



2026 Dakota County Fair Poster Art Competition

Call For Entries

Overview

This competition is for the Dakota County artist who has a true passion for the Dakota County Fair. Artists are asked to submit a color sketch celebrating the Dakota County Fair. Be a part of this annual competition and submit your most creative idea that showcases the theme of the Dakota County Fair.

There will be three finalists selected from the entries. The grand prize artist will get the \$500 cash prize while the other two finalists will receive a \$250 cash prize. Each of the three finalists will receive three (3) complimentary parking tickets.

Eligibility

The Dakota County Fair Poster Art Competition is open to Dakota County residents only, age 16 and older. Employees, directors, and immediate family of the Dakota County Fair are not eligible to enter. Any artists who submitted work for consideration in previous years are encouraged to enter again.

Theme

The theme for this competition is **“GOLD! Rush to the Fair!”**. Artists will submit a color sketch depicting their passion for the Dakota County Fair and incorporate the theme. However, we are not looking for an advertisement. The fair dates this year are August 10-16, 2026.

Submission Requirements

All submissions must include the following:

1. A completed entry form.
2. Resume (maximum of two pages) – this is to tell us about you
3. **Color** sketch (Concept) depicting the Dakota County Fair and “GOLD! Rush to the Fair!” theme on 8 ½ x 11 paper.

4. Brief description of submitted sketch and intended medium.

All materials must be submitted in hard copy form. Submission materials will not be returned.

Concept: Artwork must be two-dimensional. The first submission (Concept) must be delivered or dropped off by **Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 3 pm**. See Submitting Entries below for mailing and drop-off addresses. It should be a color sketch depicting the Dakota County Fair and “GOLD! Rush to the Fair!” theme on 8 ½ x 11 paper. Concepts may be rendered using computer software.

Final Piece: The final piece **must use traditional media**. Finalists must submit final artwork in the following size: 18 x 24-inch horizontal or vertical poster. The artist’s signature must be at least 1-inch from the border of the artwork.

Selection Criteria

Judges will be looking for the following in each of the submissions:

- Artwork should celebrate the Dakota County Fair and incorporate the theme, “GOLD! Rush to the Fair!”.
- Passion for the Dakota County Fair
- Appeal to a broad audience
- Must include “Dakota County Fair” and the Fair Dates (August 10-16, 2026). Failure to adhere to these standards will result in disqualification.

Selection Process

The selection process is as follows:

1. A panel of judges will review all submissions and select their top three submissions.
2. The artists of the top three submissions will be invited to visit with a panel to further explain their concept.
3. The top three finalists will have four weeks to create the more detailed piece of his/her concept. The final artwork of the three finalists must use traditional media and be 18 x 24” horizontal or vertical in size, with signature 1 inch above border.
4. The panel of judges will review the finalists’ artwork and will select the piece of artwork that celebrates the Dakota County Fair and theme the best.
5. For contestants under the age of 18, they must submit the release with their artwork that has a parent or guardian’s signature.

Terms and Conditions for Finalists and Grand Champion Artist

A complete agreement will be presented at the time of artist selection. All finalists' artwork will become property of the Dakota County Fair. The artists will retain the copyright, but full ownership of the finished selection will be transferred to Dakota County Fair. The Dakota County Fair will also have the right to reproduce the original artwork for sale in the form of commemorative posters and other merchandise, as well as for use in advertising and promotion of the Dakota County Fair.

The artist of the final selection agrees to publicity promoting their artwork upon request, including attending poster signing events during the Dakota County Fair

In addition to the \$500 for being the Grand Champion Artist, the artist will receive 25 posters. Furthermore, the Grand Champion Artist will be considered for various opportunities that arise before, during or after the 2026 Dakota County Fair.

Competition Proceeds

Posters will be used for advertisements of the Dakota County Fair. There may be merchandise that is made from the artwork that may be sold at the Fair Office or Information Booth during the Dakota County Fair. All proceeds from sales will support the Dakota County Fair - Friends of the Fair Fund.

Schedule of Events

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| Entry deadline: | April 1, 2026 |
| First round judging artwork: | April 8, 2026 |
| Finalists informed: | April 10, 2026 |
| Finalist artwork deadline: | May 5, 2026 |
| Judges select winning artist: | May 7, 2026 |

Submitting Entries

Materials must be delivered and arrive by **Entry Deadline: Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 3 pm**

or dropped off between 9 am – 3 pm at:

Dakota County Fair
Art Competition
4008 220th Street West
Farmington, MN 55024

Finalists will be contacted with further details at that stage of the competition. Any entries dropped off or received after 3 pm **Wednesday, April 1, 2026**, will not be accepted.

Questions?

Any questions about the competition should be directed to Kristine Smith at ksmith@dakotacountyfair.org.