



Arts Internship Program

2026 ARTS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Arts Internship Program offers paid summer internships for Milwaukee-area high school students, providing hands-on job experience in the arts while fostering essential 21st-century skills.

By partnering with local arts organizations, the program creates meaningful opportunities that benefit both students and organizations. Interns develop valuable skills for a variety of career paths, while partner organizations gain support from creative and motivated youth.

In the summer of 2025, 51 high school students completed internships at 14 partner organizations, collectively earning \$124,188 for 9,935 hours of work experience.

Organizations interested in hosting interns should carefully review these guidelines before applying.

Program manager:
Erin Fonseca, Manager– Afterschool Arts & Humanities
Department of Recreation and Community Services
erin@mkerec.net | 414-475-8479

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Program Overview	Page 2
2026 Program Changes	Page 2
Funding & Partnership	Page 3
Partner Organization Eligibility Criteria	Page 5
Internship Position Eligibility Criteria	Page 5
Partner Organization Application Process	Page 6
Student Application Process	Page 6
Addendum 1: History of Program Changes Since 2020	Page 8
Addendum 2: Important Dates & Deadlines for 2026	Page 9

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Through a partnership between Milwaukee Recreation and local arts organizations, the Arts Internship Program was created to provide high school students with paid summer internships that combine career exploration in the arts with practical job skills and valuable work experience. Internships span between 40 and 400 hours, and take place during summer months, from June through the end of summer.

Each intern works closely with a supervisor or mentor to achieve key objectives:

1. Become more prepared for future work experience
2. Gain confidence in applying for future jobs, internships, etc.
3. Learn new skills in the focus area of their internship
4. Gain a deeper understanding of the work that goes into completing a work of art or implementing a program
5. Build a professional network of mentors that will support them in achieving their future goals

Since its inception in 2010, the program has offered meaningful job experience to over 700 high school students.

In recognition of its impact, the Arts Internship Program received the Chase Economic Development Award and Wells Fargo People's Choice Award at the 2021 Milwaukee Awards for Neighborhood Development Innovation.

2026 PROGRAM CHANGES¹

1. The organization and intern application have been moved to SurveyMonkey Apply.
2. Organizations will be required to sign up for a filmmaking support session with a filmmaker contracted by Milwaukee Recreation to support interns in creating their reflection videos.

¹ [See attached Addendum 1 for history of program changes since 2020.](#)

FUNDING & PARTNERSHIP

→ **What Milwaukee Recreation Provides:**

1. Financial awards to partner organizations cover interns' hourly wages, fringe benefits, transportation, and modest overhead expenses related to the internship.
 - Awards are up to \$25,000.²
 - The minimum hourly wage for interns is \$12.50 per hour.³
 - Transportation support is provided through WisGo Cards.
 - Overhead expenses may not exceed 15% of total budget.
 - Awards are distributed on a reimbursement basis once a cost report has been submitted and approved by Milwaukee Recreation.
2. Intern application management, including providing access to the online application and distributing submitted application packets to organizations.
3. General job skills training and information sessions for interns on financial literacy, careers in the arts, networking, etc., for interns, including:⁴
 - Two mandatory training sessions throughout the internship period:
 - Intern orientation on June 18, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM. *Note: Supervisors are required to attend a portion of the intern orientation.*
 - Intern check-in on July 16, 2026 from 2:00 – 5:00 PM. *Note: Supervisors are NOT required to attend the intern check-in.*
 - A mandatory final celebration and presentation of internship reflection videos:
 - August 13, 2026 from 3:00 – 7:00 PM
4. Guidelines, prompts, and filmmaking support for intern video reflection assignment.
 - Supervisors are responsible for monitoring interns' progress and ensuring the assignment is completed.
5. An orientation meeting for all intern supervisors on May 7, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM.
 - Supervisors new to the program should arrive at 10:00 AM.
 - Returning supervisors should arrive at 11:00 AM, unless they would like a program refresher, in which case they are welcome to join at 10:00 AM.
6. Administrative tools, including:
 - A post-program evaluation survey for interns, administered by Milwaukee Recreation.
 - Photo and video documentation, when available.
 - Financial reporting templates and procedures.
 - A final report summarizing program outcomes and impact, to be completed by partner organizations.

→ **What Partner Organizations Provide:**

² Organizations that have participated in the program for more than two years are eligible to host more than five interns, thus increasing the amount they can request.

³ Organizations opting to pay more than \$12.50 per hour will be responsible for covering the additional cost.

⁴ [See attached Addendum 2 for important dates and deadlines for 2026, including events and assignments.](#)

1. All aspects of recruitment, interviewing, hiring, supervision, and payment of interns in compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations for hiring minors.
2. Ensuring interns attend all Milwaukee Recreation-led required training and events.⁵
3. Job-specific orientations and training, separate from Milwaukee Recreation-led sessions.
4. Support in completing interns' required assignments, including the final reflection video.
5. Assessment data, which Milwaukee Recreation will collect at the end of the internship period.
 - Partner organizations must:
 - Ensure all interns complete the post-program evaluation by September 30, 2026. The evaluation will be administered at the final Showcase.⁶
 - Complete a final report by September 30, 2026. The final report will be emailed to organizations following the Final Showcase.⁷
6. An Unlimited WisGo Card (Milwaukee County Transit System transportation pass) for each intern
 - WisGo Cards must be purchased by the organization and reloaded monthly until the end of the intern's summer or August 31, 2026, whichever comes first.
 - WisGo Cards must be available by the first day of the internship or by the intern orientation on June 18, 2026, whichever comes first.
 - The organization is not required to purchase WisGo Cards for interns who choose to use their own transportation.
7. Payment for all interns within two weeks of work being performed and no later than the end of the contract term (September 30, 2026).
8. All personnel, supplies, equipment, etc. necessary to perform the services of this Arts Internship are the responsibility of the organization.
9. Submission of a single cost report to Michelle Porter (via email to recfinance@milwaukee.k12.wi.us, USPS, or drop-off at 5225 W. Vliet St., Rm 162) by the end of the contract period (September 30, 2026). *Note: Only one cost report per organization will be accepted. All expenses must be properly documented in order to receive reimbursement.*
10. A supervisor for all hired interns.
 - Organizations hosting more than five interns must assign at least two supervisors.
 - Supervisors are required to attend the following events:
 - A supervisor orientation on May 7, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
 - Supervisors new to the program will arrive at 10:00 AM. Returning supervisors will arrive at 10:45 AM, unless a program refresher is desired (in which case, they will also arrive at 10 AM).
 - An intern orientation on June 18, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

⁵ If an intern fails to attend all mandatory orientations, trainings, workshops, the Final Showcase, reflection assignments, and/or the final reflection video, they will be ineligible for full payment of 20 hours for Milwaukee Recreation-sponsored trainings, events, and assignments.

⁶ Cost Report reimbursements will not be paid until all interns have completed the post-program evaluation.

⁷ Cost Report reimbursements will not be paid until the organization completes the post-program evaluation.

- Supervisors will attend only a portion of the intern orientation.
 - A final celebration on August 13, 2026 from 3:00 – 7:00 PM
 - *Supervisors are NOT required to attend the intern check-in on July 16, 2026.*
- Milwaukee Recreation does not reimburse for supervisor wages.
- Organizations must conduct and submit a Wisconsin Department of Justice Criminal Background Check (CBC) for all supervisors (as well as individuals who are expected to have direct, unsupervised contact with interns, and interns age 18 or older). CBCs must be submitted via [this form](#) at least one month prior to any contact with interns.

PARTNER ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. Organizations are eligible to apply for the Arts Internship Program if they:
 - Are currently funded via the Partnership for the Arts & Humanities; or
 - Have been funded via the Partnership for the Arts & Humanities in the past; and/or
 - Have participated in the Arts Internship program in the past.⁸
2. First-time applicants are eligible to host up to two interns. Organizations that have participated in the program for more than two years are eligible to host more than five interns.
3. If an organization fails to fill 50% or more of its allotted positions in the preceding year, it will be ineligible to receive the full number of interns requested on its application the following year.
4. If an organization's interns attended less than 80% of mandatory orientations, trainings, workshops, and/or the final celebration in the preceding year, the organization's award eligibility will be reduced the following year.

INTERNSHIP POSITION ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. Each internship should span a total of **at least 40 hours** between the student's last day of school for the 2025-26 school year (June 15, 2026 for MPS students) and the student's first day of school for the 2026-27 school year (September 1, 2026 for MPS students).
 - All internships must be concluded by August 31, 2026.
 - Interns may work during summer weekday, evening, and/or weekend hours.
2. A minimum of 75% of hours must involve *direct contact with art media*.
 - A maximum of 25% of hours may be allocated to administrative duties.
 - Internships *specifically designed around arts administration or arts education* are exempt from this requirement.
3. Interns must be assigned a supervisor⁹ who will oversee or work directly with them. Supervisors are responsible for:
 - Assisting interns in setting goals for their summer internship.
 - Supporting interns in achieving their future career goals.
 - Conducting regular check-ins with interns.

⁸ Organizations that do not meet the eligibility requirements may be allowed to apply for the program at the discretion of Milwaukee Recreation. Please contact Erin Fonseca at erin@mkerec.net | 414-475-8479 for more information.

⁹ Organizations that host more than five interns must assign at least two supervisors.

- Managing all administrative duties, such as scheduling, approving timesheets, and facilitating assessments.
4. Internships should aim to achieve the following objectives:
- Student interns will become more prepared for future work experience.
 - Student interns will gain confidence in applying for future jobs.
 - Student interns will learn new skills and abilities in the area of focus of their internship.
 - Student interns will gain a deeper understanding of the production, hard work, and dedication that goes into completing a work of art or project in the area of focus of their internship.
 - Student interns will build a professional network of mentors to support them in their future goals.

PARTNER ORGANIZATION APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Applications must be submitted via the online application form available [here](#).
 - The form will open on January 12, 2026.
 - The form will close on February 9, 2026 at 5:00 PM.
2. Interested and eligible organizations must complete the online application form (limit: one per organization), providing details on:
 - The art program or project the intern(s) will support.
 - The duration and number of hours of the internship(s).
 - The nature of the internship(s) and what the intern(s) will accomplish.
 - How the organization and supervisor will support the intern(s) in achieving the objectives of their internship and preparing for future career opportunities.
 - A proposed budget, including intern wages and fringes, transportation (WisGo Cards for interns), and overhead expenses.
3. Milwaukee Recreation staff and community representatives will review and score proposals, with scores playing a key role in determining awards.
4. Organizations will be notified in early March whether they have been approved to host interns.
 - Milwaukee Recreation may request a revised proposal including budget and/or position descriptions, before entering into a contractual agreement with any partner organization.

STUDENT APPLICATION PROCESS

1. To be eligible to serve as an intern for the Arts Internship program, individuals must:
 - Be at least 16 years of age unless the hiring organization indicates that the position or positions are open to students who are 15 years of age and older.
 - Be a high school equivalent student.
 - Be a resident of the city of Milwaukee OR currently enrolled in an MPS high school.
 - It is preferred, but not required, that individuals be considered economically disadvantaged.
2. Once contracts are executed, Milwaukee Recreation will release the Arts Internship Application (both online and in PDF/print form) for prospective interns on April 13, 2026.

- Milwaukee Recreation will share the application and descriptions of available internships with partner organizations via the Milwaukee Recreation website, the MPS Job Fair, and other channels.
 - Funded organizations should distribute the application and position descriptions through their own channels as well.
 - *Note: Milwaukee Recreation is not responsible for recruiting interns for partner organizations.*
3. Milwaukee Recreation offers application information sessions and one-on-one support to assist prospective interns throughout the application process. Session dates will be announced once the Arts Internship Application goes live.
 4. Prospective interns will complete and submit the Arts Internship application, a letter of interest, and a list of 1-3 professional references via the Milwaukee Recreation-managed online application (available [here](#)) by June 12, 2026, or by their first day of work, whichever comes first.¹⁰
 5. Organizations are then responsible for interviewing, selecting, and hiring interns.
 - Organizations must complete the hiring process for all interns and report hired interns via [this form](#) by June 16, 2026.
 6. Organizations are responsible for all HR-related duties and requirements, including:
 - Confirming that student(s) they intend to hire are available for the mandatory Milwaukee Recreation-led trainings and events.
 - Verifying that all hired interns are either city of Milwaukee residents OR currently enrolled in a Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) high school.¹¹
 - Submitting work permits to Milwaukee Recreation for any interns who are 15 years of age. Proof of the work permit must be submitted via [this form](#) before the intern begins work or by the intern orientation on June 18, 2026, whichever comes first.
 - Conducting a Wisconsin Department of Justice Criminal Background Check (CBC) on each intern age 18 or older. Copies of CBCs must be submitted via [this form](#) before the intern begins work, or by the intern orientation on June 18, 2026, whichever comes first.¹²

¹⁰ The organization's Cost Report reimbursement will not be paid until all applications are submitted via the Milwaukee Recreation-managed portal.

¹¹ Organizations will not be reimbursed for any intern(s) who do not meet the city of Milwaukee or residency or Milwaukee Public School attendance requirements.

¹² The organization's cost report reimbursement will not be paid until all work permits and criminal background checks are submitted.

ADDENDUM 1: History of Program Changes Since 2020

2026 PROGRAM CHANGES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization and intern application have been moved to SurveyMonkey Apply. Organizations are required to sign up for at least one support session with a filmmaker contracted through MKE Rec.
2025 PROGRAM CHANGES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations will not be required to support the development and execution of an independent networking event for their interns. Instead, Milwaukee Recreation will incorporate networking skill-building and opportunities into Milwaukee Recreation-led intern events to support the achievement of objective 5 above. Supervisor Orientation schedule change: Supervisors new to the program will arrive at 10:00 AM. Returning supervisors will arrive at 10:45 AM, unless a program refresher is desired (in which case, they will also arrive at 10 AM). Milwaukee Recreation will no longer accept monthly or bi-monthly cost reports for expenses related to the Arts Internship Program. Instead, organizations will submit one final cost report upon completion of the program. Organizations are now required to conduct and submit a Wisconsin Department of Justice Criminal Background Check (CBC) for all supervisors, individuals who are expected to have direct, unsupervised contact with interns, and interns age 18 or older. Previously, organizations had the option to use various background check providers.
2024 PROGRAM CHANGES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocated paid time for MPS training/events/assignments has increased from 15 to 20 hours to ensure that there is ample coverage for all mandatory requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We may not use the entire 20 hours, but we ask that you build this into your budget. We have increased the hourly wage for Arts Interns to \$12.50 per hour. The award limit was increased to \$25,000 to account for the increased hourly wage for interns.
2023 PROGRAM CHANGES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have increased the hourly wage for Arts Interns to \$11.00 per hour.
2022 PROGRAM CHANGES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application now asks applicants to include the amount of time spent on arts-related activities or tasks in the Full Position Description section. We have added a few more hours of paid MPS training/event time for a total of 15 hours. We may/may not use the entire 15 hours for MPS-led trainings or events, but we ask that you build the time into your budgets just in case. We plan to host an application how-to workshop for prospective interns.
2021 PROGRAM CHANGES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have increased the hourly wage for Arts Interns to \$9.50 per hour. All internship positions will be included in Milwaukee Recreation's publicly advertised list of available positions.

2020 PROGRAM CHANGES:

- Partner organizations are not allowed to hire students 14 years of age.
- The Arts Internship Program student application will be available online and in print. Milwaukee Recreation will manage the online portal and distribute applications to organizations.

ADDENDUM 2: Important Dates & Deadlines for 2026

WHO	WHAT	WHEN
Organizations	Org application opens	January 12
Organizations	Org application closes	February 9
Prospective interns	Intern application opens	April 13
Prospective interns	Info session for interns	April 16 & 23
Organizations	Contract term begins	May 1
Supervisors	Supervisor Orientation (in person)	May 7, 10 AM - 2 PM <i>New supervisors arrive at 10 AM Returning supervisors arrive at 10:45 AM</i>
Prospective interns	Intern application closes	June 12 at 5:00 PM
Supervisors	All interns hired	June 16 at 5:00 PM
Supervisors & interns	Intern Orientation (in person)	June 18, 10 AM - 3 PM <i>Supervisors will attend only a portion of the intern orientation.</i>
Interns	Assignment: internships documentation due	July 16
Interns	Intern Check-in (in person)	July 16, 2 - 5 PM
Interns	Filmmaker support sessions (in person)	July 20-24 & July 30-August 4
Interns	Assignment: final video due	August 7
Supervisors, interns & community members	Intern Celebration (in person)	August 13, 3 - 7 PM <i>Interns arrive at 3 PM Supervisors and guests arrive at 4 PM</i>
Supervisors & interns	Post-program evaluations and final reports due	September 30
Organizations	Cost reports due	September 30
Organizations	Contract term ends	September 30

Note: A more detailed version of this document will be shared at the supervisor orientation.