



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR THE NEXT FOREVER INITIATIVE

Deadline: January 15, 2025

Proposals for The Next Forever Commissions will be accepted from December 11, 2024 – January 15, 2025.

The Next Forever is a partnership of The Civilians with Princeton University's High Meadows Environmental Institute (HMEI) and Lewis Center for the Arts, created to explore how dynamic storytelling can engage vital environmental subjects and provide the vision and inspiration we need to navigate the challenges of our planet's future — the “next forever.”

A multi-faceted initiative, The Next Forever comprises an ongoing series of public events and performances, an undergraduate class on narrative and the environment, and a competitive commission-and-residency program for theater makers.

As the author and activist Naomi Klein has observed, the stories we tell ourselves about how we live in the world are foundational to the environmental emergencies we now confront — and to our chances of overcoming them. With funding provided by Princeton University, The Next Forever initiative will award two commissions to theater makers to create work that offers new visions for how we relate to the world around us. Additionally, the program provides the artists with the opportunity to engage over the academic year with Princeton faculty working in relevant fields.

HMEI functions as a vibrant central resource for faculty, postdocs, students, alumni, and others with an interest in environmental topics and research. Through their relationship to HMEI and the larger Princeton community, awardees will have access to a cross-disciplinary range of knowledge and ideas—of scientists, conservation psychologists, historians, policy and communications experts, and others— to support the artists, as they pursue a rigorous inquiry into their subject matter. The artists can be playwrights, composers, directors, performers, live art creators, designers, performance artists—anyone who is a generative creator of story-centered theater.

We believe that the scope and complexity of the present environmental crises ask all of us to think beyond business as usual. The Next Forever is an invitation to artists who are eager to break out of the writing studio or the rehearsal room and develop new work in conversation with leading scholars and thinkers. We are soliciting commission applications that prioritize narrative, require some kind of research process, and engage environmental subject matter on topics such as climate change, biodiversity, food security, urban systems, migration environmental justice, etc. Applicants are by no means limited to the examples in this list. We are interested in any and all possibilities.



THE COMMISSION AND RESIDENCY

As part of the Next Forever initiative, **two \$10,000 commissions** will be awarded annually to two theater makers to create original work that engages environmental subject matter. Proposed projects can be entirely new or in early stages of development. Collaborations between two artists will be considered.

The initiative provides commissioned artists with the opportunity over an academic year to engage with Princeton faculty working in fields relevant to their projects. Each recipient will receive a \$5,000 residency stipend, as well as a budget to support research activities, travel and a research assistant. Over the course of an academic year, the artists will engage with faculty and students. **(Artists will not receive housing and are expected to live within commuting distance. The residency stipend and research budget is intended to defray costs associated with being on campus.)** The specific residency schedule will be developed in collaboration with each artist, but as a general rule the artist will be expected to be present on campus at least 14 days during the academic year. Each artist will organize at least one public event, which can be an artist talk, play reading, panel discussion, or other format. Other forms of engagement with faculty and students (e.g., courses, seminars) are also possible. Following the completion of the commission, there may be potential for further development of the work with The Civilians.

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THE PARTNERS OF THE NEXT FOREVER

The Civilians is a theater company in New York City, creating work that investigates our lived experience, interrogates the stories that shape our society, and awakens new thinking. Central to our mission is the process of investigative theater, which we broadly define as any creative process of inquiry that feeds the creation of work. Methods may include research, a community-based focus, interviews, or other experimental strategies of the artist's design. The Next Forever initiative is named for the final song in The Civilians' 2014 show "The Great Immensity," a musical about climate change.

The **High Meadows Environmental Institute (HMEI)** – the interdisciplinary center of environmental research, education, and outreach at Princeton University – advances understanding of the Earth as a complex system influenced by human activities and informs solutions to local and global challenges by conducting groundbreaking research across disciplines and preparing future leaders in diverse fields to impact a world increasingly shaped by climate change.

The **Lewis Center for the Arts** at Princeton University believes that art arises out of questions. Its classes and certificate programs in Dance, Creative Writing, Theater, Music Theater, and Visual Arts, and in the interdisciplinary Princeton Atelier, operate on the principle that rigorous artistic practice is a form of research, innovation, discovery and intervention. Like scholarship of any kind, rigorous artistic practice is a way of interrogating that which is accepted or understood in an attempt to break into the territory of the unknown or under-explored.



QUALIFICATIONS

- Applicants must be 18 years of age and have authorization to work in the United States.
- We will consider a broad range of generative artists including playwrights, composers, devisers, directors and performers looking to create original theatrical work.
- Applicants must articulate some kind of research-based approach to creating their work, demonstrating that the residency period is a valuable and necessary aspect of the project.
- Applicants must be available to fulfill the Princeton residency component of the commission and should live within commuting distance via ground transportation to Princeton University. The residency period is to take place during the academic year: (September 2025 to May 2026).
- We will consider both original and adapted works, provided that the rights to any material not in the public domain have been granted in writing, and a copy of the release is emailed along with the script.
- We will consider plays, devised work, performance, live art, musicals—anything that takes place live in front of an audience. If submitting as a collaboration, please submit a single proposal as a team. Your team application should consist of a single joint proposal but with individual bios and work samples.
- Scripts and proposals should be submitted as PDF files. Music samples should be submitted as MP3 files.

SELECTION PROCESS

There will be four rounds of reading throughout the process. The review team will consist of The Civilians artistic staff and a diverse team of evaluators familiar with The Civilians. Members of the review team will be compensated for their time and expertise.

ROUND 1 – Initial Review - The artistic staff at The Civilians will give each proposal an initial review.

ROUND 2 – Applications Are Read and Evaluated by Reading Team/Semi-Finalists are Selected - Projects still under consideration will be reviewed and evaluated by the team of invited panelists. Each will review approximately 6-10 proposals, and semifinalists will be selected on the basis of their evaluations.

ROUND 3 – Finalists Are Selected - A review team comprising The Civilians artistic staff, and three-to-five panelists will read the semifinalists' applications, and finalists will be selected.

ROUND 4 – Commissioned Artists Are Selected - Members of the review team, consisting of The Civilians artistic staff and representatives of The Lewis Center and HMEI, will read or reread all finalists' applications, and some team members may meet with finalists to discuss their proposed projects and how their work would benefit from access to the Princeton community and resources.



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND HOW TO APPLY

Please submit a brief proposal through this [Online Application Form](#) for a theater project exploring an environmental issue that you would like to develop through the Next Forever Initiative. Using the form, please submit a resume or biography of each applicant artist, as well as a work sample of a script or music that you think best represents your work. The form will ask you to respond to a series of questions asking you to detail your project, mode of investigation, plans for development, and how you will use the Princeton resources in your process. Please access the form for more details regarding the questions.

The committee will read at least 10 pages of your written work sample. If there is a particular section you want read, please let us know. For music, up to 3 songs, totaling approximately ten minutes. If there are lyrics, please include them in your application.

Please contact Melissa Hardy, the New Work Program Manager, Melissa@thecivilians.org with any questions. No phone calls, please.

The Civilians' Commitment to Our Community

As you take the time and energy to apply for The Next Forever Commission, we want to share our commitment to you, our extended community.

The Civilians strives to be a vibrant company of artists whose work reflects our celebration and investigation of diverse human experiences. We believe that our work and our lives are infinitely more complex, rewarding, illuminating, and nearer to truth when we have a wider variety of human experiences in our room, at our table, and on our stages.

The Civilians is committed to dismantling racist, sexist and other unjust and harmful systems and we are committed to anti-racism practices that actively promote equity, inclusion and justice for each person in our community, regardless of and without limitation to race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation or identity, religion, age, economic class, educational level, language, immigration status, physical mobility and ability, Neurodiversity and family status. The Civilians believes that everyone should have equal access to our programs, and that our diverse community should be reflected in all that we do.

The process of selecting our Artist Commissions are guided by these commitments. All activities throughout the season are also shaped by these values and priorities, and space is held collaboratively, equitably, and with mutual respect, accordingly.

To learn about The Civilians' commitments to anti-racism, accessibility, and indigenous peoples, lands, and stories, please visit our living document [here](#).