

**COLORADO CREATIVE DISTRICT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**  
**Guidelines & Application Process**  
**CANDIDATES**



**This document contains program guidelines only. The online application portal will be available January 6, 2014.**

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**ABOUT COLORADO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

Colorado is a magnet for creative enterprises and creative workers. Indeed, with almost 8,000 businesses and 186,000 jobs, the creative sector comprises the state's 5th largest employment cluster. Colorado's Creative Industries (Creative Industries) Division, within the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, was established in July 2010 to capitalize on the immense potential for our creative sector to drive economic growth in Colorado. The Division merges the former Colorado Council on the Arts and the state's Art in Public Places program.

Our Mission

The mission of Creative Industries is to promote, support and expand the creative industries to drive Colorado's economy, grow jobs and enhance our quality of life.

Our 2011-2014 Strategic Plan Objectives

- Nonprofit and for-profit creative businesses, artists and creative entrepreneurs will have increased access to financial support, skill development and professional networking.
- Colorado will be recognized as a premier creative hub—a home for world-class creative businesses, productions and experiences.
- Opportunities for arts learning and creativity skills development will be available to Colorado youth to help them succeed in school and to be better prepared to enter the workforce.
- Local governments and coalitions will expand professional and financial support for creative businesses and cultural and artistic programs in their communities.
- All Coloradans will have access to creative environments and experiences.
- Colorado's unique cultural heritage will be preserved and promoted.

Programs and Services

To achieve our stated objectives, Creative Industries has established five priorities that guide our program development and budget:

- Increase access to direct financial support for creatives
- Create and expand professional development and networking opportunities for creatives
- Promote Colorado as a premier creative hub
- Increase access to arts and creativity skills in preschool through college education and workforce development
- Stimulate increased support for creatives by local governments and coalitions

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**ABOUT COLORADO’S CREATIVE DISTRICT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

In 2011, the Colorado legislature passed HB11-1031 encouraging the formation of Creative Districts in communities, neighborhoods or contiguous geographic areas, for the purposes of:

- Attracting artists and creative entrepreneurs to a community, infusing new energy and innovation, which in turn will enhance the economic and civic capital of the community;
- Creating 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;
- Attracting visitors;
- Revitalizing and beautifying communities;
- Providing a focal point for celebrating and strengthening a community’s unique identity;
- Showcasing cultural and artistic organizations, events and amenities;
- Contributing to the development of healthy communities; and
- Improving the quality of life of the State’s residents.

The legislation charges Creative Industries with providing leadership and a helping hand to local communities desirous of developing their own creative district by certifying Creative Districts, offering available incentives to encourage business development, exploring new incentives that are directly related to creative enterprises, facilitating local access to State assistance, enhancing the visibility of Creative Districts, providing technical assistance and planning help, ensuring broad and equitable program benefits and fostering a supportive climate for arts and culture.

The legislation is written broadly enough to ensure that the Creative District concept is relevant to places large and small, urban and rural, well-established and new. Creative Districts are defined as contiguous area that includes a mix of uses within their boundaries and are typically small enough to be walkable. All include a concentration of arts and cultural organizations and businesses, both nonprofit and for-profit. Most will incorporate complementary non-arts businesses such as restaurants, offices, retail stores, housing and lodging. All will be characterized by vigorous arts and cultural activity such as art walks and arts festivals. Often they will include community gathering places.

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**CREATIVE DISTRICT CERTIFICATION CRITERIA**

Creative districts accepted into the program work toward certification for two years and are called Candidates for Creative District Certification. This is not a grant-making program, rather, it is a program meant to develop the capacity and sustainability of creative districts as an economic and community development tool. The program is set up as an incubator to assist creative districts with a variety of elements that will ensure success.

In order to receive Certification status, a creative district must satisfy the criteria set forth in the Creative District Certification legislation, including:

- Comprise a geographically contiguous area;
- Be distinguished by physical, artistic or cultural resources that play a vital role in the quality of life of a 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 production; and
- Be engaged in promotion, preservation and educational aspects of arts and culture for community and provide interpretive, educational or recreational uses.

**ELIGIBILITY TO JOIN THE CREATIVE DISTRICT PROGRAM AS A CANDIDATE**

These guidelines are intended for Colorado towns, cities and neighborhood groups seeking formal designation from the State of Colorado as a Certified Creative District. Creative districts accepted into the program work toward certification for two years and are called Candidates for Creative District Certification. This two-year incubator program offers Candidate Districts a number of benefits in the form of direct funding, professional assistance, training and networking with peers. See the section titled What Creative District Candidacy Means, page 6.

Any community that believes its creative district is making progress towards meeting the Standards of Certification Criteria described on page 9 in these guidelines may submit a Letter of Interest to join the program as a Candidate. Candidacy will be July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2016. See Candidacy Application Process, page 11.

Eligible creative districts may have the following organizational structure or application in process:

- 501(c)(3) or application in process
- 501(c)(6) or application in process
- A unit of local government on behalf of the creative district
- Downtown Development Authority
- Business Improvement District
- A partnership between any of the above listed organizations

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**Eligibility continued...**

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**CANDIDACY APPLICATION PROCESS IN BRIEF**

This is a two-phase application process. The first phase is for interested communities to submit a Letter of Interest to Apply for Candidacy. **Letter of Interest materials must be submitted online by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, March 3, 2014. The online submission portal will be available January 6, 2014. See details in the Candidacy Application Process, page 11.**

The second phase of the process is for Creative Industries to review the Letters of Interest and conduct site visits. Creative Industries will schedule site visits of the strongest candidates. Up to 15 Creative Districts will be invited to submit an application for Candidacy. Applicants may attend the Creative Industries Summit in Salida (May 1 and 2) to receive pre-submission review of their application. Travel stipends may be provided. Up to seven Districts will be selected to join the Program as Candidates. **Creative District Candidacy Applications must be submitted online by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 23, 5:00 p.m. The online submission portal will be available in March 2014. See details in the Candidacy Application Process, page 11.**

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**DEADLINES**

**The Letter of Interest to Apply and Candidacy Applications will only be accepted online. See the deadlines below. No extensions will be granted.**

Monday, January 6	Online Letter of Interest portal available online
Monday, March 3, 5:00 p.m.	Letter of Interest to Apply due
March and April	Site visits will be conducted by Creative Industries staff
April 4, 5:00 p.m.	Applications due. Up to 15 communities will be invited to submit an Application for Candidacy
May 1-2	Invited applicants may attend the Creative Industries Summit in Salida to receive pre-submission review of their application. Travel stipends may be provided.
Friday, May 23, 5:00 p.m.	Candidacy Applications due. Materials must be submitted online
June 6	Panel reviews applications
June 16	Notification of selected Candidates
July 1	Two-year Candidacy begins
July 31, 2015-2016	Final reports due each July 31 through 2016
Spring 2016	Candidates apply for Creative District Certification

**WHAT CREATIVE DISTRICT CANDIDACY MEANS**

Becoming a Creative District Candidate in the Creative Industries Creative District Program has immense benefits, the first of which is recognition by the Colorado Governor’s Office and the Office of Economic Development and International Trade as a community that supports the local creative economy as an economic and community development strategy.

This is not a grant-making program, rather, it is a program meant to develop the capacity and sustainability of creative districts as an economic and community development tool. The program is set up as an incubator to assist Creative Districts with a variety of elements that will ensure success.

**Direct and Indirect Benefits**

To assist Candidate Creative Districts in maximizing their impact, Creative Industries provides a range of benefits from direct funding to indirect benefits. The direct funding includes \$5,000 for each of the two years of training, fiscal years 2015 and 2016, which the Districts must match.

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Once Candidate Districts fulfill the requirements of the two-year training program, they will be eligible to apply for Certification by Creative Industries. Once Colorado Certified, Districts will be eligible for further funding opportunities during the five-year certification period.

In addition to direct funding, there are indirect benefits to improve the capacity and sustainability of Districts. **The value of benefits averaged \$32,000 per Creative District from 2012-2014, including:**

- Designated Creative Industries staff to support program strategies and assist Districts.
- National and statewide marketing, advertising and social media opportunities.
- Colorado Department of Transportation Signs marking Colorado Creative Districts that are Certified by the State of Colorado.
- Technical assistance from professionals in a variety of fields, paid by Creative Industries.
- Access to national and statewide training and conferences.
- Economic impact data via [Creative Vitality Index™](#).
- Training webinars with world renowned consultants.
- Assistance with asset mapping through [Esri](#).
- Access to research and best practices.
- Access to capital.
- Ability to leverage direct funding for additional funding and partnerships.
- Mentoring and coaching from other Colorado Certified Creative Districts.

To become effective and sustainable, Creative Districts will go through Creative Industries' incubator program as Candidates for Certification. Below is a description of the activities that are required to be completed:

- Attending two Candidate District convenings annually. Three to five members of the District team will learn about vital topics ranging from branding to data collection. They will have an opportunity to network with and learn from other creative districts. Creative Industries provides travel stipends and covers travel expenses. One of the convenings is held in conjunction with Creative Industries' annual Summit, which candidates are encouraged to attend.
- Completing 30 hours per year of professional consulting with the Professional Advisory Network. Consultants that have expertise in a variety of planning and development topics will be assigned to work with Districts. Topics include strategic planning, wayfinding, zoning, branding, marketing and cultural heritage. The consultant's fee and travel expenses are paid for by Creative Industries while the Districts will be required to pay for or provide hotel and per diem.

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- Completing a training webinar series that addresses seven steps of Creative District development.

Districts will also have access to other resources such as:

- Selected books, articles, websites, funding options, etc.
- Access to the [Creative Vitality Index™](#) (CVI™) from the Western States Arts Federation. CVI™ is an index and research tool that measures annual changes in the economic health of the creative sector. This is a \$9,000 value per District.
- Access to online mapping tools through [Esri](#) for effective storytelling and advocacy. This is a \$15,000 value annually.

## **CREATIVE DISTRICT CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS**

From the selected Candidates, Creative Industries expects the following:

### Value Reporting Requirement

Candidate Creative Districts will be taught Value Reporting tasks. Telling the story about the economic, social and cultural contributions that Creative Districts make to Colorado is important. Both qualitative and quantitative information must be captured to give the message value.

Successful Creative Districts have demonstrated a positive impact on jobs, building occupancy, sales and property tax revenues, tourism, new business attraction and social benefits for residents. They enhance pedestrian traffic, stimulate tax incentives or tax relief from local governments and increase property values. Creative Districts will develop strategies to leverage their Certified status for additional funding and partnerships.

The Value Measures listed below are required to be reported to Creative Industries in the Creative District Final Report due each July 31.

Annual Measures Required:

- Participation and visitorship
- District characteristics (e.g. creative jobs and businesses)
- Activities provided
- Success stories
- New partnerships and funding leveraged

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**Other Meaningful Value Measures**

Because of the unique nature and character of each Creative District, there may be other meaningful measures that reflect a District's specific goals. Below is a list of other measures that Districts may gather and should report in the Creative Industries Final Report.

- Demographics of participants and District's businesses and employees
- Visitor zip codes
- Number of historic sites or buildings and new historic designations
- Lodging tax collection
- Sales tax collection
- Capital investment projects or infrastructure improvements
- Artist live/work spaces
- Gross sales receipts
- Occupancy rates
- Crime statistics

**Annual Final Report**

Each Candidate Creative District must submit a Final Report thirty days after the end of the State's fiscal year (July 31 of each year) for the two-year Candidacy period. The Final Report will include progress made throughout the year, financial statements and the Value Reporting described above.

**Colorado Creative District Promotion**

Creative Districts must publicize that it is a "Colorado Creative District Candidate" on all promotional tools, including social media and websites. They must use the Creative Industries logo on all advertising and published materials. Other requirements include recognition of all District funders.

**Communication with Elected Officials**

Certified Creative Districts must communicate with their elected officials, both state and local, about their Certified Creative District status and its benefits to their community.

**STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION REVIEW CRITERIA**

Candidacy applications will be reviewed by Creative Industries and will be scored and ranked based on the Standards and Certification Criteria. Because Candidates will eventually apply for certification (spring 2016), applications will be reviewed based on the certification criteria. By the end of the two-year Candidacy period, Candidates should score higher on the following Foundational Elements and Review Criteria than when they first entered the program.

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**Foundational Elements:** Three items are crucial for the success of Creative Districts and the panel will look for evidence of these throughout the application.

1. A District must capture its unique story and reflect that story in the application. The unique story may include history, the people(s) who have lived in the place, the unique style of the place as reflected in architecture, historical identification, streetscape, events and/or marketing.
2. A District must be integrated with other community systems, including but not limited to planning, economic development, tourism, transportation, urban renewal, safety, public gathering spaces, addressing social needs and/or community development.
3. A District must have local government endorsement. This could mean one or more of the following:
  - A resolution from City Council demonstrating commitment to or endorsement of the Creative District.
  - Inclusion in a municipal or county plan such as a master, comprehensive, neighborhood, cultural and/or business plans.
  - Management by a quasi-government entity such a Downtown Development Authority or Business Improvement District for which City Council reviews the budget and operating plan and appoints board members.

**Evaluation Criteria:** The following three criteria will be evaluated equally in the scoring of the certification application.

**District Characteristics**

A Certified Creative District will demonstrate:

- Specific, identifiable boundaries. There must be a clear rationale for these boundaries. Most Districts are walkable. Creative Industries can certify larger or regional Districts, but in these cases, the District's cultural identity and amenities must be consistently visible throughout the area and explicitly connected in a way that a visitor can identify. This could mean blending the creative assets with other existing organizing principles such as agritourism or heritage tourism, creating a new synergistic identity for the area publicized through signage and wayfinding.
- Arts and creative industries as a key organizing principal. Cultural events and venues that attract residents and visitors with a density of cultural organizations, artists and other creative entrepreneurs.
- Activities and plans whose purpose is to retain creative industries and entrepreneurs and to attract complementary businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops and others.

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- Evidence of integration of creative industries with other activities such as farmer’s markets, downtown retail promotions, coordination with restaurants and/or coordination with the visitor industry.
- Articulation/incorporation of cultural heritage, story and a unique sense of place. Ideally, applicants will include community historians and story bearers on their planning team.
- An identity that has already been branded and evidence such as signage or media coverage demonstrating the community is recognized as a Creative District.
- Projects and/or a built environment that indicates a commitment to revitalization and beautification. Creative Industries is especially interested in sustainable and affordable artist live/work space.
- Signage, website, brochures and other easily located information that makes it easy for visitors to know where they can find creative industries and entrepreneurs, as well as food and lodging.

**Management and Planning**

A Certified Creative District will have in place:

- A designated staff person, paid or unpaid, who coordinates District planning, management, marketing, funding and evaluation.
- A governing body that includes local government, for-profit business, nonprofit business and creative entrepreneurs. This must include one of the following:
  - An independent entity such as a 501(c)(3), 501(c)(6) organization or application in process.
  - A unit of local government such as a designated government office with a Creative District advisory committee or an appointed commission; a quasi-governmental entity such as a Downtown Development Authority whose workplan and budget includes Creative District management.
  - A formal partnership among entities with a signed memorandum of understanding in place that acknowledges shared and individual responsibilities.
- A formally-adopted strategic or business plan. All of the following elements must either be incorporated into one plan or there may be separate plans for each.
  - Marketing
  - Financial sustainability
  - Leadership
  - Community input
  - Keeping local government, Chambers of Commerce, local Tourism offices and other key players regularly updated on District activity and impact

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- A budget for the District. If the District is managed by local government, the budget must be a line item that identifies the District expenses and revenue clearly. Priority will be given to those applicants showing diverse and reliable sources of income.
- A method to collect the Value Reporting information, including numbers of participants, artists, youth, visitorship, total of creative businesses and number of creative jobs gained (or lost) in the District. The methodology of obtaining such information should be consistent from year to year.
- A set of strategies to assist creative entrepreneurs and cultural organizations within the District and/or community to become increasingly more successful as business entities.
- The creative use and re-use of vacant spaces.

**Community Buy-In**

A Certified Creative District will demonstrate active involvement in District planning by a variety of groups:

- Active involvement and endorsement by local government.
- Broad participation by the arts and culture sector, both nonprofit and for-profit, and individual creative entrepreneurs.
- Broad participation and input from residents and people living within and adjacent to the District. **Priority will be given to Districts that reflect efforts to engage groups mirroring the demographics of the community.**
- Broad participation by business owners in the District.
- Broad participation by people who own property in the District.
- Strategic alliances with key individuals and stakeholders in the community who may influence local decision-making.
- Engagement of youth.

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**CANDIDACY APPLICATION PROCESS**

**I. Letter of Interest to Apply: Materials due on or before 5:00 p.m. Monday, March 3, 2014**

Applicants must submit the following items online:

- A. A letter of no more than two pages that includes:
  - 1. The name of the Creative District and its website address.
  - 2. Name, title and contact information for the person who will help arrange a site visit.
  - 3. A narrative that provides:
    - Detailed contextual information about the community and the Creative District
    - Description of the concentration of creatives, events, cultural facilities and creative enterprises within the District boundaries
    - Description of the local government involvement and/or endorsement
    - Description of Creative District partners and the nature of the partnerships
    - Key demographics of the Creative District
    - A statement of why certification by the State of Colorado is important to the community and the Creative District
    - Any other relevant information
- B. The completed Application Checklist, see sample on page 16.

**II. Creative Industries will invite up to 15 Creative Districts to apply for Candidacy.** Notifications will be sent by Monday, March 17, 2014. Invited applicants may attend a workshop at the Creative Industries Summit on May 1 or 2 to receive assistance with their application. Travel stipends will be provided.

**III. Application for Candidacy: Those Applicants invited to apply for Candidacy must submit application materials online on or before 5:00 p.m. Friday, May 23.**

Applicants must submit the following online:

- A. Narrative answers to questions describing the District based on each of the three Review Criteria (see Standards and Certification Criteria section above).
  - 1. Refer to District Characteristics review criteria: Explain the reason the District boundaries were set as represented on your map.
  - 2. Refer to District Characteristics review criteria: Describe the District using the criteria as your guide. Include key demographics and other available data.
  - 3. Refer to the Management & Planning review criteria: Describe the District using the criteria as your guide.

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4. Refer to the Community Buy-In review criteria: Describe the District using the criteria as your guide.
5. Refer to the Management & Planning review criteria: Describe efforts and plans to achieve long-term financial sustainability.
6. Provide an explanation of what the District's most important achievements have been to date.
7. Describe the challenges of the District and what the most important technical assistance and/or training needs are.

**Upload Support Document**

- B. Upload a map of the Creative District showing as many of the items below as possible:
  1. Creative businesses, both for-profit and nonprofit
  2. Public gathering places such as plazas and parks
  3. Historic sites
  4. Public art
  5. Other amenities that are important to the character of the Creative District
- C. Submission of the Financial Spreadsheet is required. [Download the Excel Financial Form from the Applications Tools page](#). You must save the Excel form to your desktop, complete it and upload it to the online system as part of your support materials.
- D. If the District has the following documents, upload them online:
  1. A local government ordinance or plan that provides evidence of the District's connection to local government.
  2. A strategic plan that includes the District's vision, mission, goals and strategies.
  3. A list of Board of Directors or core management team, including names and title or community affiliation.
  4. Three samples of promotional items.
  5. Up to five high resolution (300dpi) images that capture the essence of the District.

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6. Three letters of recommendation. Each should concretely describe the impact of the District to date as well as anticipated impact in the future.  
Letters should be from:
  - a. Public official such as city/town mayor, city/town manager, head of Planning Department, head of Community/Economic Development Department or head of Cultural Affairs Department.
  - b. The leader of an entity such as Convention and Visitor Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Association or other business entity concerned with attracting visitors and businesses to the community
  - c. A creative entrepreneur such as artist or business owner who works and/or lives in the District
7. Optional letters of recommendation from one or more of the following:
  - a. A nonprofit cultural organization
  - b. An individual who can address how the District celebrates the cultural heritage of its area
  - c. A realtor, developer or banker who can comment on property development, property values or occupancy rates.
8. No more than three additional items which strengthen the case for certification, such as an artist directory, press articles, letters from legislators, etc.

**ONLINE APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

**Only online applications will be accepted.** No hard copies of the application or support materials will be accepted. Applicants will be required to register first and be approved as eligible to apply. [Detailed instructions for registering and using the online application system](#) should be reviewed prior to beginning an application.

All support materials will be uploaded into the online system. Each applicant will be required to download one Excel form for financial information and submit the form online as a part of the support materials.

For additional help with using the online grant system, use the Application Tools section of Creative Industries' website at [www.coloradocreativeindustries.org/manage-your-award](http://www.coloradocreativeindustries.org/manage-your-award)

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**FOR INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE**

Deana Miller, Program Manager <a href="mailto:deana.miller@state.co.us">deana.miller@state.co.us</a> 303-844-3707 Availability: M-F 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Maryo Gard Ewell, Program Consultant <a href="mailto:maryo@gard-sibley.org">maryo@gard-sibley.org</a> Availability: M-F 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
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**APPEAL PROCESS**

Applicants may appeal the Council's decision. 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 Creative Industries' written notification of denial. The Council will reconsider its decision at its next regularly scheduled meeting after receipt of the written appeal.

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND REVOCATION OF CERTIFIED STATUS**

Certified Creative Districts must submit an annual report by July 31 of each year it is certified. A link to the online report form will be sent to the Districts each spring. Note that it requests certain Value Report that corresponds to information submitted with this application. Creative Industries will chart this information from year to year. **Please ensure that the method for collection remains constant over time.**

Creative Industries has the right to revoke certification for Creative Districts that:

- Miss deadlines for annual reports.
- Fail to show progress towards meeting the goals set forth in their strategic plan.
- Demonstrate inadequate financial management and oversight.
- Fail to properly credit Creative Industries and other donors on electronic and print media and materials.

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**OTHER CONDITIONS OF FUNDING**

As a condition of receiving funding from Creative Industries, recipients are required to provide assurances of compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to the following:

- **Fair Labor Standards** – including minimum wage and working conditions.
- **Nondiscrimination** – including statutes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, creed, disability, national origin, sex, age or marital status.
- **Audit** – All applications accepted for funding become official records of the State of Colorado and are subject to an audit. Creative Industries requires open access to accounting records for funds expended under the terms of contract award for the purpose of audit examination, reference or transcription.
- **Drug-Free Work Place** – compliance to the extent applicable with the Drug-Free Work Place Act of 1988.
- **Fair Language** – In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, grant recipients must take adequate steps to ensure that people with limited English proficiency receive the language assistance necessary to afford them meaningful access to programs, activities and services.
- **Access for People with Disabilities**– Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities. Artists and Organizations receiving funding must ensure that facilities used for public presentations will be accessible to people with disabilities. Questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act may be directed to VSA arts of Colorado at 303-777-0797.
- **Credit/Acknowledgment** – Grantee agrees that a Creative Industries logo will be included in all announcements and promotional materials and efforts will be made to publicly credit Creative Industries support in any public events related to the funding program and activities.