



**Cultural Arts Facilities Expansion (CAFE)
Program Application Checklist**
(updated 01/09/26)

Please regularly review this checklist for updates since revisions may be made. This checklist is intended to serve as a starting point and is not an exhaustive list of all the questions included in the CAFE application. Before beginning the application, identify the following roles: the applicant, the lead development entity (acting as the developer), any co-applicants (if applicable), and any affiliates (if applicable). Refer to the program rules for definitions. **The applicant is required to identify a lead development entity at time of application.** Generally, a good place to start when identifying the Lead Development Entity is the legal entity that pays the salaries of development staff working on the project. The [program rules](#) provide a detailed definition of Lead Development Entity. In some cases, the applicant may serve as the Lead Development Entity.

REQUIRED DOCUMENT UPLOADS
<p>NJEDA FORMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> NJ Tax Clearance Certificate for Applicant, Lead Development Entity and Co-Applicant (if applicable): State of New Jersey's online Premier Business Services (PBS) portal, <input type="checkbox"/> Formation/Organizing documents for Applicant, Lead Development Entity, and Co-Applicant (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> NJ Charitable Registration for applicant (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> CAFE Mapping Assistant Report <input type="checkbox"/> Project Cost Analysis Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Questionnaire for Applicant and Co-Applicant (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Certification of Non-Involvement in Prohibited Activities in Russia or Belarus Pursuant to P.L. 2022, C. 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgments of Applicant <input type="checkbox"/> CAFE Certifications and Acknowledgements <input type="checkbox"/> CEO Certification for the Applicant, Lead Development Entity, and Co-Applicant (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Activities Form for Applicant, Lead Development Entity, and/or Co-Applicant (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> CEO Certification for Construction Prior to Application (if applicable)
APPLICANT PROVIDED DOCUMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Financial statements: for the last three years of the cultural arts institution (applicant), lead development entity, and co-applicant (if applicable), or if the cultural arts institution has not been in existence for at least three years, other documentation acceptable to the Authority. <input type="checkbox"/> Site Use and Access: documentation on the status of control of the site of the cultural arts project and any agreements that provide a right of access to the cultural arts institution or an affiliate to perform and complete the project which includes the 5-year eligibility period to operate the facility. If the cultural arts institution has not secured access to the site at the time of application, an agreement with the current owner of the site evidencing an intent or obligation to provide the necessary right of access to complete the cultural arts project, including, but not limited to, a letter of intent. <input type="checkbox"/> Construction Schedule: anticipated Construction Schedule including project milestones and narrative description. <input type="checkbox"/> Market and/or Feasibility Study: by an independent third party must be dated within 90 days before the application submission date and submitted at the time of application. This study must include the third party's position regarding the marketability and underwriting of the revenue and expense components of the proposed cultural arts project through the duration of the 5- year eligibility period. Recommended sections include market overview, target audience analysis, competitive analysis, project assessment, marketing strategy, and financial analysis. In addition, provide a narrative that demonstrates: the demand for a cultural arts institution facility at the proposed project site and why it is expected to be successful. The study should also demonstrate that the cultural arts institution either has a strong prior track record of success or provide an independent analysis that demonstrates that a newly formed cultural arts institution will be successful. <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising Plan (from non-profit applicants only): to explain the strategy for securing the necessary funds to successfully execute the cultural arts project including a staffing and annual budget. Recommended sections include project overview, funding goals, target donors, fundraising strategies, forecasted timeline, budget, marketing, risk management, evaluation and metrics. The plan must be dated within 90 days before the application submission date and submitted at the time of application. <input type="checkbox"/> Operating Plan for the 5-year eligibility period after construction including the proposed staffing plan and operating pro forma. Compute the unlevered IRR (internal rate of return) with and without tax credits using a terminal value. Refer to project economic instructions for detailed information on the calculation process for operating budget, net operating income, net profit and loss, terminal value calculation, and unlevered IRR. <input type="checkbox"/> For Profit applicants only: For profit applicants must provide proof that they are receiving a federal or state historic tax credit. This requirement does not apply to non-profit or governmental applicants. <input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Municipal Support: Written letter(s) of municipal support from the chief executive (e.g. Mayor) or resolution from the governing body (e.g. City Council). Letters of support do not require the municipality to make any statements about the feasibility or likelihood of the project receiving a temporary certificate of occupancy (TCO) within four years of the applicant executing a tax credit

agreement with NJEDA. However, in the letter the municipality should acknowledge that the municipality is aware of the CAFE program requirement that the cultural arts institution is to complete the project and receive a TCO within four years of the cultural arts institution executing a tax agreement with NJEDA. The scoring rubric for CAFE awards points if the letter of support also explains how the project aligns with the municipality's development goals. Therefore, applicants who wish to receive points for this category should ensure that this letter details the project's alignment with municipality's development goals and addresses any potential inconsistencies between the project and existing land use regulations.

- **Appraisal:** provide both an “as is” and “as completed” appraised value by a NJ licensed third party Appraiser, **must be dated within 12 months before the application submission date and submitted with the application.** If the applicant includes building acquisition as a project cost, the appraisal must show the value of the building. If an applicant is not using the property value as equity, an independent third-party broker’s opinion may be substituted for the appraisal, provided that both the individual providing the broker’s opinion and the principal in the firm that is providing the broker’s opinion certify the opinion, and both the firm and individual are NJ licensed brokers. For projects that will be leased for 30 years or more, the market value of the lease (as determined by a third-party NJ licensed Appraiser) may be substituted for the “as is” part of the appraisal.
- **Letter of Intent:** evidencing a proposed partnership during the eligibility period with one or more local community organizations that provide support and services to Work First New Jersey program recipients. A [list](#) of local community organizations who have received a grant from the Office of Transitional Workforce Services has been posted on the CAFE webpage. Potential CAFE applicants may find this list helpful for identifying local organizations that support Work First New Jersey program recipients. Additional resources may be available through county and local workforce development offices.
- **List:** status of all required local, State, and Federal government permits and local planning and zoning board approvals that have been issued for the cultural arts project, or will be required to be issued, pending resolution of financing issues.
- **List:** all the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of the Treasury permits and approvals or obligations and responsibilities, with which the cultural arts institution (applicant), lead development entity and co-applicant (if applicable) are associated, or in which they have an interest. The list shall identify the entity that applied for or received such permits and approvals or have such obligations and responsibilities, such as by program interest numbers or licensing numbers. Here is the [spreadsheet](#) for this list.
- **List:** all development subsidies the applicant and co-applicant (if applicable) are receiving or requesting for the cultural arts project including the name of the granting body, the value of each development subsidy, and the aggregate value of all development subsidies requested or received.
- **Participation agreement (also referred to as operating agreement, or service agreement in the application):** between the applicant and co-applicant, if applicable, including how the co-applicant will take an active role in the cultural arts project, and a description of the capital, real property, or services related to the cultural arts project that the co-applicant will provide that directly affect and serve the anticipated visitors or customers of the cultural arts project.
- **Land Use and any other Plans:** necessary to complete the cultural arts project (site plans, project elevation views, and/or presentation materials presented in municipal review settings), if such plans are available. At the time of application this is optional but strongly recommended to facilitate review of the application. Proof of municipal site plan approval will be required within 1 year of board approval.
- **If the cultural arts facility is part of a larger facility:** provide a site plan for the larger facility. Responses may include additional documentation containing details for the NJEDA to understand more about the project, including project elevation views and/or presentation materials presented in a municipal review setting.
- **Floor Plan and Narrative:** describing the allocation of uses and their respective square footage within the cultural arts project, noting any areas that will be leased or subleased to an entity other than the applicant.
- **Sources of Funding:** for each funding source include the name of funding source, funding source type, description, funding amount, and documentation supporting the funding source. If your project plan involves monetizing the tax credit (aka selling tax credits to bring cash into the project), please explain how you will do this and include the details in the Sources of Funding section of the application. For example, are you bringing the proceeds from the sale of the tax credits into the project each year? Or are you using a bridge lending source (such as a tax credit investor, bank, syndicator, or other) to monetize the credits and help finance the construction? Include the details of each deal and include letters of interest and/or term sheets that are signed, dated, and contain specific terms of the deal (e.g. such as the quantity of tax credits the buyer intends to purchase and the price, the valuation of the tax credits, and/or terms for loans (dollar amount, loan terms, interest/discount rates and fees), etc.). Backup documentation for all funding sources is required. At time of application, at a minimum, a letter of intent or commitment is required for each funding source (or fundraising plan, for fundraising). Executed financing commitments (including capital raised via fundraising) will be a condition of Board approval and will be required within one year of Board approval.
- Projected number of construction employees and permanent jobs.
- (*updated 7/10/25*) Evidence for Prior Construction Projects:
 - Date project started construction
 - Detailed explanation of where the project currently is in the project schedule at the time of application to the CAFE program

- Evidence of project budget at start of construction (examples of evidence may include a dated proposal, construction contract, approval of the project budget by the applicant’s governing body or other evidence the Applicant believes will clearly demonstrate to NJEDA the budget at time construction commenced.)
- Explanation of why your budget has increased, including why the Applicant believes each reason for the cost increase could not have been reasonably anticipated.
- For each contractor/subcontractor that has performed construction work on the project: name/address, date of award of each contract, and start date of each construction activity, Certified Payroll Reports and certificate showing their public works contractor registration was valid at the time the work was performed, NJ Prevailing Wage Rate Determination for each contract awarded at the time of the award (for prior work), Contractors Application for payment (AIA G702/G703 or equivalent)
- Photos showing prior work, if available
- Non-debt funding has been raised to date and non-debt funding expected to be raised within 12 months following a potential NJEDA Board approval.

REQUIRED NARRATIVES

- Description of the scale and scope of the proposed cultural arts project.
- Description of the significant economic, social, planning, employment, and other benefits that would accrue to the State, county, or municipality from the cultural arts project.
- Description of the cultural arts project including but not limited to overview, goals, target audience, artistic vision, partnerships, and challenges. Provide as much detail as possible.
- Scope of the work to be performed at the cultural arts facility. Describe the approach for carrying out construction work (including but not limited to planning and engineering, remedial site work, demolition, site preparation, construction work for the cultural arts facility, and contingency planning) including logistical approach and major milestones.
- **For pro rata share projects:** describe the construction details of the structure and how it will be used by the cultural arts project. Additionally, provide the pro rata share as a percentage (%) based on the square footage of the larger facility, explain the methodology and how this pro rata share was determined, and how and where it was included in the project cost analysis worksheet.
- Description of the experience and qualifications of the applicant and relevant project team members' ability to complete cultural arts project.
- Description of applicant’s and co-applicant's (if applicable) mission statement, customer base, and markets served for the Authority to understand primary mission of cultural, arts and cultural education, or artistic enrichment for the people of NJ.
- Description of how the proposed project is consistent or inconsistent with municipal land use plans.
- Description of how the cultural arts project will comply with the minimum environmental and sustainability standards ([Green Building Standards](#))
- *(updated 7/10/25)* For prior construction projects: comprehensive explanation detailing the reasons why the project has commenced and cannot be completed without an award of CAFE tax credits. See May 13, 2025, Board Memo for details.
 - Reasons why the project has commenced and project costs
 - Reason for construction budget increase and why the cost increase could not have been reasonably anticipated.
 - Explanation of why the applicant believes this funding gap between the budget at start of construction and the current budget inclusive of cost increases cannot be filled within a reasonable timeframe without significantly impacting the construction schedule
 - Detailed explanation of where the project currently is in the project schedule at time of application
 - Description of work completed by each contractor

SCORING [CAFE-Board-Memo-Appendix-B-Scoring-2025-01-23-1.pdf](#)

The applicant will have the opportunity to provide the following information which will be evaluated to determine if the applicant meets the required minimum score for the program. Certain factors will be evaluated based on information previously provided in the application. Applicants may elect to opt out of some scoring criteria and still be scored on other factors.

- **Relationship of the cultural arts project to a comprehensive local development strategy:** including its relation to other development and redevelopment projects in the municipality. In addition to the letter of support from the municipal government described in the applicant provided document section above, the applicant may provide evidence that cultural arts project is a permitted use according to land use zoning or the redevelopment plan. The applicant may do this by submitting a letter from the local zoning official verifying that the project is an allowed use, or by referencing the relevant local zoning ordinance or redevelopment plan that confirms the project's permitted status.
- **Job Creation and Economic Development:** detailed narrative describing how the cultural arts project

enhances and promotes job creation and economic development for both the region and state. Upload additional documentation to support this criterion that has not already been included in the application such as an economic impact statement.

- **Economic and Social Distress in the Vicinity:** upload the report from the [CAFE Mapping Assistant](#) tool
- **Full Time Jobs:** Determination if the cultural arts project meets the CAFE program’s definition of “open to the public” (from CAFE program rules) at time of application. (It is required that all projects meet the definition of “open to the public” after construction and throughout the entire eligibility period.)
- **General Public Accessibility Planning:** provide a plan/ strategic plan or other documentation to support the applicant’s approach for this criterion. The evaluation may consider factors such as the cultural arts institution's mission, accessibility strategies, admission plans, programming and hours, and their history of successfully executing these initiatives. Strategies could include plans for discounted or free admission, accessible hours, and events or educational offerings available to the public without financial, scheduling, or other restrictive barriers.
- **Diversity Scoring:** This criterion assesses the diversity of the cultural arts institutions board of directors and whether it is representative of the community.
 - [Applicant Identity Certification Questionnaire](#)
 - **Individual Diversity Information-** if the individual(s) does not identify as one of the groups listed on the Applicant Identify Certification Questionnaire as historically underserved or underrepresented (Black/African American; Hispanic or Latino; Asian Pacific; and/or Subcontinent Asian), for NJEDA to consider other categories as historically underserved and underrepresented, provide information on how the category or categories identified by the individual(s) are historically underserved or underrepresented.
 - **Analysis and Supporting Documentation-** provide an analysis and any supplemental documents to demonstrate that the diversity of the directors (or partners or members as appropriate) are representative of the community in which the cultural arts project is located based on governmental data, including, but not limited to, the most recently available census data. The analysis should contain a comparison of the diversity of the applicant’s directors (or partners or members, as appropriate) versus the community. Additionally, this analysis should also explain the applicant’s rationale and basis for making the determination that they are “representative of the community,” along with the supporting data. Census data may be obtained at <https://data.census.gov/> or by typing “[municipality] census data” into a web browser.