

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

for Arts Across the Prairie: Placemaking in Rural ND – Region 3

Placemaking in Region 3 – North Central North Dakota

Arts Across the Prairie: Placemaking in Rural North Dakota is a statewide, public art program from North Dakota Council on the Arts (NDCA). This program will create eight large-scale public artworks – one for each geographic region in the state – that reflect the unique history, landscape, and cultural heritage of each region. All eight works will be placed in rural locations.

Region 3, located in north-central ND, is comprised of Benson, Cavalier, Eddy, Ransom, Rolette, and Towner Counties. Regional and local leaders from business, arts, education, and community were recruited as stakeholders to guide the development of one artwork and site to be the artistic, historical, and cultural representation for the eight counties. Since early 2024, the stakeholders have met to plan the sixth statewide *Arts Across the Prairie* project. They selected as their project's subtheme the phrase "Heart of the Land, Spirit of Unity."

Who We Are Looking For

Artists must live in North Dakota, or tribal reservations in SD, MN, MT, southern Manitoba, and/or southern Saskatchewan. Those with longstanding commitment to or history with these lands and communities may also be considered.

An artist or creative team may apply, although the total fee for the project will not change. Ideally, one would be an established artist, with experience in large-scale outdoor installations and public art and familiarity with placemaking, community work, and teaching.

Application Timeline

- **January 6, 2026 at 3:00pm CT**: Informational Webinar; email arts@nd.gov by January 1 to receive log-in information
- **January 15 at 11:59pm CT**: Request for Qualifications is due (Phase One)
- **March 1**: Notify finalist candidates with detailed Request for Proposals (Phase Two)
- **April 12 at 11:59pm CT**: Finalist candidates' Request for Proposals, with design proposal, are due
- **Week of May 4-8, TBD**: Online interviews with finalists
- **Late May 2026**: Final artist selection announced

How To Apply – Phase One

DO NOT submit a project proposal or design at this time.

If you need reasonable accommodation, please email arts@nd.gov.

It is recommended that all potential applicants join an informational webinar to be held on January 6, 2026 at 3:00 pm CT.

Please email arts@nd.gov by Thursday, January 1, 2026, by 5 pm CT to receive the Zoom link.

Provide the following in a **single PDF** document labeled with your first and last name or company name. Please do not include supplemental materials beyond the requirements listed below. Work samples (JPEGs) can be sent as a separate attachment if needed.

- One-page of contact information for the artist. If a creative team, provide this for the lead artist and creative team members.
- One-page letter describing interest in the project and approach to art making; please include statement addressing eligibility criteria, approach to research and stakeholder engagement, and integrating educational opportunities into the process.
- One-page bio or resume; if you have multiple team members, please keep biographical information for each team member to one (1) page.
- One-page list identifying up to each of the seven work sample images, to include title, year, medium, budget, and dimensions.
 - Work sample images: up to seven (7) digital images of your recent projects. Individuals and teams are limited to seven (7) images maximum. Artists should include photos that document experience in creating large-scale outdoor artwork or related skills.
 - All images must be in JPEG format, 1920 pixels maximum on the longest side, 72 dpi, with compression settings resulting in the best image quality under 2MB file size.

Please submit all RFQ materials via email to arts@nd.gov
Subject line – *Arts Across the Prairie Region 3*

All Phase One materials must be received by January 15, 11:59pm CT

Selection Process and Deadlines

NDCA Staff will review all initial submissions to determine if basic qualifications are met. Applications will then be reviewed by a Selection Committee comprised of stakeholders, artists, and community members. Selection of three finalists will be based on the following criteria:

- Quality of letter of interest regarding *Arts Across the Prairie* and this region's project; why do you want to be involved?
- Ability of artist(s) to complete project as based on biography, resume/CV, and prior experience
- Quality of work samples
- To a lesser extent, teaching experience and/or experience in community engagement

Only three finalists will be asked to develop a design concept presentation to the Selection Committee. They will be offered a \$400 stipend upon completion of the interview. They will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Strength of design concept and its resonance with the project's subtheme, intent, and regional context
- The feasibility of the scope of project, budget, build plan, and timeline, including confidence in artist to successfully execute project as presented
- Presentation of artwork as a community asset which relates to the region and its people while creating a sense of welcome
- An ability and willingness to communicate and engage with diverse communities, including stakeholders, North Dakota artists, and fabrication and construction professionals

All Phase Two materials must be received by April 12, 11:59pm CT

The three finalist interviews are expected to take place via Zoom on one day the week of May 4-8. The selection committee will announce the artist selected for the Region 3 Arts Across the Prairie project by late May.

Expected Project Timeline

- **Summer/Fall 2026:** Contract, stakeholder consultation, final design, budgeting
- **Winter 2026/27:** Phase 1
- **Summer 2027:** Phase 2
- **Winter 2027/28:** Final phases
- **Spring 2028:** Installation

Budget Information

Region 3 – Funding for phases 2 through installation will come from the 2027 legislative session. The total project budget is \$150,000. Of this sum, \$95,000 covers fabrication and installation. The artist fee is \$55,000 of the total \$150,000. Expenses covered by the artist fee include:

- design and oversight
- technical drawings, and/or engineering if not included in fabrication
- 3D charette/model
- in-state transportation
- lodging
- per diem
- three-four site visits to/in North Dakota (dates TBD)

Community Engagement

With artist site visits, NDCA will arrange opportunities for stakeholders and community members to hear from the artist and learn about *Arts Across the Prairie*. These community events, including the selected artist's participation, will be integral parts of site visits in North Dakota.

Integral to this program is the Artist Training Cohort, a two-session learning experience – one online and one on-site -- where the selected artist provides insight into installing large-scale public art. The goal is to provide training for ND artists to increase skill levels and capacity for public art production. Ten North Dakota artists will be selected for each region and paid to take part in this program. NDCA will plan these learning sessions in consultation with the artist.

Stakeholders are eager to continue the community spirit and collective buy-in of this project. Artist-initiated opportunities to engage community members or provide sharing opportunities throughout the process resonate deeply with stakeholders.

Background and Themes for Region 3, “Heart of the Land, Spirit of Unity”

Region 3 Stakeholders began meeting in late 2023 to discuss the history, landscape, and cultural heritage of their home region. Located in north-central North Dakota, Region 3 is unique for being the only of the state's eight regions with two tribal nations -- the Spirit Lake Nation and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. The Spirit Lake's people are known as *Mni Wakan Oyate*, or “The People of the Spirit Water.” The Turtle Mountain Chippewa call themselves *Anishinaabe*, meaning “The Original People,” and may also be known as Ojibwe. French-Canadian missionaries, namely Father Georges-Antoine Belcourt, arrived in northern North Dakota in the mid-nineteenth century. White settlers, coming from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, and Germans-from-Russia, began immigrating to the region throughout the next fifty years, establishing settlements and homesteads and tilling the land en masse.

The landscape is varied. In the north, the tree-covered, rolling hills of the Turtle Mountains feature pockets of fresh water, which unfurl into unendingly flat farmland blanketed in row crops and dotted with houses. Southward, the expansive waters of Devils Lake shape the landscape.

Water, with its different names, meanings, and formative power, is integral to the region. Devils Lake is the name for both the region's largest city and largest body of water. It is, however, a mistranslation of *Mni Wakan*, more accurately translated as *Spirit Lake* or *Spirit Water*. For the Spirit Lake Nation, the water has deep spiritual associations. For thirty years, Devils Lake has experienced a wet cycle, rising up and down, flooding farmland and threatening infrastructure. Fishing on the lake, historically for sustenance, is now an immense draw for outdoor recreationalists and forms a cornerstone of the regional economy. Algae blooms on the water pose danger. The water's role is nuanced, multifaceted.

The Turtle Mountains are known as the heart of Turtle Island, otherwise known as North America. The legend of the turtle and the serpent is a creation story, teaching that Mother Earth arose on the back of a turtle. While Rugby (nearby in Region 2) claims to be the geological center of North America, Turtle Mountain claims status as the heart.

Sacred buttes – including Butte St. Paul (with special connection to Fr. Belcourt), Bear Butte, and Heart Butte – reinforce the connection between earth and sky, lifting one up and providing views of the land. The tribal nations' histories are rich and storied, their influence strong. Many accomplished Native artists call the region home.

The northern lights and brilliant night skies mesmerize, particularly here. The wind and open prairie are essential elements, and here, the seasons are distinct and powerful in nature. Outdoor recreation like fishing, boating, and snowmobiling is widespread. Farming, agriculture, and the work of farmers shapes culture and life. The regional economy focuses on row crop agriculture, livestock, outdoor recreation, and outdoor tourism.

Stakeholders discussed turtles, hearts, and hills; medicine gardens and natural medicines. In addition to their subtheme, "Heart of the Land, Spirit of Unity," they discussed others such as life on the prairie, prairie passion, the heartbeat of the Plains, the spirit of the prairie, the soul of the prairie, and other heart-related themes.

Stakeholders visited many sites, looking for one that could capture it all – the water, the farming and diverse landscape, both tribal nations. Was there one site that holds significance for Turtle Mountain, for Spirit Lake, and for the region at large? Should two sites be considered, and if so, is a powerful and awe-inspiring artwork still possible? Could different elements, like soil, be incorporated to reference what may be missing?

The selected site is in central Lohnes Township (47°56'55.2"N 98°42'53.8"W). It looks onto immediate surroundings of small watering holes, pastureland, and cropland. Looking west, the land slowly drops, offering a stunning vista with Devil's Heart Butte in the distance. Submitted proposals should be a symbolic reference to this narrative, as stakeholders would like to see these themes represented in the final public artwork. *You are encouraged to investigate.* Upon selection, there will be a dialogue between the stakeholders and the artist to address any concerns.

Artists may be interested to research other notable sites in the region, namely:

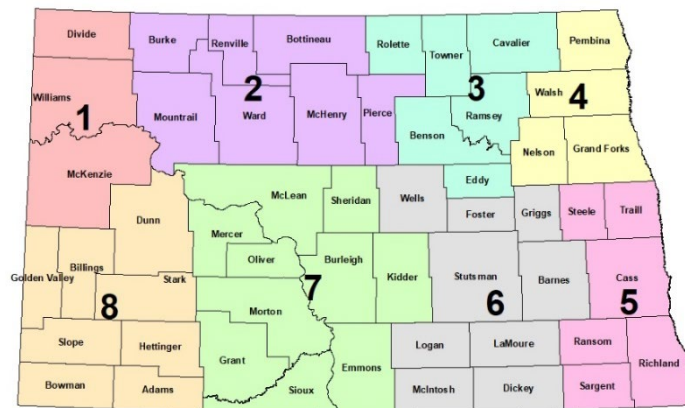
- The International Peace Garden, a botanical garden celebrating peace between Canada and the United States
- Coghlan Castle, a large fieldstone farmhouse near St. John
- Mystical Horizons, a 21st-century Stonehenge near Bottineau
- Graham's Island, an island in Devils Lake

and other topical research, such as:

- [Flood History & Response, Devils Lake](#)
- [The History and Culture of the Mni Wakan Oyate](#)
- [The History and Culture of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa](#)
- [Timeline of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa](#)

The artwork's design should, in its way, capture this narrative and integrate well into its natural setting and larger North Dakota context. We welcome ideas that explore, look outwards, and offer something new.

Site Location



From top, clockwise: Regions of North Dakota; looking west; looking southwest

About Arts Across the Prairie

Arts Across the Prairie: Placemaking in Rural North Dakota will create public-private partnerships throughout the state while providing a national model for this type of creative placemaking. Visit artsacrosstheprairie.nd.gov.

Our goals are to...

- Foster creative cross county networking and regional collaboration
- Promote tourism for in-and out-of-state visitors
- Stimulate economic development and activity in rural areas of North Dakota
- Build stronger arts communities across the state
- Invest in North Dakota's creative sector with professional training and support to heighten visibility
- Bolster NDCA's role as a rural development partner
- Celebrate the cultural heritage of rural areas

NDCA is committed to providing opportunities to all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnic origin, religion, political belief, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, or physical ability.

Transformation of Communities:

Through this program, empowered groups will reach across their regions (and the state) for mutually beneficial partnerships. The culture of rural areas will be celebrated; and community-driven placemaking will create economic, tourism, and equity benefits.

Transformation of Local Art:

The artist(s) will offer training to North Dakota artists to take on projects of this nature. Local artists' capacity will increase with these enhanced skills, resulting in the creation of more art for local communities. This will also expand artists' eligibility for additional funding opportunities. (Workshop parameters TBD)

Partnerships:

NDCA is creating multi-sector, multi-jurisdiction groups of statewide Stakeholders who will collaborate to maximize resources and expertise. As a community-driven initiative, *Arts Across the Prairie* aims to promote civic pride, affirm uniqueness of place, and strengthen cultural identity. This program will create public-private partnerships throughout the state and will provide a national model of this type of creative placemaking, an important step forward for our state. The initiative will foster community innovation across North Dakota in a way that is equitable, scalable, and sustainable.