts-based nonprofit organization**: Are you a working artist who is currently an employee of an Oregon nonprofit with an arts-based mission? (excluding contract work). *Answering ‘Yes’ does not necessarily make one ineligible to apply.*
  - Do you have an individual artistic practice independent of the work of the organization by which you are employed?

  *The Spark Award for Oregon Artists is intended for individual artists who have an individual artistic practice independent from the work of their employer.*

- **Student status**: Are you currently enrolled in a creative degree program, or will you be within the next year (Associate, low residency, undergraduate, graduate)?

- **Conflict of Interest**:
  - Are you a family member of an employee or board member of the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation, or the Foundation’s namesakes? (Family member is defined as a spouse, domestic partner, parent, child or sibling.)

*Application Questions:*

- **Applicant details**:

  **Preferred name**
Pronouns

Artistic discipline:
Please select your discipline category from the list below. Then you will provide a short description that details your practice (e.g. Category: Music; Description: I am an opera singer)

Artist website and/or social media handles (if applicable)

If you include links here, only include links to accounts that are focused exclusively on your work as an artist.

Demographics (This information is collected solely for data and reporting purposes and will not be visible to panelists.)

Employee of Oregon nonprofits with arts-based mission:

Is your role artistic or administrative?

Does your artistic practice exist independently from your employer?

What is the name of your employer?

What is your job title?

Please note: If you are employed at an Oregon nonprofit with an arts-based mission, please only apply for the Spark Award if you have an individual artistic practice independent of the work of the nonprofit organization by which you are employed.

1. The Spark Award for Oregon Artists provides grant funds to support the work of individual artists rather than the work of arts organizations. Arts organizations are eligible to receive operating support through other Miller grant programs.

2. We would like to ensure that organizations who are eligible to receive funding from the Miller Foundation to support their staff and operations are not potentially receiving duplicate support through this program (i.e. supporting the creation of a single work with Miller organizational support and a Spark Award).

The Spark Award is intended to enrich the Oregon arts ecology through funding to Individual Artists. Please only apply if you have your own artistic practice separate from your employer.
Discipline Category:
- Dance
- Music
- Theater
- Folk & Traditional
- Other performing art

Discipline Description:
Within the discipline you selected above, please provide a short description of your artistic practice. (limit to 200 characters with spaces)

- **Bio:** Please tell us a bit about yourself, such as where you grew up, what led you to become an artist, or any other information that might not be included in other parts of your application. (limit to 2000 characters with spaces)

- **Artist Statement:** Please share your background and journey as an artist. Tell us about your work, including your influences and how your work has developed over time. What are your current investigations or curiosities? (limit to 2500 characters with spaces)

- **Impact on creative development:** How would this funding provide momentum for your creative development at this particular time in your artistic career? How would this funding help address barriers or enhance your ability to sustain and advance your practice? (limit to 3500 characters with spaces)

Reminder: This funding is intended to support you as an artist. As such, the funding may be used to support any activities and aspects that sustain your practice, including - but not limited to - living costs such as rent, healthcare, childcare, and/or trainings, materials, equipment, research costs, etc. This funding does not need to be used in support of a specific project. However, the application should describe how the funding can advance your creative development and artistic career.
**Engagement:** Who do you see as a primary audience(s) for your work? Can you share an instance of engaging Oregon audiences/community in the recent past? (limit to 2500 characters with spaces)

**Additional required materials:**

- **Resume/CV [PDF]:** (5 pages maximum) Upload a resume/ CV in a single document. The document should provide details of any training and/or background and experience related to your current artistic practice. This could include, depending on your discipline(s), a history of recent performances, presentations, exhibitions, grants/awards, residencies, community work or other relevant activities. Do not include general employment history or other information unless it is pertinent to your artistic practice.

- **Work Samples for performing arts applicants (eligible in 2024):** (minimum of 3, maximum of 7) Please provide links to locations where your work is hosted rather than uploading files, if possible.

  *The work samples you submit are the most important part of your application.*
  
  o Provide work samples that have been completed in the last seven years that you consider the best examples of your creative work.

  o If your work samples include other people, please identify yourself and specify your role in the event/performance. We recommend you primarily provide work samples where you are in a lead role.

  o **Work sample descriptions:** Please provide the title of the work, year the work was created, and your role (dancer, choreographer, composer, etc.). Also, please provide cue points or page numbers for each.

*Please note that panelists will be reviewing a high volume of applications.* Accordingly, it is best to select work samples that will leave a strong impression within the first few minutes of review.

*Unless specific cue points or page numbers are indicated, panelists will review the first 3 minutes of each video/audio sample.*

**Panelists will review a maximum of 15 minutes of video or audio in total** for each applicant. Additional material will be reviewed solely at the panelists’ discretion. Please submit no more than a combined total of 15 minutes video/audio.

You may link or upload a minimum of 3 work samples, and no more than 7 total work samples.
Preferred method: For audio and video files only, provide links to hosted media rather than uploading files to the portal. For example, you can provide links to media posted on YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, or other sites. When providing links, be sure to include any necessary passwords.

If you choose to upload files, please limit file sizes to the following:

- Video: up to 250MB each (.avi, .m4v, .mpg, .wmv)
- Audio: up to 30MB each (.aiff, .mp3, .wav)
- Image: up to 5MB each (.jpg, .png, .pdf)

WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

With this new funding opportunity, we are happy to offer new avenues of support:

- **How to Apply** video: a short overview by Miller team members of what to expect when applying for the Spark Award (in late July, this video will be available at MillerFound.org/artists).
- **1:1 Spark Support**: On September 17 and 18, 2024 we will offer 15-minute, one-on-one meetings with prospective applicants on Zoom or over the phone, to provide individualized application support. **Register in advance** here.

Potential applicants should thoroughly review all application documents and requirements prior to scheduling and prepare for the session with specific questions.

**Open Support Session**: During this one-hour open Zoom work session on September 25, 2024, Miller Foundation program staff will be available to support applicants by answering questions about the application and facilitate a shared virtual workspace where applicants can gather to work on their applications in community. **Register for Zoom** here.

Potential applicants should thoroughly review all application requirements prior to attending.

- **Access**: The Miller foundation is committed to making this opportunity accessible to everyone. Please get in touch with us at artists@millerfound.org to request translation, interpretation, or other assistance you might require in completing this application.
- **Contact us**: We are happy to answer your questions about the application (technical, eligibility, assistance). **Please do not wait until the day of the deadline to get in touch**: artists@millerfound.org.
2024 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Updated July 19, 2024)

Please see complete program information at millerfound.org/artists and in our guidelines (PDF).

Who is eligible to apply for the Spark Award?

In 2024, Oregon artists in the performing arts who are 30 years of age or older with 7+ years of a sustained art practice (not including schooling), and who are regularly creating and presenting new work to audiences, are eligible to apply. Applicants must have been Oregon residents for the last five years and at the time of application. Please review the full eligibility criteria, as well as a list of those who are ineligible to apply: https://www.millerfound.org/grants/artists-grant-program#additional-info

Why are only artists in the performing arts eligible to apply in 2024?

This is a three-year pilot program during which the Foundation expects to support 60 individual Oregon artists in total (20 per year) across artistic disciplines. Each year will focus on a different discipline(s). In 2024, we will support artists in the performing arts; in 2025, literary artists and media artists; and in 2026, visual artists.

I'm a literary artist, when can I apply for the Spark Award?

You are eligible to apply in 2025. Look for details in March 2025.

I'm a media artist, when can I apply for the Spark Award?

You are eligible to apply in 2025. Look for details in March 2025.

I'm a visual artist, when can I apply for the Spark Award?

You are eligible to apply in 2026. Look for details in March 2026.

How do you define an artist in the midpoint of their career?

“Midpoint” is defined as an artist 30 years or older who is able to demonstrate 7+ years (not including schooling) of a sustained art practice with likely future contributions in their discipline(s). A post-secondary degree, creative or otherwise, is not a requirement.

Emerging artists (less than seven years of professional practice outside of schooling) and artists in the later stages of an artistic career (an artist who has experienced ongoing professional recognition and success over many years) are not eligible to apply.

Is there a minimum age to apply for the Spark Award?

Yes, artists must have turned 30 years or older by December 31, 2024.
What is a working artist?
A working artist is an individual currently creating original work and sharing that work with audiences/the community on a regular basis.

We do not expect that working artists have a practice that necessarily supports them as their primary source of income.

What if I’m part of a collaborative team?
This funding is to support individual artists rather than artistic teams. Applicants can work with collaborators if they choose to do so, but only individual applicants will be considered.

I lived in Oregon for more than 5 years but just recently moved away, am I eligible to apply?
No. Applicants must be Oregon residents at the time of application and anticipate staying in residence for the next year.

Do the last 5 years of Oregon residency have to be continuous?
Yes. Brief absences are acceptable as long as you maintained an Oregon residence during that time period (a “resident of Oregon” is a person who would be required to file a resident Oregon income tax return).

I’m getting a degree in a non-art related program, am I eligible to apply?
Yes.

I’m currently enrolled in a creative degree program, am I eligible to apply?
No. Applicants may not be currently enrolled in a creative degree program (Associate, low residency, undergraduate or graduate).

What if I’m a permanent employee of a nonprofit organization with an arts-based mission that is eligible to apply for other Miller Foundation grant support?
Applicants employed by an arts organization in an artistic capacity are only eligible if they have an individual artistic practice independent from the work of that organization. These grant funds are intended to support the work of individual artists rather than the work of arts organizations. We would like to ensure that organizations who are eligible to receive funding from the Miller Foundation to support their staff and operations are not potentially receiving duplicate support through this program (i.e. supporting the creation of a single work with Miller organizational support AND a Spark Award).

I’m new to writing grant applications, do you have resources to help me get started?
Yes. Learn more about available resources at https://www.millerfound.org/grants/artists-grant-program#get-help

Do I have to create a new work with the funds from the Spark Award?
No. This funding does not need to be used in support of a specific project.
Is there a recorded info session I can watch?
Yes. In late July, we will post a short informational video on our website at:
www.millerfound.org/artists-grant-program

I need help completing my application, what are my options?
Email Yaelle Amir, Spark Program Associate at artists@millerfound.org.

I’m having trouble with the Grants Portal, who can help me?
For technical support accessing our Grants Portal, you can email tech@millerfound.org. For assistance with your application or for other questions about the program, please contact Yaelle Amir at artists@millerfound.org.

When are applications due?
Applications are due by 5:00PM on Wednesday, October 2, 2024. Late submissions cannot be accepted.

Do you accept late submissions?
No, late submissions will not be accepted. For this reason, please begin filling out your application at least several days prior to the deadline.

Can I submit my application via email?
No. Applications must be submitted through our Grants Portal, available by visiting www.millerfound.org. Email applications cannot be accepted.

If you need assistance with our Grants Portal, email tech@millerfound.org

Who will be reviewing the applications?
A panel of artists, curators and arts professionals will review applications and make recommendations to the Miller Foundation Board of Directors for final approval each year.

Are there restrictions on how the Spark Award funds are spent?
This funding is intended to support you as an artist. As such, the funding may be used to support any activities and expenses that sustain your practice, including - but not limited to - living costs such as rent, healthcare, childcare, and/or training, materials, equipment, research costs, etc.

There are two types of expenses that these funds cannot support:

1) Tuition toward a college degree program; and

2) Compensation for work an artist is doing as an employee of a nonprofit organization with an arts-based mission. [We would like to ensure that organizations who receive funding from the Miller Foundation to support their staff and operations are not receiving duplicate support through this program (i.e. supporting the creation of a single work with Miller organizational support AND a Spark Award).]

Do I have to pay taxes on the award funds?
Yes, award funds are taxable income and recipients will be issued a 1099 tax form at the end of
the year. Award recipients will be offered the option to receive a free, one-hour consultation with a tax accountant.

How long do I need to stay in Oregon if I receive the award?
You should only apply if you anticipate remaining an Oregon resident for the next year.

When will I hear back about whether I’ve been selected for an award?
All applicants will receive notification via email by the end of January 2025, regardless of the outcome.

If I’m selected to receive an award, when is the earliest I can expect to receive the funds?
If selected for an award, you will be asked to complete a grant agreement and W-9. Once completed, the Foundation will issue payment(s), by March 1, 2025. Recipients can receive the award in a lump sum or in multiple payments. The funding is taxable income.

This document was last updated on July 17, 2024.