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Wave Pool Incubator (WPI): **Artist Fellowship Program**

The Wave Pool Incubator is a six-month fellowship supporting Cincinnati-area artists at the early stages of establishing ambitious, long-term, community-centered initiatives. Fellows receive a \$4,000 stipend, \$1,500 project budget, studio/office space, and mentorship to plan the work, test approaches, build relationships, fundraise, and develop their initiatives toward sustainability.



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The Need

Truly transformative socially engaged art demands sustained investment in relationships and long-term iterative development. Yet most funders expect defined relationships and outcomes as a condition for their support. This creates a gap: artists with promising, community-centered ideas often lack access to the early support needed to shape their work into fully-fledged proposals. This is especially true for artists whose practices are rooted in community, public engagement, and collaboration with partners outside of the arts.

Wave Pool is launching a program that provides early support to artists at the most formative stage of their ambitious initiatives, when they need room to shape their nascent ideas into projects, build trust, and develop a path toward institutional or philanthropic partnerships.

Wave Pool itself began this way: as an artist-led experiment in an abandoned storefront, testing whether contemporary art could serve a neighborhood. That experiment helped transform Camp Washington into one of Cincinnati's most creative districts. We know what early, attentive support makes possible, and how much harder things are without it.

The Program

Cincinnati-based artists apply with a concept for an artist-led initiative. Selected fellows receive six months of support: stipend, project budget, access to facilities, and mentorship. fellows use the time to build community relationships, test approaches in a supportive environment, and develop their projects toward sustainability through grants, partnerships, business models, or cooperative structures.

In its inaugural year, preference will be given to initiatives taking place in Camp Washington or its immediate vicinity.

What We're Looking For

We seek Cincinnati-based artists with ambitious concepts for artist-led initiatives. Strong candidates will propose projects that:

- Embed artistic creativity into the public realm through innovative approaches
- Center on relationships and collaboration
- Require sustained investment in trust-building and iterative development



- Could lead to new artist-led institutions or sustainable structures in Cincinnati. Possible examples include a nonprofit, a business, a new program within an existing institution, a co-op, a community of practice, or other self-sustaining structures
- Benefit from cross-sector partnerships. Examples include artists collaborating with health or social services organizations, local government, universities, businesses, or other non-arts structures.

We have a very broad understanding of "art" and "artists," and are open to a wide range of cultural practices and disciplines, as long as they have the potential to grow beyond a single project into something lasting.

What Fellows Receive

- \$4,000 stipend
- \$1,500 project budget
- Studio/office space at Wave Pool for six months
- Access to Wave Pool facilities (ceramics, woodworking, project space)
- Mentorship from Wave Pool staff on fundraising, collaboration development, professional development, strategic planning, budgeting
- Discounted fiscal sponsorship fee (4%, reduced from standard 8%) for grants and donations received for the project during the fellowship and for three years after

What We Expect from Fellows

Fellows should use the six months to develop their projects toward sustainability. This means building relationships with potential partners, experimenting, refining the project concept, and identifying pathways to future support: grants, institutional collaborations, or other sustainable structures.

The fellowship does not require fellows to leave employment, relocate, or otherwise disrupt their lives. However, fellows should be prepared to invest meaningfully and consistently in their projects throughout the six months.

We ask fellows to:

- Participate in biweekly cohort meetings



- Present their work publicly at least once during the fellowship, in a format appropriate to the project
- Document their process and progress
- Complete a final report summarizing process, outcomes, and next steps

The fellowship is self-directed. Fellows should be able to work independently and take the lead in developing their projects.

Eligibility

- Open to artists based in the Cincinnati region
 - Housing is not provided; fellows must be able to commute to Wave Pool for the duration of the program
- Individuals and collectives may apply (stipend and budget remain fixed regardless of group size)
- No restrictions on career stage or discipline, although priority will be given to artists working across disciplines and with experience in facilitating complex projects in a public realm
- Past Wave Pool fellows are welcome to apply

Application Process and Timeline

- Stage 1: Initial Application (see questions in the end of this document)
- Stage 2: Full Application (by invitation)

Finalists will be invited to submit:

- CV or resume
- Expanded project vision shared in an in-person interview
 - What motivates you for this work?
 - Why are you the right person to do it?
 - Who are your potential collaborators (people and institutions)?
 - How do you envision this project evolving over the next year? 2 years? 5 years?

Timeline

- January 10: Open call published
- February 2: Information webinar @ 5PM: [Sign up here](#)



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- February 4, 4-6PM: Office hours for consultations
- February 8: Stage 1 deadline
- February 18: Finalists invited to Stage 2
- Week of March 9: fellows announced
- April (date flexible): Fellowship begins

7. How to Apply

- <https://www.wavepoolgallery.org/wpi>
- Contact for questions: info@wavepoolgallery.org



Application Form Questions

Contact Information

- Name
- Email
- Phone
- Website (optional)
- Social media (optional)
- Are you applying as an individual or a collective/group? (note that the budget remains the same regardless)

About Your Initiative

Keep responses specific, informative, brief, and direct. Avoid generic statements and professional jargon.

1. What do you want to establish? (150 words max)

Describe the initiative you want to create. This could be an organization, program, cooperative, business, community of practice, or another structure. Be as specific as you can at this stage: in your imagination, what will the initiative do?

2. Why do you want to establish it? (150 words max)

What need or opportunity does this initiative address?

3. Where do you want to establish it? (50 words max)

Describe the location, community, platform, or context in which this initiative would be based.

4. Who will this work impact and how? (50 words max)

Describe the people or communities this initiative will serve and the change you hope to create for them.

5. If you imagine this initiative ten years from now, what does it look like? (150 words max)

Describe your long-term vision: What has this initiative become? How is it sustained? What has it accomplished?

6. Is there anything else you'd like us to know?



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7. Work Samples (*required*)

Upload a PDF (3 pages max) documenting up to 3 past projects that demonstrate how you arrived at this project and why you are qualified to lead it. These could be artworks, community projects, past initiatives, or other relevant work. Include images and descriptive text as you see appropriate.