



LOUISIANA  
**CULTURAL**  
DISTRICTS

Office of the Lt. Governor; Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism; Office of Cultural Development, Louisiana Division of the Arts

# 2024 APPLICATION GUIDE



LOUISIANA  
OFFICE *of* CULTURAL  
DEVELOPMENT

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# Louisiana Cultural Districts

This document provides an overview of the Louisiana Cultural Districts Program. If you are considering submitting an application as a cultural district, please read the entire document carefully to gain a better understanding of the program, criteria for eligibility, and decide if being certified as a cultural district will provide the desired benefits to the residents and businesses in the proposed district and surrounding community. Please also contact the program director Francesca Vega at [fvega@crt.la.gov](mailto:fvega@crt.la.gov) prior to applying. For additional information please visit–

<https://www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/cultural-districts>

## What is a Cultural District?

A "Cultural District," defined by law, is a district designated by a Local Governing Authority (LGA) for the purpose of revitalizing a community by creating a hub of cultural activity, by offering communities opportunities to create or rebuild cultural destinations.

A Louisiana Cultural District must:

- Be geographically contiguous
- Be distinguished by cultural resources that play a vital role in the life and cultural development of a community
- Focus on an existing cultural anchor such as a major art institution, art and entertainment businesses, an area or business with arts and cultural activities or cultural or artisan production Be engaged in the promotion, preservation, and educational aspects of the arts and culture of the locale
- Contribute to the public through interpretive and educational uses
- Encourage opportunity for affordable artist housing and work space
- Complete annual reports and business listings

Cultural Districts should be a unique reflection of local heritage, history, and cultural development. Many are found in downtown areas, but they can be in suburban, rural, and neighborhood locations. Americans for the Arts define Cultural Districts as “a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of the city in which a high concentration of arts and cultural facilities serve as the anchor attraction.”

Cultural industries are recognized as one of the leading economic clusters in the Louisiana economy. The cultural cluster includes the following industries:

- Visual arts (painting, sculpture, photography)
- Preservation (historic preservation of buildings and structures)
- Film and digital media (film festivals, local documentaries)
- Music and performing arts (live music/performance venues, classes, dance studios)
- Literary arts and humanities (book readings and signings, story-telling, folklore)

**Size is an important consideration for a Cultural District.** A Cultural District should:

- Contain a variety of structures, residents, businesses, organizations, spaces, and experiences to support and stimulate cultural economic activity

- Have sufficient property owners taking advantage of state historic tax credits and/or vendors to take advantage of original art sales tax exemptions
- **Consider existing National Register, local historic districts, Downtown Development Districts, and Main Street boundaries**
- Be small enough to develop a sense of identity and community among the residents, businesses, and organizations to attract and stimulate a recognizable hub of cultural activity
- Be reasonably compact and small enough for accessible pedestrian traffic
- Be small enough that sales tax exemptions and tax credits do not become a burdensome loss of revenue to the state and local government

## Eligibility

### Who May Apply

Any municipal or parish government in the state may designate a specific geographic area and apply for that area to become a Cultural District. A Local Governing Authority (LGA) may delegate its authority, but not its responsibility, to complete the application and comply with all administrative and reporting requirements.

### Certifying Authority

A committee organized by the Louisiana Division of the Arts (LDOA) determines if an application conforms to the requirements and meets the criteria established by law, set forth in the rules, and described in these guidelines.

### Application Assistance

The LDOA will provide information to assist the LGA, residents, and businesses, with a Cultural District application and to understand the benefits and responsibilities upon request.

## Certification Criteria

Proposed Cultural District applications are evaluated to determine whether they currently meet the following mandatory criteria, or have the strong potential to do so in the future.

### Basic Criteria

1. The district must be geographically contiguous
2. The district must be distinguished by **cultural resources** that play a vital role in the life, economic and cultural development of a community
3. The district must focus on an existing **cultural anchor**, such as a major art institution, art and entertainment businesses, an area with arts and cultural activities or cultural or artisan production.
4. The district must be engaged in the promotion, preservation, interpretive and educational aspects of the arts and culture of the locale
5. The Local Governing Authority (LGA) in which the proposed cultural district is located must endorse the application by ordinance or resolution (consider time needed for locally required public notice and meeting schedules).
6. Encourage opportunity for affordable artist housing and work space

If the proposed district meets the basic criteria, a committee will then evaluate the potential of the proposed Cultural District based on the following committee evaluation criteria.

## **Committee Evaluation Criteria**

The application is based on the following criteria. In each section, please address your community's ability to do the following.

### **ARTISTIC/CULTURAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

Promote the arts and support artists Encourage creativity and cultural activity  
Attract artists and cultural industry workers  
Potential for artists, housing, studio, and performance

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Engage residents  
Provide a sense of community Serve as a gathering place  
Ability to share benefits of the Louisiana Cultural District Program to residents within the district (district-wide meetings, mailers, etc.)  
Strengthen community partnerships Develop a positive image

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Capitalize on cultural, economic, commercial, and social assets Revitalize an area  
Stimulate the economy, and draw tourists

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

Demonstrated ability to prepare and submit an annual report by January 1 each year (who will be responsible, how will you maintain an updated business listing, etc.)  
Demonstrated ability to sustain activity in the district/plan for the future (what is the basic/master/strategic plan)

## **Benefits**

Once a Cultural District is certified, the following benefits take effect:

1. The sales of qualifying original, one-of-a-kind works of visual art within the district are exempt from local sales tax. *All sales as of July 1, 2018 must charge the state sales tax amount of 4.45%.*
2. Renovations to commercial historic structures within the district may be eligible for state historic tax credits.
3. Cultural District liaisons will have ongoing communication with the Louisiana Division of the Arts and access to technical assistance/resources.
4. Cultural District certification, which is often used in tandem with other arts/cultural or development tools to maximize benefit and achieve the district's goals.

## **Application Procedures**

### **Deadline**

The LDOA will accept applications for Cultural Districts from LGAs once a year. Check with LDOA to confirm annual deadline. A committee will review applications for completeness; evaluate each submission to determine if the criteria for certification are met; issue a notice of conditional approval; pending receipt of a communication plan, issue a notice of certification to the applying agent with an October 1 effective date of certification. Timelines may be adjusted at the discretion of LDOA.

### Authority to Submit an Application

**The Local Governing Authority (LGA) in which the proposed Cultural District is located must endorse the application by ordinance or resolution.** The LGA should specify the boundaries of the proposed district; acknowledge local sales tax exemption for original art sold within the boundaries; designate a responsible party to act on behalf of the LGA; and accept responsibility to provide required reports and conduct communications. (consider time needed for locally required public notice and meeting schedules).

A sample resolution is available at–

[https://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/OCD/arts/culturedistricts/sample\\_resolution\\_for\\_cultural\\_districts.pdf](https://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/OCD/arts/culturedistricts/sample_resolution_for_cultural_districts.pdf)

### Cultural District Certification Timeline (subject to changes/updates)

Planning Phase	Invite the Louisiana Cultural Districts Director for a site visit or meeting to assist with the Cultural District application and provide feedback.
January - April	Applicant gathers application materials.
May 1 – May 23	Letters of Interest being accepted (Part 1 of application). Ordinance or resolution begins being drafted through the LGA.
May 31	Full application opens for selected applicants (Part 2 of application).
July 1	Full application closes (Part 2 of application).
July/August	Committee evaluates applications.
October	LDOA issues notice of decision to certify the Cultural District, or refusal to certify. Effective date of certification is October 1.
October	Once certified, the LGA begins implementation of a communication/promotion plan as outlined in the application.

### Submission Instructions

Provide **only** the documents, maps and photographs required or requested in the application. Please, no extraneous materials not specifically required or requested. All applications will be submitted through [Submittable](#).

Provide all requested information in the spaces provided on the application form. Narratives, maps, photographs, and supporting documents must be clearly labeled with section numbers. Use the Checklist below to be sure all required information is included.

Email any questions to: [fvega@crt.la.gov](mailto:fvega@crt.la.gov)

## Cultural District Application Format/Checklist (based on above listed criteria)

- I. CONTACT INFORMATION
  - A. Local Governing Authority Contacts
  - B. Designated Cultural District Liaison Contact
  
- II. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION
  - A. Boundary Description
  - B. District Information
  - C. Feature Data
  - D. Historically and/or culturally significant buildings or structures
  - E. Cultural Assets Inventory
  - F. Map(s) of proposed district
  - G. 5 to10 Photographs
  
- III. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES
  - A. Artistic/Cultural Product Development
  - B. Community Development
  - C. Communication and Promotion Plan
  - D. Economic Development
  
- IV. SUSTAINABILITY
  - A. Reporting Ability
  - B. Short & Long-term Plan
  
- V. GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT
  - A. Resolution(s) or Ordinance(s) from Local Governing Authority
  - B. Evidence of Community Support
  
- VI. CERTIFICATION AND SIGNATURES by Local Governing Authority

If the application is incomplete or requires additional information, the LDOA will notify the applicant through its designated contact, specifying the deficiencies and/or information required to complete the application.

1. If the applicant is notified that additional information is required, the applicant must provide the requested information within 15 days after date of notification.
2. If the applicant does provide the requested information within 15 days of issuance of the notice of deficiency, the application will be deemed incomplete and will not be reviewed further.
3. If an application is rejected for failure to remedy omissions the Applicant can apply for reconsideration in future application cycles with no penalty or prejudice.

### Effective Date

The effective date of certification shall be the date specified in the final written notice of approval of the Cultural District, set for October 1. Associated tax incentives take effect on the effective date of certification.

For more info: <https://www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/cultural-districts>

## Notice of Certification and Opportunity to Appeal Decision

The LDOA will notify the Applicant in writing whether the proposed Cultural District has been certified as proposed, has been certified with amendments, or has been denied.

If an application is denied, the LDOA will provide specific reasons whereby the criteria for certification were not met and work with the Applicant to identify those areas in the application that prevented the proposed cultural district from being approved as submitted. The Applicant can apply for reconsideration in future application cycles with no penalty or prejudice.

If an application is denied the Applicant may submit a request for administrative review to the Secretary of the Department, within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the decision of the Department. An appeal must include the following:

1. Identification of the decision to which the appeal pertains
2. A statement of the decision sought
4. A statement of the facts and reasons upon which such remedy is requested
5. The name and address to which the Department will send all communications regarding the appeal

Mail appeal to: Louisiana Cultural Districts Program  
Appeal for <insert name of proposed Cultural District> PO Box 44247  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Or Email to: [fvega@crt.la.gov](mailto:fvega@crt.la.gov)

Within thirty (30) days of issuance of a request for administrative review the Department, will reconsider the application based on additional facts and information provided and will issue a decision by mail.

## Definitions

**Cultural District** - an area designated by a Local Governing Authority and certified by the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism in accordance with the statutory and regulatory procedures, standards, criteria, and benefits pertaining to such districts.

**Department** - the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (DCRT). The Louisiana Division of the Arts (LDOA) within the Office of Cultural Development (OCD), administers the Cultural Districts program.

**Local Governing Authority (LGA)**- the governing authority of the Municipality in which the Cultural District is located unless the district is not located within a municipality, in which case "Local Governing Authority" shall mean the governing authority of the Parish. If the district is located partly in a municipality, "Local Governing Authority" shall mean both the governing authority of the parish and the governing authority of the municipality.

**Applicant** - The Local Governing Authority (LGA), also referred to as Applicant, may designate an employee, an association, or some other entity or individual to act on its behalf to complete requirements related to the Cultural District application and implementation. The designee should be documented by ordinance, resolution or letter signed by the chief officer

authorized to act on behalf of the LGA in which the Cultural District is located. Note however, that while the duties of the LGA may be delegated, the responsibility for these functions remains with the LGA.

**Liaison** – a locally designated contact person responsible to communicate with the LDOA about the Cultural District program, manage the program incentives in the district, communicate with residents and businesses, and facilitate reporting requirements on behalf of the LGA.

**Established Location** – any location, either permanent or temporary, within the boundary of a certified Cultural District.

**Vendor** - artists, dealers, or anyone selling original, one-of-a-kind works of art within the boundaries of a certified Cultural District. Vendors should be registered with state and local tax authorities, licensed to sell products, and routinely pay state and local sales tax on retail transactions.

**Tax Exempt Original Art** - Original, one-of-a-kind, visual art, conceived and made by hand of the artist or under his direction, and not intended for mass production, except for specified handmade media of multiples of up to 100 limited editions.