Call for Artists
Adopt-a-Marlin Program
Morehead City, North Carolina
Applications Due December 12, 2025

Morehead City, in partnership with local businesses and organizations, is pleased to announce the Adopt-a-Marlin Program. This initiative will celebrate community pride and artistic creativity by showcasing large fiberglass Marlin statues, each uniquely painted by local artists, created in collaboration with local businesses and organizations. Once completed, the Marlins will be installed on the purchasing business or organization's property, highlighting our coastal identity and supporting economic vitality through cultural tourism.

Project Overview

- Local businesses and organizations will "adopt" a Marlin by purchasing and hosting a seven-foot-tall fiberglass statue provided by the City.
- A curated pool of artists will be pre-selected by the City's Adopt-A-Marlin Committee through this Call for Artists.
- Each purchaser will review the pool of approved artists and select one to commission for their Marlin's artwork.
- The selected artist and purchaser will work together to mutually agree upon a design and a price for the Marlin artwork, funded by the purchaser.

Artist Eligibility

- Open to professional and emerging artists within North Carolina, 18 years or older.
- Artists must demonstrate the ability to complete large-scale, outdoor public art projects.
- Collaborative teams are welcome to apply.

Artwork Guidelines

- Artists will work on fiberglass Marlin statues, which stand approximately 7 feet tall. A mockup of the statue and artist suggestions from the statue vendor are included with this Call for Artists.
- Designs must be original and family friendly. Suggested to reflect creativity, community spirit, and/or local heritage.
- Final designs must abide by Morehead City Ordinances, including but not limited to those related to signage (e.g., no lettering or words).

Artist Stipend

- Selected artists will receive a stipend, funded directly by the purchaser, at an amount to be agreed upon by artist and purchaser.
- The stipend covers all materials, supplies and labor.

Selection Process

- Applications will be reviewed by the City's Adopt-A-Marlin Committee based on artistic merit, feasibility and community relevance.
- Approved artists will form the Artist Pool from which purchasers may choose.

Timeline

- Call Opens: October 31, 2025
- Application Deadline: December 12, 2025

Submission Requirements

- Artist statement (max 500 words) about your work and interest in community art.
- 3–5 images of past artistic projects (public art preferred).
- Preliminary conceptual sketch (optional but encouraged).

How to Apply

Click here to complete the application online

If you have any questions about the Call for Artists or the Adopt-A-Marlin Program, please contact Sarah Currie, sarah.currie@moreheadcitync.gov

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Icon Poly Suggestions for Artist

The sculptures we provide to art projects like yours are specifically designed to be safe for any artist to work on by using the least toxic materials on the market, and in most cases are readily available for artists at hobby and art supply stores for use by artists in their homes or studios.

1. Lightly sand the entire surface with 180-220 grit to clean the surface of dirt and residues that could cause adhesion problems with your paint. After sanding, clean your surface with straight water on a damp cloth. Be sure to let the entire surface dry prior to painting. Do not use mechanical sanders. If any primer flakes off when sanding, sand back to where the primer is stuck, and then reprime or Gesso that area. We suggest using any brand of Gesso and almost all paint manufacturers have an exterior grade acrylic primer that will work. Be sure to follow directions and safety guidelines on any products that you use.

2. Wear plastic gloves when doing this and when touching the raw sculpture after sanding. This will keep oils from your hands off the surface which could cause an adhesion problem when painting. Do not wear powdered latex gloves because powder residue will remain on the sculpture.

3. Using acrylic paints is recommended. Most brands work fine as long as they are high quality with natural pigments. We recommend staying away from oil paints if you do not have a lot of experience with them. If you have specific questions, please contact Icon Poly.

4. If a drill is needed for embossing or any other creative reason, Icon Poly suggests a Dremel-type rotary tool.

5. (For experienced artists) If an artist plans to cover the entire surface with materials other than paint, in the case of tile or mosaic work, an artist should remove as much primer as possible, so the adhesive can attach to the raw resin surface.

6. (For experienced artists) When attaching items with adhesive be sure to sand or rasp down into the material of the sculpture. Gluing directly to the primed surface may not yield the best results.

7. (For experienced artists) If attaching items, we recommend using physical attachments (i.e. screws, bolts) in conjunction with adhesive attachments when possible. Using both together will create a much more durable piece. If you intend to change the structure or add to the structure, please contact Icon Poly for guidance.

8. (For experienced artists) We highly recommend structural urethane adhesive when bonding things to the sculpture. Several companies make these, such as 3M, U-Pol, and Norton. These are normally found at auto body supply stores.

9. After your sculpture is complete, you must apply an automotive grade high gloss urethane clear coat for protection from UV and exterior elements. Three coats are encouraged. Always follow application instructions on the product you select. Be sure to test for compatibility in an inconspicuous area prior to clear coating the entire sculpture. No matter which product you select be sure to follow instructions and safety guidelines.

10. Your sculptures will have a 1/8” clean drilled hole somewhere on the underneath side. Do not seal this hole off. If you cover the hole with paint or other materials, please re-drill the hole as it is a breath hole and is important for the longevity of the sculpture and the artwork applied to it, by limiting expansion and contraction.

11. Here at Icon Poly, we only use the taping process when we can clear coat with urethane clear between layers. If we want to do fine lines without clear coating and taping we use fine line acrylic paint pens or paint bottles with needle-type tips to make the fine lines.

Icon Poly would like to see artists’ work and the progress of the project. Please share photos by going to www.facebook.com/iconpoly and locating the album for the project you are working on. We like to see any pictures, in progress and completed.

