

KIDS FORWARD

Artist Request for Proposals to Reimagine Wisconsin Celebrating the Importance of the Arts in Social Justice Movements

AT A GLANCE

Issued by	Kids Forward
RFP Launch Date	June 1, 2026
Submission Deadline	July 6, 2026 at 11:59 PM CT
Awards	6 Artist Awards of \$1,000 each
Art Pieces Due	September 4, 2026
Questions	info@kidsforward.org

1. About Kids Forward

Kids Forward is a statewide antiracist policy center that inspires action and advocates for children and families of color and those furthest from opportunity in Wisconsin. We envision a Wisconsin where every child thrives.

Kids Forward has spent more than 140 years standing up for children and families in Wisconsin. We are the oldest multi-issue child and family advocacy organization in the country – and we’re just getting started.

Through research, policy analysis, public education, community engagement, and advocacy, Kids Forward works to build a Wisconsin where every child thrives. That means fighting for the children and families who are furthest from opportunity: families of color, families living in poverty, and communities that have been systematically left behind.

We know that policy change alone is not enough. The stories we tell – and the art we make – shape what Wisconsin believes is possible. That’s why we created Reimagine Wisconsin.

2. About Reimagine Wisconsin

Reimagine Wisconsin is our multi-year campaign to reimagine an economy that works for everyone, not the just wealthy few.

Every family deserves a fair shot, no matter their race, background, or zip code. It feels like we’re doing everything right to get there. But, we struggle to afford child care and groceries, while the wealthiest few benefit the most.

They want us to blame immigrants and each other instead of them to distract from the real issue: an economy that funnels wealth to the top.

Real affordability isn't about temporary fixes or political spin. It's about solving the root causes of how we got here: ensuring we see the results of our work and the wealthy few pay their fair share. When we come together, reject division, and demand a system that works for all of us, communities can have the things they need, like: a child who can see a doctor when they're sick. A parent who earns enough to pay rent and still puts food on the table. A teenager who gets a second chance instead of a prison sentence. A family that can afford child care without choosing between groceries and going to work.

As part of this campaign, we are inviting artists to help us bring that vision to life.

3. Purpose

Kids Forward is seeking proposals from Wisconsin artists to create original works of art that respond to one of our six core policy priorities. We believe that art moves people in ways that data and policy briefs cannot. We want art that makes someone feel the urgency of a family without health insurance, or the possibility of a community that invests in young people instead of incarcerating them.

Six artists will be selected to receive an Artist Award of \$1,000 each, along with a platform to share their work with communities across Wisconsin. Selected artists will create their work over a six-week period, and the resulting pieces will be used by Kids Forward in our campaign materials, public education efforts, and digital outreach.

This is your invitation to make policy feel real.

4. Policy Areas

Artists must respond to one of the following six policy priorities, organized under three thematic areas:

Care That Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health care at a price all Wisconsin residents can afford• Child care at no more than 5% of a family's income
Work That Pays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A living wage starting at \$20/hr that goes up as cost of living increases• Expanding tax credits that help working families make ends meet
Communities That Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age appropriate support for youth, instead of new youth prisons• Healthy school meals for all kids and nutritious food families can afford

In your proposal, please identify the specific policy priority your work will address and explain your connection to it. We welcome proposals from artists whose own lived experience touches these issues, and from artists who are motivated by the experiences of others in their communities.

5. Who Should Apply

We are looking for artists who:

- Are based in Wisconsin or have a demonstrated connection to Wisconsin communities
- Work in any artistic medium (see Section 6 for guidance)
- Are interested in the intersection of art, equity, and policy
- Can commit to completing their work by September 4, 2026

We especially encourage proposals from artists of color, artists from communities directly affected by the policies described above, and artists who are earlier in their careers and have not yet had access to significant funding or platforms. Kids Forward is committed to racial equity, and that commitment extends to this project.

There is no educational requirement to apply. We are not looking for a particular style or aesthetic. We are looking for artists who have something to say.

6. Eligible Art Forms

We welcome proposals in a wide range of mediums, including but not limited to:

- Visual art (painting, illustration, drawing, printmaking, collage, mixed media)
- Photography
- Graphic design and digital art (in alignment with our principles, we will not accept AI generated art)
- Textile and fiber art
- Sculpture or three-dimensional work
- Music and spoken word (audio recordings or video performances)
- Video, film, or animation
- Murals or large-scale public-facing work

All work must be appropriate for audiences of all ages, including children and families. We welcome work that is sophisticated, complex, and emotionally powerful – but *it should be free of explicit language, graphic violence, or adult content*.

Kids Forward will use images or digital versions of each piece (for example, an audio or video recording of a musical work) in our campaign materials and public outreach. The artwork itself will remain owned by the artist, who retains full rights to exhibit, sell, or otherwise use their piece as they see fit.

7. Award Details

Number of Awards	6 Artist Awards
Award Amount	\$1,000 stipend per artist
Work Period	6 weeks (award notification through September 4, 2026)
Deliverable	Completed artwork and a digital file or image suitable for Kids Forward's use
Rights	Artist retains full ownership; Kids Forward receives license to use image/digital version in Campaign Materials, Advertising, Stories or videos in media releases (incl. but not limited to newspaper, television, radio, magazines, and online publications), Social Media, Websites (kidsforward.org , reimaginewi.org), Fundraising mail, Fundraising emails, Printed or online brochures/publications

The \$1,000 stipend is intended to support your time and materials. It is not a commission price – the artwork belongs to you. We simply ask for the right to share it.

8. How to Apply

Submit your proposal by **July 6, 2026 at 11:59 PM CT**. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Required Submission Materials

Your proposal should include the following, compiled into a single PDF or email submission:

1. Artist Statement (300–500 words)

Describe yourself as an artist: your background, your practice, and what drives your work. Tell us which policy priority you will address, what connects you to the policy area you've chosen – whether through lived experience, community ties, or artistic curiosity.

2. Project Proposal (300–500 words)

Describe the artwork you plan to create. What is the medium? What will it look like, sound like, or feel like? How does it connect to the policy priority you've selected? What do you want people to take away from it?

3. Work Samples

Please share 3–5 examples of previous work. These can be images, links to video or audio, or a portfolio link. Work samples do not need to be related to policy or advocacy. Work samples do not need to be previously sold/published.

4. Contact Information

Your name, preferred pronouns (optional), city/region of Wisconsin, email address, and phone number.

How to Submit

- Email your complete proposal to: info@kidsforward.org using subject line: Reimagine Wisconsin Artist Proposal – [Your Name], or
- Via our online form at <https://kidsforward.org/calling-all-artists-reimagining-wisconsin-through-art/>

9. Selection Process & Criteria

Kids Forward staff and community reviewers will evaluate proposals using the following criteria:

- **Artistic quality and strength of portfolio**
 - Does the work demonstrate skill, intentionality, and a distinct artistic voice?
- **Connection to policy priority**
 - Does the proposal demonstrate a thoughtful, substantive engagement with the chosen policy area?
- **Community connection**
 - Does the artist have a meaningful connection to Wisconsin communities, especially communities most affected by these policy issues?
- **Feasibility**
 - Is the proposed work realistic to complete within the six-week timeline and with the available stipend?
- **Clarity and vision**
 - Does the proposal communicate a clear creative vision and intended impact?

We aim to select six artists representing a range of mediums, regions of Wisconsin, and policy areas. We will notify all applicants of our decision by late July 2026.

10. Key Dates

Date	Milestone
June 1, 2026	RFP launches; submissions open
July 6, 2026	Proposal submission deadline (11:59 PM CT)
Late July 2026	Artists notified of selection
Late July – September 4, 2026	Six-week art creation period
September 4, 2026	Completed artwork due
Fall 2026	Artwork featured in Reimagine Wisconsin campaign

11. Questions

We want this process to be accessible and transparent. If you have questions about the RFP, the policy areas, eligibility, or anything else, please reach out.

Email: info@kidsforward.org

Kids Forward is committed to making this process welcoming for all artists. If you need this RFP in an alternative format or have accessibility needs related to the application process, please contact us and we will do our best to accommodate you.

Wisconsin is worth reimagining.

We hope you'll help us do it.

kidsforward.org | reimaginewisconsin@kidsforward.org