BBJ Queens, Bronx, and Manhattan
Percent for Art Artist Selection FAQ

Why are you looking for artists?

- The New York City Department of Design and Construction ("DDC") seeks artists interested in being commissioned to provide artwork for the New York City Borough-Based Jails Program ("BBJ"). The City will be selecting artists soon for upcoming artwork commissions at the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan BBJ facilities through the NYC Percent for Art Program.

How do I apply to be considered for the commissions?

- Complete and submit the response to the Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) form online by April 20, 2026 at https://bit.ly/4cZSRvH.

Who is eligible to apply?

- Any adult living visual artist is eligible to apply.
- Artists who have been impacted by the criminal justice system are encouraged to apply.

What information is requested in the RFEI response form?

- Name, email, website (optional), mailing address, phone, social media (optional), short bio, short statement of interest, and portfolio (10 images of past work and a list of images)

How do I submit my portfolio?

- Generally, we are looking for 10 image files of past work and a document with a list of the images to be shared via a download link pasted into the RFEI form. Folders should be accessible to anyone with the link and not password protected.
- Examples of websites that can create download links to files include Dropbox, Google Drive, WeTransfer, Box, etc. Several of these services are free.
- For images, the following file formats are preferred for best results: JPG, PNG, GIF, TIFF, or BMP files. Preferred image layout: horizontal orientation, minimum resolution 1920x1080 pixels.

- For the document listing the image information, the following formats are acceptable: .doc, .docx, .odt, .pdf, .rtf, .txt, .xlsx, or .csv.
- If you need assistance, please reach out to us via email: pfa@bbjnyc.com

What specifically are you looking for in the portfolio?

- We recommend that you select 10 of the best and most relevant examples of your previous work.

Can I submit more than 10 images of my past work?

- No, please only submit 10 images. Artists will be considered equally based on a standard of 10 images of past work each. If more than 10 images are submitted, you will be asked to revise your submission.

How long do artists have to respond to the RFEI?

- The RFEI response form was released on March 12, 2026 and will close on April 20, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST. The open period duration is 40 calendar days or approximately 5 ½ weeks.

Can I change my RFEI responses after the online form has been submitted?

- Yes, please send an email to pfa@bbjnyc.com to request any changes to your RFEI responses by April 20, 2026.

Do I need to pick the project or borough I want to be considered for?

- No, all artists will be considered for inclusion in the selection pool for all three facilities. If you are selected as a finalist, artists will participate in a series of interviews with all three facility teams to determine the best artist for each project.

What is the payment schedule for artists who are selected for award?

- If awarded, payments to the artist are made according to a fee schedule in the artist's contract. If you are selected as a finalist, payments will be discussed in more detail during the orientation for finalists on May 15, 2026.

Could an artist paint directly on the wall, or would the artwork need to be fabricated elsewhere?

- Most Percent for Art (PFA) artworks are fabricated off site and then brought to the site to be installed. If it is important to an artist to work directly on site,

it could be considered, but whether this would be feasible would depend on your process, whether it can be done safely on site given construction work, and whether the result would be durable and long-lasting. For PFA, artwork must be installed before the completion of the capital project. We can discuss further if you are selected as a finalist.

What kind of artwork can be considered- 2D or 3D?

- There will be 3D exterior opportunities. We expect most of the interior artwork opportunities to be 2D or low relief. However, we are open to considering other proposals if you are selected as a finalist. The feasibility of 3D artwork options would be considered based on several factors, including use of the space, user safety, artwork cost, size, weight, level of site preparation that would be required, and maintenance and cleaning requirements for the artwork.

Will there be a list of fabricators available for the commissions?

- If selected for award, we can share a list of various types of fabricators for reference. Other fabricators can be used as well. Artists are responsible for selecting a fabricator or self-fabricating the artworks.

How many artworks should be proposed for each of the sites? Or is it one artwork for the area selected by the artists?

- We are not looking for specific proposals for any of the potential locations. At this stage, artists only need to respond to the RFEI by completing the web form at https://bit.ly/4cZSRvH, which includes submission of a portfolio of past work.
- Through the artist selection process, we are selecting artists based on qualifications, not specific proposals. If you are selected as a finalist, potential locations will be discussed further at the orientation on May 15, 2026.

If I submit an RFEI response, when will I know if I've been selected as a finalist to advance to the second phase of the selection process?

- All RFEI respondents will be notified of their status via email by April 28, 2026.

How will artists be selected?

- Artists for the BBJ projects will be selected through the City's two-phase artist selection panel process. The panel will be comprised of representatives of the City agencies involved in the project and representatives of the public knowledgeable about public art, as well as other advisory panelists.
- Phase 1: Artists who have responded to the RFEI by completing the web form will be considered for inclusion in the group of artists reviewed during Phase 1 of the selection process. Respondents may be contacted to provide additional information prior to the start of Phase 1. During the first artist selection panel meeting, a smaller group of finalists will be selected to advance to the second phase of the selection process. Artists selected to be finalists will be notified at the end of Phase 1 (by April 28, 2026) and may be required to provide additional information at that time.
- Phase 2: During Phase 2, finalists will be invited to attend an orientation on May 15, 2026 and will be scheduled for an interview between June 8-15, 2026. Then, the second artist selection panel meeting will take place, during which at least three artists will be selected from the Phase 2 finalists for award of commissions for artwork. Finalists will be notified of the outcome of the selection process on July 13, 2026.

What is the NYC Percent for Art Program?

- The New York City Percent for Art Program allows City agencies the opportunity to acquire, commission, or restore works of art for City-owned properties throughout the five boroughs. It is one of the largest municipally funded public art programs in the United States. The program was established by local law in 1982. Over the past four decades, hundreds of site-specific, long term public artworks have been commissioned and installed throughout the City's five boroughs through Percent for Art Program.

What kind of artworks are commissioned through the NYC Percent for Art Program?

- Artworks commissioned through Percent for Art become a part of the City's official art collection and must be:
    i. Long-term: designed to last for the life of the building (at least 50 years)
    ii. Site-specific and physically integrated into the design and construction of the project

iii. Durable: not easily removed, relocated, altered, or damaged
iv. Maintainable by the agency having jurisdiction
v. Safe for all users
vi. Approved and accepted by the participating agencies and the NYC Public Design Commission

Why should artists apply?

- These commissions will be an opportunity for selected artists to make a lasting improvement to the facilities and have a positive impact on people in custody, their family and friends, facility staff, neighbors, and others in the greater community. The BBJ projects represent a transformational investment by the City of New York in implementing its commitment to justice reform.
- Artists who have been impacted by the criminal justice system are encouraged to apply.

Why do artists have to complete the RFEI response form?

- Only artists who affirm they are interested in these commissions will be considered.

Where are the BBJ facilities you are commissioning artwork for through this process?

- We are commissioning artists for artwork at the following projects:
  i. BBJ Bronx Facility
  357 Southern Boulevard
  Bronx, NY 10454
  ii. BBJ Queens Facility
  80-45 126th Street
  Kew Gardens, NY 11415
  iii. BBJ Manhattan Facility
  125 White Street
  New York, NY 10013

Why aren't you commissioning artwork for the BBJ Brooklyn Facility as well?

- The BBJ Brooklyn Facility already has an artist commissioned through Percent for Art.

How much will the award for artwork be for each project?

- The artwork commission awarded to the selected artists is up to $900,000 for each facility. If selected for award, the artist will provide design services, attain the required approvals, and manage the fabrication and installation of the artwork at the site, working in coordination with the contracted Design-Builder for the facility and the agencies involved in the project. The artist will use the artwork commission according to the following budget guidelines: 20% artist's fee, 60-65% artwork fabrication and installation, 5-10% expenses, and 10% contingency. The City's design-build consultant will design and construct the required site preparation for the artwork.

Will artists that are selected as finalists be compensated for their participation in Phase 2 of the artist selection process, if they are not selected for award of a commission?

- Yes. If you are a finalist who is not selected for award of a commission, you will receive an honorarium of $500.

What are the key dates in the artist selection process for artists?

- March 12, 2026: RFEI Opens
- April 20, 2026: RFEI Closes
- April 28, 2026: Selected Finalists Notified at the end of Phase 1
- May 15, 2026: Artist Finalist Orientation (by invite only)
- June 8-15, 2026: Artist Finalist Interviews (by invite only)
- July 13, 2026: Finalists Notified of Selection Results at the end of Phase 2

What makes an artist well qualified for these commissions?

- During Phase 1 of the artist selection process, artist qualifications will be judged based on:
    i. Successful completion of RFEI form online
    ii. Past work
    iii. Relevant experience & expertise
- During Phase 2 of the artist selection, artists qualifications will be judged based on:
    i. Past work demonstrates skilled craftsmanship
    ii. Relevant experience & expertise
    iii. References
    iv. Background

v. Demonstration of collaboration skills
vi. Demonstration of professionalism, and
vii. Presentation or description of an approach and initial concept ideas
    1. Artist's approach is sensitive to the site's architecture, function and users
    2. Artist's approach demonstrates clarity of artistic vision
    3. Artist's approach is feasible within available budget and can meet requirements for the space(s)
    4. Artist's approach is true to their artistic sensibility

Which agencies are participating in the artist selection process?

- The participating agencies are NYC Department of Design and Construction, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, NYC Department of Transportation, NYC Department of Correction, NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, and NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation Correctional Health Services.

What are the goals for the artwork commissioned through this process?

- The goals for the Percent for Art Program are:
    i. Commission artwork of the highest possible caliber
    ii. Set a national example for public art commissioning, while reflecting contemporary art practices
    iii. Bring artists into the design process for new buildings and infrastructure so that the City's civic and community buildings and public spaces are enriched
- Additionally, the goals for the BBJ projects are:
    i. Commission artwork that is appropriate to the unique use of the facility
    ii. Provide artwork for multiple audiences: people in custody, staff, visitors, & general public
    iii. Integrate artwork with overall design approach and BBJ Program goals to improve experience of the facility
    iv. Provide artwork that is meaningful to those who will occupy the facility
    v. Commission artwork that resonates now but endures into the future

Why are you not requesting proposals from artists during the selection process?

- Specific artwork proposals are not being requested during the artist selection process to allow commissioned artists the opportunity to develop a proposal with more input from the design team and constituents, including people with lived experience, staff, and community members.
- If awarded, artists will be required to conduct a research phase, including engagement with people with lived experience, staff, community members, and others to confirm development of an appropriate concept.

Will there be arts programming available to people in custody?

- Yes, arts programming will be provided by the Department of Correction and therapeutic arts programming will be provided by Correctional Health Services after the facility is open.

Can Percent for Art funding be used in other ways than for commissioning long term site-specific artwork for these three BBJ facilities?

- No, Percent for Art funding is a special allocation from each project's capital construction budget. Each Percent for Art project is part of the specific capital project it is being funded from. The City is prohibited by law from using capital funds for things like temporary art, training, programming or maintenance. The City cannot combine Percent for Art funds from multiple capital projects or use the funding for artwork at sites other than the site of the capital project.

Will there be other artwork in the facilities besides the artwork commissioned through Percent for Art?

- Yes, the interior design of the BBJ facilities includes graphics to provide visual interest in certain spaces, for example.
- Murals and other artwork may be created through other means (not Percent for Art) after the facility is occupied by the Department of Correction.

How has this opportunity been publicized and made accessible to artists?

- The RFEI/open call has been publicized through the following methods:
    i. Posted to City Record Online, New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), and Public Art Exchange (PAX)
    ii. Posted to social media sites including Instagram and LinkedIn
    iii. Through direct outreach to individual artists and arts organizations
    iv. Through a public Artist Info Session Event on Zoom with Q&A (3/25)

v. By providing artist information in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish
vi. General distribution of flyers, both electronic and paper
vii. To neighbors of the projects through each project's Community Construction Liaison
viii. By announcement and distribution of flyers at BBJ community engagement events, including public design workshop and community board presentations
ix. Through local colleges with fine arts programs
x. Through justice advocate organizations and individuals

If I'm selected for award, what will the general artwork schedule be?

- For the BBJ Bronx Facility and Queens Facility projects, artwork design is expected to start in Fall 2026 and be completed by Fall 2027; artwork installation is anticipated in 2031.
- For the BBJ Manhattan Facility, artwork design is expected to start in Fall 2026 and be completed by Spring 2028; artwork installation is anticipated in 2032.
- Selected artists will likely be generally expected to meet with the project team once per week during the design phase for the artwork.

I know an artist perfect for this; what should I do?

- Share the online RFEI response form at https://bit.ly/4cZSRvH and tell them to fill it out by April 20, 2026

I have more questions – who should I reach out to?

- All questions should be directed via email to pfa@bbjnyc.com
- No phone calls please.