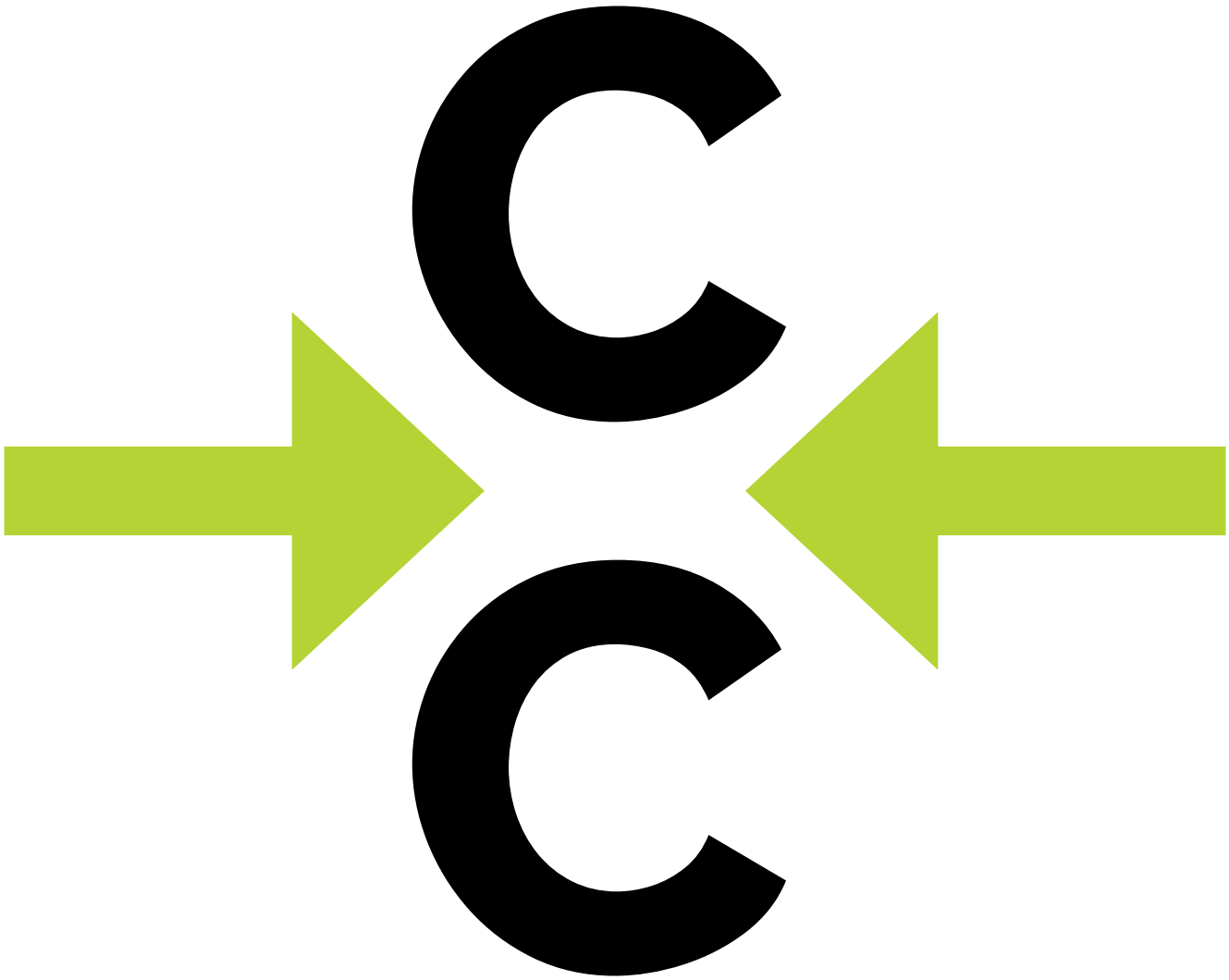
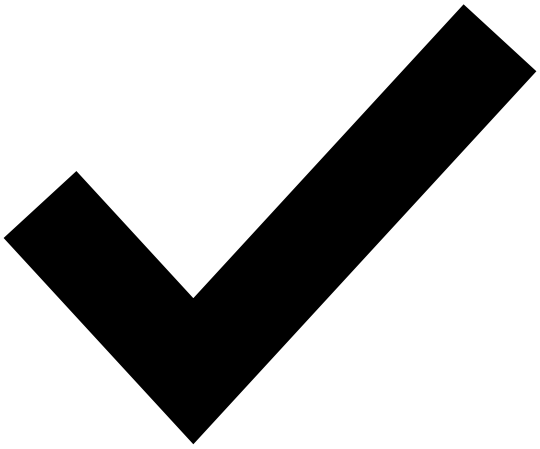
Grant Program Overview and Application Instructions 2027



Creative Connections is made possible by the voters of Minnesota, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Dates



Contact

creativeconnections@mrac.org

NEW 27

We update our grants and overviews every year!

Keep an eye out for this logo for rules or changes that are new for 2027.

Important Dates

Application opens in Submittable

October 26, 2026

Deadline

Friday, November 20, 2026, 11:59 pm

Final grant award notification: March 29, 2027

Eligible funding period

April 5, 2027–June 30, 2028

NEW 27

Required online grantee orientation

Multiple dates April 1–15, 2027

See **What is the required online grantee orientation? (page 6)**

Parts

Contents

Read this document thoroughly before filling out an application for the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council's 2027 Creative Connections grant.

Once you submit your application through our online portal, you **cannot make changes** and **cannot resubmit an application in whole or in part**. If your proposal is funded, parts of your application are considered public information.

1.

Part 1: Grant Description and Frequently Asked Questions: grant purpose, general eligibility, information needed in your application, and other commonly asked questions: **pages 4–6**.

2.

Part 2: Complete Individual Eligibility Requirements: all eligibility rules related to qualifying individuals, activities, location, and beneficiaries, as well as ineligible applicants: **pages 7–8**.

3.

Part 3: Your Proposal Description: the questions you will be asked in the proposal description section of the application: **page 9**.

4.

Part 4: Your Proposal Budget Plan: information about your application's budget and your MRAC request vs. total project cost: **pages 10–11**.

5.

Part 5: Eligible/Ineligible Expenses and Funding Period Information: what expenses grant funds can cover (including examples), ineligible proposal activities and budget items, funding period, and incurred expense definition: **pages 12–14**.

6.

Part 6: Application Instructions, Assistance, and Additional Resources: filling out your application in Submittable and information about assistance and accessibility: **pages 15–16**.

1.

Part 1: Grant Description and Frequently Asked Questions

What does this grant provide funds for?

Creative Connections provides **up to $5,000** for artistic proposals in Minnesota **led by an individual**.

Proposals must focus on creating access to the arts for Minnesotans and/or Minnesota communities.

Who is eligible to apply for this grant?

Applicants must maintain a primary residential address in one of the seven metro counties: **Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, or Washington**. P.O. boxes are not accepted.

There are also specific requirements for citizenship and residency duration.

See **Part 2: Complete Individual Eligibility Requirements (pages 7–8)**.

What information do I need to provide in my application?

There are four parts to the application: Individual Information, Your Proposal Description, Your Proposal Budget Plan, and Data, Outcomes & Evaluation.

Individual Information: your legal name, primary residential address, and phone number. It will be optional to provide a public-facing name, demographic information (such as race/ethnicity, gender identity, veteran status, etc.), and pronouns.

Your Proposal Description: the name of your proposal, a short proposal summary, your proposal's goals, its overall plan and activities, and its timeline. Additionally, you will be asked about

the community or communities your proposal will serve, how the proposal will increase access to the arts for Minnesotans, and your experience. **See Part 3: Your Proposal Description (page 9)** for the list of questions.

Your Budget Plan: the total amount of funds you are requesting from MRAC and a description of expenses that will be covered by these funds. If your proposal requires funds beyond the MRAC grant, you will provide additional funding expense descriptions and amounts as well as the funding sources, and whether that funding is secured or pending. You can review information about budgeting in **Part 4: Your Budget Plan (page 10–11)**.

Data, Outcomes & Evaluation: proposal artistic discipline(s), an estimated number of participants and their demographics, outcome goals, and evaluation plan(s).

How do I submit an application?

All applications are filled out and submitted through Submittable, our online application portal. Applicants may only submit one application.

Applications in other formats will not be accepted without prior approval and arrangement with a staff member.

What types of proposals have been funded in the past?

Please see our award announcement for the **2026 Creative Connections program**.

How are applications reviewed and scored?

MRAC staff do not make funding decisions. Instead, MRAC trains community members to become application reviewers. This includes artists, arts professionals, and other individuals from the seven metro counties.

Community reviewers are given specific criteria to use when they evaluate each application. The **Application Scoring Guide for Reviewers** is available so you can take it into consideration when you are filling out your application.

Helpful Tip: We strongly recommend that you review the Scoring Guide before you begin and as you write your application.

For a full explanation of our Grant Application Review process, **visit our website**.

What if I have received a Creative Connections grant in the past?

You may not have more than one grant from the Creative Connections program at the same time.



If you received a Creative Connections grant in 2025 or 2026, your Final Report for that grant must be submitted and approved by MRAC staff before Friday, November 20, 2026 to be eligible for a 2027 award.

Remember: prior grant awards do not guarantee future grant awards.

How is the information in my application shared by MRAC?

If you receive a grant in this program, your application will be shared with the Minnesota State Arts Board (MSAB) to track funding for the arts in Minnesota. MSAB will share your information with the Legislative Coordinating Commission, and your name, contact information, and grant amount will be posted on the **Legacy website**. Please see the **Data Use and Sharing statement** on our website for more information.

What is the required online grantee orientation?



Starting with our 2027 grant cycle, all grantees are required to attend a virtual, 30-minute presentation about their grant program. This will include important information about the Grant Agreement, the Legacy Amendment, and using Submittable to manage your grant.

If you receive a grant, you will be required to sign up for one session.

2.

Part 2: Complete Individual Eligibility Requirements

Creative Connections provides up to $5,000 for artistic proposals in Minnesota led by an individual.

Basic Eligibility for Individuals

Any individual that meets the following criteria can apply:

- Maintain a primary residential address in one of the seven metro counties: **Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, or Washington.** P.O. boxes are not accepted.
- Be a US citizen or have attained permanent resident status in the United States.
- Reside in the seven-county metro region for at least six (6) months prior to the application deadline (from May 20, 2026) and continue to do so for the entirety of your proposed grant period. If a grantee moves away during that time, you must notify MRAC, and your grant funds may be recalled.
- You must be the **primary and sole leader of the proposal**. Examples of leader roles include project manager/artistic director, individual personally delivering program/art-based component, individual that will be responsible for the use of and reporting on funds, individual maintaining full ownership and creative control over the project/program.

Although you may be in partnership with an organization, your proposal project and funds must be managed by you, the applicant. The applicant must propose a self-initiated, individual-organized project and retain primary ownership (greater than 50%) of its direction, execution, and budget. Projects largely managed, funded, or facilitated by an organization or group are ineligible. See more at **Ineligible Applicants** below.

Qualifying Proposal Activities

Proposals must focus on creating access to the arts for Minnesotans and/or Minnesota communities. Qualifying activities for your grant request will do any of the following:

- Connect Minnesotans with arts and cultural experiences;
- Integrate artistic engagement to accomplish a Minnesota community's non-arts goals;
- Provide Minnesotans with opportunities for arts learning;
- Pass along expressive cultural traditions from Minnesota communities.

Required Minimum of Proposal Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of proposed activities must be community members in Minnesota. At least three (3) Minnesotans other than the applicant must participate in the proposal.

Example: if you are designing an art-making activity for children, at least three kids must be involved.

Proposal Location

All proposal activities must take place within the geographical borders of Minnesota.

Ineligible proposal expenses include costs for relocating the applicant's legal address/residence outside the state of Minnesota, travel expenses to or from Minnesota, and procuring visas.

Helpful Tip: you may engage an out-of-state artist or consultant within your proposal, but their travel expenses to or from Minnesota cannot be included in your proposed budget.

Ineligible Applicants

Individuals with overdue Final Reports are ineligible.

Duos, collectives, schools, groups, nonprofit organizations, for-profits, LLCs, or any other incorporated entities are not eligible. Individuals also cannot propose a program within their place of employment, such as a teacher proposing a project to be executed within their school. Additionally, proposals cannot be primarily for the benefit of and/or submitted on behalf of any these entities. Applicants must be individuals, and grant checks will only be issued directly to the applicant, not to an applicant's business.

Individuals in partnership with any state agency, public entity, or nonprofit organization that receives a legislative appropriation or legislatively mandated grant from the State of Minnesota's arts and cultural heritage fund for FY27 may not receive a Creative Connections grant and funding from such a grant cannot be included in a proposed budget.

3.

Part 3: Your Proposal Description

You will answer the following specific questions about your proposal. Each textbox will display a word limit.

Do not include hyperlinks in text boxes. Any hyperlinks will be deleted and may affect your application's eligibility.

Helpful Tip: You can use the **Proposal Drafting Document** to work on rough drafts of your narrative answers.

List of Proposal Questions

What is the name or title of your proposal? (Limit: 10 words)

Provide short summary of your proposal (Limit: 25 words)

What are the goals of your proposal and what specific activities will you undertake with this grant funding? (Limit: 200 words)

Who are the participants or communities that will be served by your proposal? (Limit: 200 words)

How will this proposal create access to the arts through engagement with Minnesota communities? (Limit: 200 words)

What experience do you have in creating meaningful access to the arts for Minnesotans? (Limit: 200 words)

Where do you envision proposal activities taking place? (Limit: 200 words)

Provide a timeline of the activities funded by the grant. Provide months and years (for example, "July 2027: art classes for children"). (Limit: 200 words)

4.

Part 4: Your Budget Plan

Total Funding Request

All eligible applicants may request up to $5,000.

Proposal Funding Period

The eligible funding period is April 5, 2027–June 30, 2028. All grant-funded activities must take place between these dates.

Double Check: If any proposal activities occurring outside of this period are included, the entire application may be deemed ineligible.

General Information about Your Funding Request

Your request for MRAC funds may not exceed $5,000. Budget expenses should clearly align with your proposal description. You will provide a list of expense descriptions (such as artist compensation or rental fees) and how much each expense will cost.

Remember: You may request less than $5,000 if that will cover your expenses. There is no advantage or disadvantage to asking for an amount smaller than the maximum.

Your Budget Plan Spreadsheet in Submittable

You will input **only the expenses MRAC funds will cover** into the Budget Plan Spreadsheet. It will include columns for the Expense Description and Dollar Amount.

Helpful Tip: You can use the Budget Plan Drafting Sheet to estimate your expenses before inputting them into Submittable.

Review **Instructions: Filling Out Your Budget Plan Spreadsheets** for guidance on working with the Submittable interface.

MRAC Funding Request vs. Total Proposal Cost

For some applicants, the funding you request from MRAC will be the only planned funding for your proposal. In other words, your proposal can be completed with $5,000 or less.

For others, funding you request from MRAC will be one portion of the planned total cost of the proposal. For example, you may need $10,000 to carry out your overall proposal and plan on submitting other grant applications to different organizations or otherwise have additional sources of funding (such as private donations or personal funds etc.).

Example: an individual is planning a community music day at a senior center. They propose to use $5,000 from MRAC to cover costs of musical instruments and pay for an additional instructor. Additionally, they will use funds from merchandise sales to pay for cleaning supplies and advertising.

Demonstrating Planned Funding Beyond Your MRAC Request

If your planned proposal will require more than $5,000 to complete, you must demonstrate how you will cover the funds needed beyond your MRAC request (See **MRAC Funding Request vs. Total Proposal Cost** above).

After filling out the Budget Plan Spreadsheet, the application will ask if your proposal has additional expenses. You will select "yes" or "no."



If you answer "yes," you will proceed to the following additional steps:

1. Fill out an Additional Expenses Description Spreadsheet listing your additional expenses and their costs.
2. Fill out an Additional Funding Sources Spreadsheet indicating the sources for your additional funding, the dollar amounts, whether the amount is secured or pending, and if pending, when you will know whether or not it has been secured.

The Total on the Additional Expenses Description Spreadsheet MUST match the Total on the Additional Funding Sources Spreadsheet.

Remember: listing a funding source as pending does not render your application ineligible.

Why do we ask this? Funding for this grant comes from Minnesota's arts and cultural heritage fund through a legislative appropriation. As required by the Minnesota State Arts Board, these funds may be granted for an entire proposal or *for part of a proposal*, as long as the recipient accounts for the entire cost and can demonstrate that they *have adequate resources to complete the entire proposal*.

5.

Part 5: Eligible/Ineligible Expenses and Funding Period Information

Eligible Expenses

Eligible cash expenses may include the following. This is not a complete list, and you may request expenses not shown here:

Proposal leader compensation (including taxes), payments to other collaborators/personnel/artists, supplies (only for use during the eligible funding period of the proposal, be specific), space and/or equipment rental, marketing and promotion, accessibility-related costs (you will need to be specific), mileage/travel/lodging/car rental (within Minnesota only), or other expenses.

Additionally, applicants may request funds for equipment purchases. Equipment must be directly related to and necessary for the proposal. Equipment purchase funding is limited to up to 25% of the amount requested. Equipment is considered any physical or digital item that will continue to be used beyond the eligible funding period.

Helpful Example: if you are requesting $5,000 in funding, only $1,250 may be requested for equipment purchases.

Eligible Funding Period

All grant funds must be spent and all expenses incurred between April 5, 2027, and June 30, 2028.

Double Check: If any expenses (both incurred and spent) or reimbursements made outside of this period are included in the application, the entire application may be deemed ineligible.

What is an incurred expense? Incurred expenses are also known as "promises to pay." Because you are not guaranteed a grant, you can't make any promises to pay (i.e. incur an expense) before the grant funding period begins. That means all

grant-related contracts or agreements must be both entered into (signed) and executed (paid or fulfilled) within the funding period.

Helpful Examples of Incurred Expenses: bookings with artists or venues, artist fee agreements, and any other formal agreement/contract for goods or services where payment is promised, whether or not cash changes hands at the time the agreement/contract is signed.

Double Check: If any proposal activities occurring outside of this period are included in the application, the entire application may be deemed ineligible.

Funding Allocation

Funds will be awarded to the highest scoring applications.

Additionally, a portion of funds for this grant will be set aside for individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or a person of color (BIPOC); and/or a person with a disability; and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+); and for all applicants from Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Scott, and Washington counties.

Ineligible Activities & Budget Items

Applicants may not request funds for any of the following:

- Activities and/or expenses that are included in another open or pending MRAC grant, as a proposal can only be funded by one MRAC grant.
- Activities that violate applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances; attempt to influence any state or federal legislation or appropriation; support or are essentially for the religious socialization of the participants or audience; and/or discriminate against persons or groups.
- Activities and/or expenses that take place outside of the state of Minnesota, including travel costs, costs of visas, and/or costs for relocating the applicant's legal address outside Minnesota.
- You may engage an out-of-state artist or consultant within your proposal, but their travel expenses to or from Minnesota cannot be included in an MRAC application.
- Unrealized income and expenses including, but not limited to, contingency funds, scholarships, participant cost subsidies, or in-kind support.
- The purchase of real estate property or expenses for facilities improvements to commercial or residential properties; or the development of endowments, funds toward debt reduction, and/or building cash reserves.
- Expenses to purchase alcoholic beverages or THC-infused consumable products (beverages, edibles, etc.) or to pay associated costs (servers, insurance, licenses, etc.).
- Proposals designed to raise funds/regrant/donate funds on behalf of another person, organization, or cause. MRAC funds cannot be donated to another organization or person.

These dollars cannot substitute other state dollars. This includes:

- Requests in which any portion of the project budget will be used to pay an artist or arts organization to provide essentially the same services that an ongoing teacher, teaching staff, or arts specialist previously provided or would be expected to provide in a school setting.
- Requests in which the proposal will replace discontinued or nonexistent arts programs that should be fulfilling the state's arts curriculum requirements in schools.

Tax Implications of Individual Grants

This grant award may affect your individual taxes. Successful grantees will be required to submit a W-9 form with their legal name and personal social security number or ITIN.

Grant funds will be distributed via check or ACH Payment Authorization (direct deposit). The name on the check or the bank account provided must match the name on your W-9 form. Payments will only be made to individuals (LLCs or businesses are not accepted). All grantees will receive an IRS Form 1099-NEC from MRAC for the tax year the check was issued.

Remember: MRAC staff are not tax professionals and cannot advise on how much the grant will affect individual tax situations. We encourage you to contact a tax preparer for more information on tax liability.

6.

Part 6: Application Instructions, Assistance, and Additional Resources

Instructions to Fill Out Your Application

Step 1: Create an account with Submittable and review MRAC's online application

MRAC uses Submittable for all our grant applications, and you must have an account with Submittable to apply.

If you are a first-time applicant, you should create a Submittable account with **an email address you check frequently**. You will receive an email notification when there is a new message about your application. Correspondence between staff and applicants will be sent primarily within the Submittable online interface and not directly over email. MRAC staff may reach out with questions or request additional information. If we do not hear from you within the timeline provided in the message, your application may be deemed ineligible.

Helpful Tip: Be sure to "safelist" notification emails from Submittable. You can learn how to do so in this **Submittable safelist email explanation article**.

If you are considering applying, we encourage you to review the application in Submittable when the application window opens. Familiarizing yourself with the Submittable interface can be useful when you are ready to input the information there!

Step 2: Fill out the FY27 Creative Connections Application in Submittable

You will fill out your application online in the Submittable interface. You cannot submit additional materials via email.

Things to know about Submittable:

- Certain application questions are only made available to view after you have answered previous questions, so it is best to fill out the application in order.
- The application includes checkboxes, date selection boxes, dropdown boxes, number input boxes, and text boxes for long answers. Additionally, you will need to type your proposal's planned expenses into the Budget Plan Spreadsheet.
- Each text box will display a maximum word count. There are no formatting options (bold or italics).
- Do not include hyperlinks in text boxes, as the application reviewers will be limited to the content of your application. Any hyperlinks will be deleted and may affect your application's eligibility. Note: if you type any domain extension (i.e. .com or .org) into the textbox, Submittable will automatically convert it to a hyperlink.
- Submittable will auto-save your work every few minutes, and there is also a "save" button at the bottom of the form.

Step 3: Complete the application and hit "Submit"

You must answer every question marked as "required" to complete the application. Be sure to double check all your answers, including budget amounts and totals, before you submit your application.

Once you submit your application, you cannot make any changes and cannot resubmit an application in whole or in part.

Out of fairness to all applicants, there are no exceptions to this policy.

Get Assistance

Staff are available to answer questions about the 2027 Creative Connections grant while the application is open for submissions:

Monday, October 26, 2026 at 9 am–Friday, November 20, 2026 at 5 pm.

Email us at **creativeconnections@mrac.org** with any questions. Staff work standard business hours, Monday–Friday, 9 am–5 pm.

Common Question: Will MRAC staff read my application and make suggestions on how I can improve it before the deadline?

Answer: To keep the process fair and balanced, they cannot review application content or make recommendations for improving your application. Staff only provide feedback related to eligibility or clarify aspects of the overview or application. This includes whether you or your proposal is eligible based on the guidelines in this document.

Submittable Support

For Submittable support, please visit the **applicant help center** or use the Submittable **assistance request form**.

Application Accessibility

MRAC staff are dedicated to creating an accessible application process for everyone.

If you have any questions about accessibility or need an accommodation, please reach out to **creativeconnections@mrac.org** at least two weeks before the application deadline.

Additional Resources

We have several resources to help you plan and prepare your application. These include instructions on how to fill out the Budget Plan Spreadsheets, documents to help you create rough drafts of your proposal description and budget plan, the application scoring guide for our community reviewers, and a reference PDF of the application.

You will find all of them on the **Creative Connections webpage** once the application window opens on October 26, 2026.