

Spirit & Place Festival

Application Guidelines



INDIANA UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS
SPirit & PLace

**All meetings are optional, but strongly recommended*

January – May	Meet with the Program Director! Schedule a time to chat about your ideas and to learn how the festival can be a great way to connect with the community! Email festival@iu.edu or call 317-274-2462 .
Feb. 19, 2025 3 - 4PM, Zoom	NATURE Brainstorming – <i>Creative Zoom session aimed at helping you break through creative blocks to find NATURE inspired event connections.</i>
Mar. 10, 2025 10:30AM & 3:30PM Michigan Rd. Library	Prospective Applicant Gathering – <i>Unpack the festival selection process and discover how to best prepare for a successful application. Same session offered twice on March 10 at 6201 Michigan Rd. (See April for Zoom sessions.)</i>
Mar. 25, 2025 3 – 4:30PM Broad Ripple Park Family Center	NATURE Brainstorming – <i>Gather with other event creatives to explore the NATURE theme and build partnerships. Address: 1426 Broad Ripple Ave.</i>
April 1, 2025	Online Application Opens – <i>All applications must be submitted using the online form. Visit the spiritandplace.org's homepage for the link.</i>
April 9, 2025 12PM, Zoom	Prospective Applicant Gathering
April 24, 2025 10AM, Zoom	Prospective Applicant Gathering
May 21, 2025	Application Review Ends – <i>Spirit & Place will provide feedback on applications before the deadline. The earlier the better!</i>
Friday, May 23 Midnight	Application Deadline
Nov. 6 – 16	Spirit & Place Festival <i>Partner events run from Nov. 7 – 16 at 4PM</i>

What is the Spirit & Place Festival?

Spirit & Place was launched in 1996 and is a community-focused project housed on the campus of IU Indianapolis. Its mission is to catalyze civic engagement through the arts, humanities, and religion. Its signature offering – Spirit & Place Festival – is a unique multi-day festival of events. It is the nation’s *only* arts, humanities, and religion festival.

With the exception for the opening and closing events, everything offered in the Spirit & Place Festival is created by the community. **Who do we mean by “community?” YOU!**

People from all walks of life and organizations across sectors are welcome to pitch event ideas for the annual November festival. Every year we welcome artists, musicians, poets, writers, clergy, people of faith, scholars, educators, museum and library staff, social service workers, activists, storytellers, and others to propose creative events exploring **the yearly theme**. Events must also be rooted in one of our “civic tools” – **the arts, humanities, and/or religion** – and engage at least **one other community partner**.

Our shared goal is to create a mix of welcoming events that allow the public to **reflect on a common theme while creating rich arts, humanities, and/or religion experiences with friends and strangers!** These shared experiences enrich our sense of place, build civic bonds, and help combat the loneliness, isolation, and polarization felt by many.

To pitch an idea, you need to submit an application that outlines what an audience will experience at your event; how it explores the theme while using the arts, humanities, and/or religion; and who else you will be working with.

A team of reviewers coming from different faith traditions, races, genders, and ages read the festival applications and select festival events in June. **Selected events receive a \$200 stipend to help with event costs.** Festival partners are also offered training opportunities, one-on-one event coaching, and marketing support.

What the public had to say after the 2024 Spirit & Place Festival:

I needed this reminder in my life. It felt good for my soul.

I felt connected to my community and the kindness of strangers.

*Hearing different perspectives and chatting with my neighbor let me know **I am not alone.***

Events must be scheduled between Nov. 7 – 16.

Spirit & Place will officially kick off the festival with an event on November 6. Partner-created events may be scheduled between Nov. 7 – 16. Events scheduled for Nov. 16 must conclude no later than 4PM. When scheduling your event, check community calendars and be mindful of major happenings like the **Monumental Marathon on Nov. 8.**

HOW DOES THE SPIRIT & PLACE FESTIVAL WORK?

1

Dream up an awesome event inspired by the yearly theme.



2

Root your event in the arts, humanities, and/or religion.



3

Work with at least one community partner.



4

Attend an info session or schedule time to talk with Spirit & Place.



5

Turn in your application by the deadline!



6

If selected, you'll receive a modest event stipend and other support.



»» THE SPIRIT & PLACE FESTIVAL IS TRULY CREATED BY YOU.

Spirit & Place does not try to control what you do or how you do it, but events should avoid proselytizing, welcome multiple points of view, and strive to create a shared sense of belonging. Events can be entirely new or an inventive spin on existing programming.

As the event creator, you pick the date, time, and (Central Indiana) venue for your event.

We provide marketing support, coaching, and stipend.

Big Three: Theme, Civic Tools, & Community Partnerships

The best chance of having your event chosen for the festival is by strongly connecting to the **REQUIRED** elements of **the theme, use of our civic tools, and developing meaningful partnerships.**

#1 The Theme

This year's theme is NATURE. Your event idea should be inspired by the theme **AND** help the community reflect on or feel connected to your interpretation of NATURE. Creating 11 days of community thinking, feeling, and doing around a common theme is how we help people feel connected to each other. We welcome ideas literally connected to nature (i.e., environmental and outdoor events) as well as more philosophical ideas exploring the “nature of . . .” a relevant topic.

Use our [theme prompt sheet](#) for inspiration and check out what festival goers in 2024 [thought about the NATURE theme](#). Visit spiritandplace.org and search under the Festival Theme tag.

#2 Civic Tools

The **arts, humanities, and religion** are a part of all our lives. Even if you are not artistic, you are likely to listen to music or watch TV. Although you may not consider yourself a history buff, subjects like history, economics, sociology, ethics, political science, etc. are deeply woven into the fabric of our society. Religion and spirituality have played a significant role in every human society and continue to shape the lives of millions. Festival events must engage **ONE OR MORE** of our civic tools. Don't be afraid to stretch yourself by using more than one civic tool, but only one is required. [Learn more by visiting the Festival page of our website.](#)



#3 Community Partnerships

Partnering with others allows you to share the workload, receive creative input, and avoid blind spots. **The festival requires you to work with at least one external partner.** What does that mean? If you work for a university, you should ideally find at least one off-campus partner. If you work for an organization with affinity groups, that's great – include them! But who else from the community could you invite in to help? Events created by individuals tend to be naturally collaborative. However, independent event creators are encouraged (not required) to find an organizational partner. Organizational partners can often help with capacity (e.g., event logistics, venue, registration, marketing, etc.) The Selection Committee will give **preference to partnerships that are deeply collaborative rather than transactional.** The committee recognizes venue, promotional, and staff support partnerships take time to develop (i.e., they count and fulfill the partnership requirement!). However, the committee will give higher marks if you can show how everyone is working together to explore the theme and create a powerful community experience.



WHAT MAKES THE SPIRIT & PLACE FESTIVAL SPECIAL?



THE THEME

By creating events around a common theme, we invite the community to slow down, think deeply, meet new people, and form rich connections between ideas and each other.

COLLABORATION

Festival events should be collaborative. It takes teamwork to create dynamic public events that open hearts and minds and create a sense of belonging!



CIVIC TOOLS



Engaging the **ARTS** opens our senses, liberates our imaginations, and unlocks fresh perspectives. Through the **HUMANITIES**—history, literature, philosophy, sociology, ethics, etc.—we can explore the complex interactions between people, place, and time. The world's **RELIGIOUS** and **SPIRITUAL** traditions invite us to examine what it means to be human and how to live in relationship to one another.

Learn more at spiritandplace.org or email festival@iu.edu.

What else is the Selection Committee looking for?

Selection Criteria (Ranked on a scale of 1 to 7)

1.) ***Theme (required).** Freedom to interpret the theme is part of what makes the festival such a wonderful experience. Strive to make sure the theme is central to your planning and the audience experience.

2.) ***Civic Tools (required).** Which civic tool are you using and how? If you are using the arts, how so? If rooting your event in the humanities, which *specific humanities disciplines* will you use? For religion/spiritual events, how is your event examining a tradition's beliefs, practices, or texts?

3.) ***Collaborative (required).** You must work with at least one external partner. Working together looks different for everyone (e.g., venue partner, promotional partner, etc.) and we know it all takes time to manage. But **partnerships between disciplines** and **collaborative relationships that share authority and/or are co-creative** will be ranked the highest.

4.) **Clarity & Capacity.** The committee needs to understand what the audience will experience. Remember, this is a festival of events – so describe the event! They are also assessing whether you can pull off everything you're planning.

5.) **Inventiveness.** Whether a brand-new offering or an intentional modification to existing programming, festival events should offer fresh insights, bold topic choices, thought-provoking speakers, creative partnerships, inventive formats, or unique venues. The committee wants to know why your event is special and why it should be amplified within the festival.

Nothing for us, without us.

Caring for your audience also means knowing your lane. If planning an event *about* a group of people, that group needs to be involved from the beginning. Engage those community partners early and involve them in the application process.

About Our Civic Tools

Talking about the **arts** without sharing artistic examples or creatively engaging the audience is a big miss. **Connecting around a “shared sense of humanity” or “humanness” is NOT using the humanities.** Engaging **religion** means unpacking beliefs, practices, text, etc. in relation to the theme, not just creating a religious event. Hosting an event at a place of worship does not “check” the religion box.

6.) **Audience Care.** Who is your audience and how will you design for their needs? If your event is for families, have you carefully planned the day, time, and activities for children? Does your audience need you to plan for added accessibility features, proximity to public transit, or food at an after-work event?

7.) **Commitment Beyond Self.** If your singular goal is increased visibility or brand awareness, we're not a good fit. **The Spirit & Place Festival is a communal experience.** Your event is part of a collective whole, and **Spirit & Place's values** of reciprocity, abundance, emergence, and being people-centered must be a part of your intentions. Hey, we're not saying you can't leverage your festival event for greater visibility! It just shouldn't be your #1 goal.

Hints & Tips from the Selection Committee

- **Be as detailed as possible.** We know you will not have all your event plans confirmed by the application deadline. But the more details you provide, the stronger you will be scored.
- **Clarity & Focus.** Know your “why”¹. Be intentional in addressing the theme. Be specific about your use of the arts, humanities, and/or religion. Go deep rather than broad. (Don’t try to be everything to everyone!)
- **Paint a picture.** The title is your first impression – make it memorable!² Clearly describe the event. What is the format? How will the experience flow? What will people see, hear, feel, think, and/or do?
- **Be smart with timing & audience needs.** You pick the event date, time, and venue. **Events should be scheduled from Nov. 7 through 4PM on Nov. 16.** (Be mindful of the **Monumental Marathon** on Nov. 8.) Can your audience reasonably get to your location at the start time? If it is right after work, will food be provided? Is the day & time convenient for families? Does the event respect people’s time? Unless you are planning a workshop or come-and-go style event, we recommend events should last no longer than 2 hours.
- **Surprising Juxtapositions & New Locations.** Creating moments of contrasts by pairing unlikely speakers or topics is always a plus. So are new venues or using familiar venues in a surprising way!
- **Thoughtful Partnerships.** We love that you might use the festival to strengthen existing community relationships and encourage you to do so. Just remember that when tackling enduring issues or engaging audiences outside your area of expertise, working with culturally/religiously sensitive partners is a must.

Don’t Make it Weird!

Do not list anyone as a community partner who you have not asked. They might be on the Selection Committee – and it’s awkward when this happens.

Special preferences

The Selection Committee gives higher scores to event applications that demonstrate:


- Use of multiple civic tools (e.g., Arts and Humanities; Religion and Art, etc.)
- "Never-before-seen" and/or interactive opportunities.
- Collaborations based on shared authority and co-creation.
- Interfaith events, especially those involving non-Abrahamic traditions.
- Opportunities that highlight, celebrate, and intentionally include the complex diversity and perspectives of our community.

¹ What is the purpose behind your event and why you want to be a part of the Spirit & Place Festival? What are the core values driving your efforts? Knowing this will help you write a clear and compelling application.

² Past titles we’ve loved: *B-Movies & Bad History*; *The Score Awakens*; *Two Truths & a Lie: The Intersection of Fact & Fiction*; *Truthsgiving: Using Food to Dismantle a Colonial Myth*.

Resources, Support, & Benefits

Spirit & Place is here to support you during the application process and beyond.

<h3 style="text-align: center;">Application Support</h3> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Take advantage of the variety of ways Spirit & Place can assist with the application process.</i></p>	<h3 style="text-align: center;">Festival Benefits</h3> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>If selected for the Spirit & Place Festival, we continue to support.</i></p>
<p>1. Applicant Meetings Whether you'd like to discuss your ideas, strategize partnerships and venues, or just unpack the nuts and bolts of how to craft a compelling application, we have you covered! Email festival@iu.edu to set up a one-on-one conversation or visit spiritandplace.org to sign up for a prospective applicant meeting.</p> <p>2. Online Resources Our website is filled with help sheets, checklists, and videos! Materials include: Application Narrative Examples Event Intentionality Worksheet Who's Your Audience Worksheet Community Engagement & Events Designing Successful Events (video)</p> <p>3. Application Review Let us help you! Spirit & Place staff are happy to review and advise on your event application. The earlier the review request, the better. Requests can be made through May 21.</p>	<p>1. \$200 Event Stipend All lead partners³ (or their designee) will receive \$200 to apply towards their event.</p> <p>2. Equipment Loans Spirit & Place can loan festival partners a portable sound system (speaker & two hand-held mics) or OWL 360 Meeting Pro Camera for their events.</p> <p>3. PR & Marketing In partnership with Bohlsen Group, Spirit & Place promotes the festival <i>as a whole</i> through press releases, media alerts, community calendars, and (paid and organic) social media posts. Spirit & Place also utilizes its email list of 6K+ subscribers. Well-attended events are those that also engage in their own robust marketing efforts. Spirit & Place will be working with Bohlsen Group during the summer of 2025 to provide event partners with one-on-one strategy sessions and other tutorials on effective marketing & PR.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>

Photography & ASL Interpretation
Spirit & Place sends a **limited number of professional photographers** to festival events. If a photographer can go to your event, you will receive copies of the photos. Spirit & Place also works with **IUI's Program in American Sign Language (ASL) and English Interpreting** to send student volunteers to a limited number of events.

³ The "lead partner" is typically the person/organization responsible for submitting the application and serves as the chief point of contact during the festival application process and beyond.

Accessibility is not an afterthought

Please consider ways you can make your event more accessible by checking out Spirit & Place’s online resources like this [event design tip sheet](#) and this [planning video](#).

For blind & visually impaired guests, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large font versions of materials• Reserved seating for clear sight lines• Dark text on light backgrounds• Audio description services	For deaf & hearing-impaired guests, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ASL services• Using a microphone• Assisted listening devices or audio captioning
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Limitations & Restrictions

The Spirit & Place Festival is a celebration of arts, humanities, and religion in community life. It is a platform for experimentation and a space to cultivate new relationships, catalyze civic engagement, amplify unheard voices, and uncover community solutions. The festival is an inclusive arena that often delves into difficult dialogues while embracing the idea of “[adventurous civility](#).”

In other words, the festival is not a platform to preach to your choir, a podium from which to proselytize, a placeholder for existing events, or a mere marketing tool for your organization. Please read about [Spirit & Place’s values](#) to learn more.

Limitations and restrictions include:

- **Accessibility.** All events must be in ADA compliant facilities unless the venue is a designated historical structure or an outdoor event. Event partners should make every effort to meet accommodation requests.
- **No personal development workshops.** We are looking for community-focused events.
- **No research studies.** Scholars wishing to showcase their work within the festival are welcome, but the festival is not a site to conduct research unless it is community-engaged.
- **No fundraising & limited fee-based events.** Fundraisers are not allowed, and free events are preferred. We recognized performing arts events, events with licensing fees, and those serving food must recoup cost through ticket sales.
- **Date restrictions.** Events should be scheduled to begin **Friday, Nov. 7** and conclude no later than **4PM on Sunday, Nov. 16**.

Community-Engaged Research

Outputs from events with research goals must center the community and be shared with the community. Event attendees should be told upon registering that the event has research/project goals, and their participation will be used to further these goals. (University Folks: Events requiring an IRB that do not have a public component as an output will not be accepted into the festival.)

Partner Agreement

Agreement with the following is required.

1) Festival Partner Meeting

Tentatively planned for **July 9**, this “next steps” meeting is REQUIRED for lead partners and/or their collaborating partners. (Can’t make it? You can send a replacement from your event team.)

2) Promotions & Marketing

Relying solely on Spirit & Place to generate an audience will not be enough. Resources (like the [PR Matrix](#)), trainings, and consultations will be made available to all festival partners, but a **commitment to engage in promotions is needed from all**. Additionally, all partners – lead, collaborating, and venue – must commit to distributing event guides leading up to the festival.

3) Withdrawals & Event Essentials

Event selection notifications will go out in late June/early July. Event creators have until August 1 to withdraw their event from the festival. **August 1 is also the date to confirm all “event essentials.”** This includes the event date, time, venue, title, short description, and event image. Image permissions are required, and images should be in jpg or tif format at 300dpi. (Don’t panic! We’ll help with this.)

4) Event Registration

Event registration is required (with some exemptions) and **you will manage your own registration process**. (Depending on need, Spirit & Place provides an Eventbrite 101 tutorial in the summer.) All lead partners, regardless of the registration platform, must include **email permission language** in their registration form and send the registration link **to Spirit & Place no later than October 1**.

5) Event Framing & Logistics

Your festival event should not be repeated between August 1 and December 31, 2025 (some exceptions apply). **All events must use Spirit & Place’s talking points at the beginning of their event and end with reminders to turn in an event survey**. Venue partners should be made aware of the delivery of **event guides in late September** and ensure they are left out for public distribution. They should also supply a table and two chairs in a visible location for festival volunteers.

6) Festival Volunteers

Spirit & Place will send 1 to 3 volunteers to all events. They will greet attendees, keep a sign-in sheet for walk-in guests, distribute event guides, and collect event surveys. If provided with a registration list, they can assist with an official check-in. They will have an extra copy of the talking points, but it is not their job to deliver opening remarks. Spirit & Place volunteers will not aid with set-up or tear-down activities.

7) Post-Festival: Partner Survey & Registration Email List

Lead partners must complete a partner survey by December 1, 2025, and supply a registration email list (.xls or .csv only). Submitting a partner survey is required for future festival consideration.