

Our Town

GUIDELINES

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Our Town

(Landing Page Text)

Our Town is the NEA’s creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the program supports activities that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities. Our Town projects advance local economic, physical, or social outcomes in communities, ultimately laying the groundwork for systems change and centering equity. These projects require a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government entity, with one of the partners being a cultural organization. Grants range from \$25,000 to \$150,000, with a minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount.

Upcoming deadlines:

Part 1 - Submit to Grants.gov	August 4, 2024 by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time
<i>Prepare application material so that it’s ready to upload when the Applicant Portal opens</i>	
Part 2 - Submit to Applicant Portal	August 9-16, 2023 by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time
Earliest Announcement of Grant Award or Rejection	April 2024
Earliest Start Date for Proposed Project	July 1, 2024

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- [Our Town Theory of Change](#)
- Recent Our Town Grantees (LINK TBD to PDF of FY 19, 20, 21 grantees)
- [Responsible Conduct of Performance Measurement, Program Evaluation, and Research](#)
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OUR TOWN: Program Description

Our Town is the NEA's creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the program supports activities that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities. Our Town projects advance local economic, physical, or social outcomes in communities, ultimately laying the groundwork for systems change and centering equity.

These projects require a partnership between a local government entity and nonprofit organization, one of which must be a cultural organization; and should engage in partnership with other sectors (e.g., agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, workforce development). Grants range from \$25,000 to \$150,000, with a minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount.

Projects

We encourage applications for projects that integrate arts, culture and design into strategies for strengthening communities ([LINK to objective definition below](#)). Arts, culture, and design may uniquely:

- Bring new attention to or elevate key community assets and issues, voices of residents, local history, or cultural infrastructure.
- Inject new or additional energy, resources, activity, people, or enthusiasm into a place, community issue, or local economy.
- Envision new possibilities for a community or place—a new future, a way of overcoming a challenge, or approaching problem-solving.
- Connect communities, people, places, and economic opportunity via physical spaces or new relationships.

The NEA is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and fostering mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all individuals and groups. Our Town supports a variety of projects across the country in urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities of all sizes.

Project Types

Our Town projects must demonstrate a specific role for arts, culture, and design as a part of strategies that **strengthen communities** ([LINK to objective information below](#)) by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. Competitive projects often pilot new proposed activities and establish new or deepen existing cross-sector partnerships, while also

demonstrating how they strive to lay the groundwork for long-term systems change. Projects may include activities such as:

Arts Engagement:

- **Artist residency:** A program designed to strategically connect artists with the opportunity to bring their creative skill sets to non-arts institutions, including residencies in government offices, businesses, or other institutions.
- **Arts festivals:** Public events that safely gather people, often in public space or otherwise unexpected places, to showcase talent and exchange culture.
- **Community co-creation of art:** The process of engaging stakeholders to participate or collaborate alongside artists/designers in conceiving, designing, or fabricating a work or works of art.
- **Performances:** Presentations of a live art work (e.g., music, theater, dance, media).
- **Public art:** A work of art that is conceived for a particular place or community, with the intention of being broadly accessible, and often involving community members in the process of developing, selecting, or executing the work. Temporary public art may be included. These are works that are meant for display over a finite period of time using easily-removed materials, and are often used to prototype an idea, product, or process.

Cultural Planning:

- **Cultural planning:** The process of identifying and leveraging a community's cultural resources to inform decision-making (e.g., creating a cultural plan, or integrating plans and policies around arts and culture as part of a city master planning process).
- **Cultural district planning:** The process of identifying a specific geography with unique potential for community and/or economic development based on cultural assets (e.g., through designation, branding, policy, plans, or other means).
- **Creative asset mapping:** The process of identifying the people, places, physical infrastructure, institutions, and customs that hold meaningful aesthetics, historical, social and/or economic value that make a place unique.
- **Public art planning:** The process of developing community-wide strategies and/or policies that guide and support commissioning, installing, and maintaining works of public art and/or temporary public art.

Design:

- **Artist/designer-facilitated community planning:** Artists/designers leading or partnering in the creative processes of visioning and developing solutions to community issues.
- **Design of artist space:** Design processes to support the creation of dedicated spaces for artists to live and/or to produce, exhibit, or sell their work.
- **Design of cultural facilities:** Design processes to support the creation of a dedicated building or space for creating and/or showcasing arts and culture.

- **Public space design:** The process of designing elements of public infrastructure, or spaces where people congregate (e.g., parks, plazas, landscapes, neighborhoods, districts, infrastructure, and artist-produced elements of streetscapes).

Artist and Creative Industry Support:

- **Creative business development:** Programs or services that support entrepreneurs and businesses in the creative industries, or help cultivate strong infrastructure for establishing and developing creative businesses.
- **Professional artist development:** Programs or services that support artists professionally, such as through skill development or accessing markets and capital.

For more information, review the list of recently funded Our Town grants ([LINK TO LIST OF RECENT OT GRANTEES—FYs 19, 20, 21](#)).

Required Partnerships

A key to the success of creative placemaking is involving the arts in partnership with committed governmental, nonprofit, and private sector leadership. All applications must demonstrate a partnership that will provide leadership for the project. These partnerships must involve two primary partners, as defined by these guidelines:

1. Nonprofit organization
2. Local government entity

One of these two primary partners must be a cultural (arts or design) organization. **The highest ranking official of the local government is required to submit a formal statement of support.** See "How to Apply" ([LINK](#)) for more information.

Additional partners are encouraged and may include an appropriate variety of entities such as arts organizations and artists, design professionals and design centers, as well as cross-sector partnerships with state level government agencies, councils of government, rural or regional planning organizations, foundations, nonprofit and community organizations, educational institutions, real estate developers, business leaders, and special districts that advance community investments in agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development. Partnerships that leverage infrastructure investments are welcome and encouraged.

Strengthening Communities

Through Our Town projects, the NEA intends to achieve the following objective: *Strengthening Communities: Embed the arts in system-wide initiatives that strengthen or heal communities.*

Our Town projects integrate arts, culture, and design into strategies that strengthen communities and center equity in advancing economic, physical, or social change.

- Evidence of **Economic Change** might include: Economic improvements of individuals, institutions, or the community including local business growth, job creation/labor force participation, professional development/training, prevention of displacement, in-migration, and tourism.
- Evidence of **Physical Change** might include: Design of physical improvements to the built and natural environment, and delivery of public services including beautification or enhancement of physical environment (including arts, culture, and public space).
- Evidence of **Social Change** might include: Improvements to social relationships, civic engagement and community empowerment, amplifying community identity including collective efficacy, social capital, social cohesion, and community attachment.

Successful Our Town projects lay the groundwork for systems change that sustains the integration of arts, culture, and design into strategies for strengthening communities over the long term.

- Evidence of **Systems Change** might include: Improvements to community capacity to sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into strategies for advancing local outcomes; for example: establishment of new or sustained cross-sector partnerships; shifts in institutional structure, new practices or policies; replication or scaling of innovative project models; or establishment of training programs.

An Our Town project may work to advance a specific economic, physical, or social change, with the intention of laying the groundwork for systems change. Or, a project may aim to address systems change directly.

NOTE TO OPA: EMBED LOGIC MODEL GRAPHIC

For more about the strengthening communities objective, see [A Framework for Measuring and Understanding the Our Town Program.](#)

OUR TOWN: Award Information

Grant Amounts, Cost Share, and Matching Funds

We anticipate awarding a limited number of grants, subject to the availability of funding.

You must request a grant amount at one of the following levels: \$25,000, \$50,000, \$75,000, \$100,000, or \$150,000. We will award very few grants at the \$150,000 level; these will be only for projects of significant scale and impact.

Our grants cannot exceed 50% of the total cost of the project. All grants require a nonfederal cost share/match of at least 1 to 1. These cost share/matching funds may be all cash or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. You may include in your Project Budget cost share/matching funds that are proposed but not yet committed at the time of the application deadline.

We reserve the right to limit our support of a project to a particular phase(s) or cost(s). All costs included in your Project Budget must be expended during your period of performance. Costs associated with other federal funds, whether direct or indirect (e.g., flow down through a state arts agency), cannot be included in your Project Budget. **Costs incurred before the earliest project start date of July 1, 2024, cannot be included in your budget or cost share/match.**

Period of Performance

Our support of a project may start on July 1, 2024, or any time thereafter. A grant period of up to two years is allowed. **The two-year period is intended to allow an applicant sufficient time to plan, execute, and close out its project, not to repeat a one-year project for a second year.**

Any planning costs that are included as part of the project must be incurred during your established period of performance.

OUR TOWN: Eligibility

All applications require partnerships that involve at least two primary partners as defined by these guidelines: a nonprofit organization and a local governmental entity. One of the two primary partners must be a cultural (arts or design) organization. Additional partners are encouraged.

One of the two primary partners must act as the official applicant (lead applicant). This lead applicant must meet the eligibility requirements, submit the application, and assume full responsibility for the grant.

Eligible lead applicants are:

- Nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) U.S. organizations with a documented completed **three-year history of programming**. For the purpose of defining eligibility, "three-year history" refers to when an organization began its programming and not when it incorporated or received nonprofit, tax-exempt status. Programming is not required to have taken place during consecutive years. Organizations that previously operated as a program of another institution may include programming it carried out while part of that institution for its three-year history.
- Local governments. For the purposes of these guidelines, local governments are defined as counties, parishes, cities, towns, villages, or federally recognized tribal governments. Local arts agencies or other departments, agencies, or entities within an eligible local government may submit the application on behalf of that local government. The following do not qualify as local governments: state level government agencies, other state-designated entities, state higher education institutions, regional governments and entities, quasi-government organizations, regional planning organizations, city council or aldermen offices, and business improvement districts.

For U.S. territories, if no local government exists, the territory government can serve as the local government.

To be eligible, the lead applicant organization must:

- Meet the NEA's "**Legal Requirements**," including nonprofit, tax-exempt status, at the time of application. (All organizations must apply directly on their own behalf. Applications through a fiscal sponsor/agent are not allowed. [See more information on fiscal sponsors/agents.](#))
- Have a commitment to the project from the local government, as demonstrated by the required formal statement of support for the project from the highest ranking official of the local government participating in the project.

Eligible organizations that received American Rescue Plan (ARP) or CARES Act funding may apply to this program as long as there are no overlapping costs during the same grant period.

Additional partners are encouraged and may include an appropriate variety of entities such as arts organizations and artists, design professionals and design centers, state level government agencies, foundations, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, real estate developers, business leaders, community organizations, council of governments, rural planning organizations, transportation agencies, special districts, educational organizations, as well as public and governmental entities. Federal agencies cannot be monetary partners.

The designated state and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) and their regional arts organizations (RAOs) may serve as partners, but not primary partners, in projects. NEA funds cannot support any SAA or RAO costs. There is an exception for U.S. territories. The territory's SAA may serve as the local government primary partner. However, all grant funds must be passed on to the other partners.

All applicants must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) assigned by the System for Award Management (SAM, www.sam.gov), be registered with SAM, and maintain an active SAM registration until the application process is complete, and should a grant be made, throughout the life of the award. Partner organizations are not required to have a SAM registration or UEI.

Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian Applicants or Projects

We provide support for projects featuring Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian arts across all NEA disciplines. ([See more information here.](#))

Late, ineligible, and incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Application Restrictions

An organization may submit as a lead applicant two applications to Our Town.

A partnering organization may serve as a partner on as many applications as they like.

If more than one application is submitted from a single lead applicant, local government, or within the same geographic area, the capacity of the lead applicant, local government, or geographic area to carry out and sustain multiple Our Town projects will be considered in the review of applications.

Other NEA Funding Opportunities

You may apply to other NEA Fiscal Year 2024 funding opportunities, including Grants for Arts Projects in addition to Our Town. If you submit applications to other opportunities, each request must be for a distinctly different project, or a distinctly different phase of a project.

If you have other NEA awards with activities and/or periods of performance that will overlap with you proposed Our Town project, contact Our Town staff for guidance to ensure that the projects are different or for a distinctly different phase of a project

If you have applied to the NEA in the past and were not recommended for funding, you may apply again to any funding opportunity, including Our Town.

OUR TOWN: Application Calendar

Part 1 - Submit to Grants.gov	August 4, 2023 by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time
<i>Prepare application material so that it's ready to upload when the Applicant Portal opens</i>	
Part 2 - Submit to Applicant Portal	August 9-16, 2023 by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time
Earliest Announcement of Grant Award or Rejection	April 2024
Earliest Start Date for Proposed Project	July 1, 2024

Before applying, your organization must create and maintain up-to-date registrations with both the System for Award Management (SAM) at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) and [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). Registering and maintaining accounts with SAM and Grants.gov is always FREE. See [How to Apply LINK](#) for more information.

Registration in SAM.gov and Grants.gov can take several weeks. Give yourself plenty of time to get registered. Similarly, submit your application to Grants.gov well in advance of the deadline in case you encounter any difficulties.

Late, ineligible, and incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Exceptions to the deadline will be considered only for registration or renewal issues or technical malfunctions that are the result of failures on the part of DUNS, SAM, Grants.gov, or NEA systems, as determined by the NEA. To be considered for this exception, you must provide documentation of a DUNS, SAM, Grants.gov, or NEA systems failure that prevented your submission by the deadline.

In the event of a major emergency (e.g., a hurricane or Grants.gov technological failure), the NEA Chair may adjust application deadlines for affected applicants. If a deadline is extended for any reason, an announcement will be posted on our website.

If you have questions: Email: OT@arts.gov



Contact the Office of Accessibility at 202-682-5532 / accessibility@arts.gov or the Office of Civil Rights at civilrights@arts.gov to request an accommodation or an alternate format of the guidelines.

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May 2023

OUR TOWN: Unallowable Activities/Costs

Under these guidelines, funding is **not** available for:

Activities

- General operating or seasonal support.
- Direct grants to individuals.
- Individual elementary or secondary schools -- charter, private, or public -- directly. Schools may participate as partners in projects for which another eligible organization applies. Local education agencies, school districts, and state and regional education agencies are eligible. If a single school also is a local education agency, as is the case with some charter schools, the school may apply with documentation that supports its status as a local education agency.
- Projects that replace arts instruction provided by an arts specialist.
- Generally, courses in degree-granting institutions.
- Literary publishing that does not focus on contemporary literature and/or writers.
- Generally, publication of books, exhibition of works, or other projects by the applicant organization's board members, faculty, or trustees.
- Generally, exhibitions of, and other projects that primarily involve, single, individually-owned, private collections.
- Projects for which the selection of artists or art works is based upon criteria other than artistic excellence and artistic merit. Examples include festivals, exhibitions, or publications for which no jury/editorial/curatorial judgment has been applied.
- Social activities such as receptions, parties, galas, community dinners, and potlucks/picnics.
- Awards to individuals or organizations to honor or recognize achievement.
- Commercial (for-profit) enterprises or activities, including concessions, food, T-shirts, artwork, or other items for resale. This includes online or virtual sales/shops.
- Lobbying, including activities intended to influence the outcome of elections or influence government officials regarding pending legislation, either directly or through specific lobbying appeals to the public.
- Voter registration drives and related activities.
- Construction, purchase, or renovation of facilities. (Design fees, preparing space for an exhibit, installation or de-installation of art, and community planning are eligible. However, no NEA or cost share/matching funds may be directed to the costs of physical construction or renovation or toward the purchase costs of facilities or land.)
- Subgranting or regranting, except for state arts agencies, regional arts organizations, or local arts agencies that are designated to operate on behalf of their local governments or are operating units of city or county government. ([See more information on subgranting.](#))

Costs

- Cash reserves and endowments.
- Costs for the creation of new organizations.
- Costs to bring a project into compliance with federal grant requirements. This includes environmental or historical assessments or reviews and the hiring of individuals to write assessments or reviews or to otherwise comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and/or the National Historic Preservation Act.
- Expenditures related to compensation to foreign nationals and/or travel to or from foreign countries when those expenditures are not in compliance with regulations issued by the U.S. Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control. For further information, see <https://www.treasury.gov/about/organizational-structure/offices/pages/office-of-foreign-assets-control.aspx> or contact our Office of Grants Management at grants@arts.gov.
- Project costs supported by any other federal funding. This includes federal funding received either directly from a federal agency (e.g., National Endowment for the Humanities, Housing and Urban Development, National Science Foundation, or an entity that receives federal appropriations such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting or Amtrak); or indirectly from a pass-through organization such as a state arts agency, regional arts organization, or a grant made to another entity.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Gifts and prizes, including cash prizes as well as other items (e.g., electronic devices, gift certificates) with monetary value.
- Contributions and donations to other entities.
- General miscellaneous or contingency costs.
- Fines and penalties, bad debt costs, deficit reduction.
- Marketing expenses that are not directly related to the project.
- Audit costs that are not directly related to a single audit (formerly known as an A-133 audit).
- Rental costs for home office workspace owned by individuals or entities affiliated with the applicant organization.
- The purchase of vehicles.
- Visa costs paid to the U.S. government.
- Costs incurred before the beginning or after the completion of the official period of performance.

All applicants should carefully review the **Assurance of Compliance** and **Appendix A of our General Terms and Conditions** (GTC) which detail other requirements that govern awards.

OUR TOWN: How to Apply

Submitting an application is a multi-step process:

- **Register** with **SAM** and **Grants.gov** or renew/verify these registrations.
- **Part 1:** Submit to Grants.gov the “Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organization Form” This is a brief form that will collect very basic information about your organization.
- **Part 2:** Complete the “Grant Application Form (GAF)” and upload items through the NEA’s Applicant Portal. This web form is where you will enter the majority of your application material (e.g., project description, timelines, budget information).

SAM, Grants.gov (Part 1), and the NEA’s Applicant Portal (Part 2) are separate online systems.

Instructions for Part 1 and Part 2, including application deadlines and a list of all the application questions, can be found at the bottom of this page.

If you have questions, contact us at OT@arts.gov.

All Applicants: Getting Registered

Applying for a federal grant for the first time? [See here.](#)

Register with SAM and Grants.gov or renew/verify these registrations

Before applying, your organization must create and maintain up-to-date registrations with both the System for Award Management (SAM) at **SAM.gov** and **Grants.gov**. Registering and maintaining accounts with SAM and Grants.gov is always FREE.

These registrations can take several weeks to finalize, so begin this process early! Registrations with SAM and Grants.gov must be active for you to submit your application. Finalize your registrations well before the application deadline. This should allow you time to resolve any issues that may arise.

Your organization must be registered with SAM before registering with Grants.gov.

On April 4, 2023, the federal government switched from using the DUNS number to a new Unique Entity Identifier, also known as a “UEI.” The UEI is a 12-character alpha numeric value that will be assigned by SAM for free. You must have a UEI in order to submit your application.

SAM

Organizations without a SAM registration:

- You will be assigned a UEI by SAM as part of SAM’s registration process. You will no longer need a DUNS number to register with SAM.
- Go [SAM](#) to get started.

Organizations already registered with SAM:

- A UEI will automatically be assigned to your organization by SAM. The UEI will be visible in your organization’s SAM record.
- If you have difficulty locating the UEI, contact SAM at 1-866-606-8221 or see the [help section](#) of SAM’s website.

When registering/renewing your SAM account, be sure to select “Yes” when completing the “Representations & Certifications” section. All awardees are required to have these representations & certifications in order to receive an award. Your SAM registration must be current at the time a grant is made, and throughout the life of the award.

SAM registrations, once activated, can take a day or more to be visible in Grants.gov. Verify your SAM registration well ahead of the application deadline.

Grants.gov Registration

If your organization is not yet registered with Grants.gov, go to [Organization Registration](#).

If your organization already has registered with Grants.gov, renew your registration with SAM and verify that your registration with Grants.gov is current.

You must complete the Grants.gov registration process to access the Part 1 application package (see below). You will need the Grants.gov Username and Password that you obtain during the registration process to submit your application, and you won’t be able to submit your application unless your SAM registration is active and up-to-date.

SAM and Grants.gov Help

The NEA does not have access to your SAM or Grants.gov accounts. If you have any questions about or need assistance with these sites contact them directly:

- **SAM Federal Service Desk:** Call 1-866-606-8221 or see the information posted on the SAM website at [SAM Help](#).
- **Grants.gov Contact Center:** Call 1-800-518-4726, email support@grants.gov, or consult the information posted on the Grants.gov website at [Support](#). The Grants.gov Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

All Applicants: Go to the Grant Opportunity Package

Access the Grant Opportunity Package with the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organization Form on Grants.gov by clicking on the link below:



1. Clicking the link above will take you **directly** to the pre-populated application package in Grants.gov.
2. The Grants.gov “View Grant Opportunity” screen will open, click the red “Apply” button.
3. You will be prompted to enter your Grants.gov Username and Password. In order to create the Workspace application, you must be logged into Grants.gov with a participant role of either **Workspace Manager** or **Authorized Organization Representative (AOR)**. More information on participant roles can be found [here](#).
4. After logging in, to create a Workspace application:
 - a. Fill in the Application Filing Name field, then
 - b. Click the **Create Workspace** button.
5. After creating a Workspace, you will be directed to the Manage Workspace page, where you can begin working on the application.

Learn more about using Grants.gov’s Workspace [here](#).

Application Instructions:

For instructions on completing Part 1 and Part 2, download the application instructions PDF ([LINK](#)).

OUR TOWN: Application Review

Review Criteria

Applications are reviewed on the basis of the following criteria:

The **artistic excellence** of the project, which includes the following:

- Quality of the artists, culture bearers, design professionals, organizations, works of art, activities, and/or services that the project will involve; and their relevance to the community in which the project takes place.
- Potential of the project to center artists, culture bearers, and designers in the proposed project activities, and ultimately to center them in long term systems change work.

The **artistic merit** of the project, which includes the following:

- Potential of the project activities to advance local economic, physical, or social outcomes desired by the community.
- Potential for the project activities to ultimately lay the groundwork for systems changes that sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into strategies for strengthening communities over the long term. (Systems changes can include, for example: establishment of new and sustained cross-sector partnerships; shifts in institutional structure, practices or policies; replication or scaling of innovative project models; or establishment of training programs).
- Strength and depth of the proposed partnership between the required local and nonprofit partners, as well as engagement across other sectors (such as agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development).
- Evidence of deep and authentic community engagement in planning for and participating in the project.
- Potential to serve and/or reach individuals or communities whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability, as applicable.
- Appropriateness of the proposed performance measurements and their ability to demonstrate that project activities are advancing local physical, economic, or social outcomes, including, as appropriate, plans for documentation and evaluation of the overall project results.
- Ability to carry out the project based on factors such as the appropriateness of the budget, the quality and clarity of the project goals and design, the resources involved, and the qualifications of the project's personnel.

NOTE: We fund arts, culture, and design projects, and make grants only for specific, definable activities. Your application may be rejected if it does not sufficiently describe the project activities.

If more than one application is submitted from a single lead applicant, local government, or within the same geographic area, the capacity of the lead applicant, local government, or geographic area to carry out and sustain multiple Our Town projects will be considered in the review of applications.

What Happens to Your Application

All applications are reviewed according to the review criteria by an advisory panel comprised of qualified peer experts, including at least one knowledgeable layperson, representing a range of multidisciplinary art, design, and economic and community development fields. Panel recommendations are forwarded to the National Council on the Arts, which then makes recommendations to the Chair of the NEA. The Chair reviews the Council's recommendations and makes the final decision on all grant awards. Pending the availability of funding, it is anticipated that applicants will be notified of award or rejection in April 2024.

Risk Assessment: All recommended applications undergo a review to evaluate risk posed by the applicant prior to making a federal award. This may include past performance on grants, meeting reporting deadlines, compliance with terms and conditions, audit findings, etc.

OUR TOWN: Award Administration

Award Notices

Grant decisions for the Our Town category are expected to be announced in April 2024.

Note that the "announcement" is likely to take the form of a preliminary congratulatory note, a request for project/budget revisions, or a rejection notification. The official grant award notification (i.e., a notice of action authorized by the NEA Office of Grants Management) is the only legal and valid confirmation of award. Receipt of your official award notification can take several months depending on a number of factors such as reviewing changes to the project budget, the number of awards to be processed, whether the agency has its appropriation from Congress, etc.

Final Reporting

Before a grant is awarded, organizations must have submitted acceptable Final Report packages by the due date(s) for all NEA grant(s) previously received.

National Historic Preservation Act and/or the National Environmental Policy Act Review

If you are recommended for a grant, your project may be subject to the [National Historic Preservation Act](#) (NHPA) and/or the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA) and the NEA will conduct a review of your project to ensure that it is in compliance with NHPA/NEPA.

Some of the common project types that garner a NHPA review are:

- A project involving or occurring at or near a place that is 50 years old or older, and therefore potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. This includes a property, such as a historic house museum or a historic plaza; or a historic district with multiple historic properties. Historic places may also be structures, such as bridges, or objects, such as sculptures, or a landscape that is historically significant.
- The commissioning and installation of temporary or permanent outdoor installations, including sculptures, statuary, banners, mixed media, painting or murals.
- An outdoor arts festival.
- Permanent wayfinding signs and other similar artistic directional installations,
- Maintenance or rehabilitation of landscapes and gardens.
- In-kind replacement or repairs at a facility that is older than 50 years of age.
- Design services and planning for projects that may affect historic properties.

This review and approval process take time to complete and may delay your project's start date and our ability to make a grant award/our ability to release grant funds. If you are recommended for an award which may have historic preservation or environmental concerns (NHPA/NEPA), you will be notified and asked to provide additional information.

To expedite the review, ensure that you include thorough and complete information for all project activities and locations. The NEA cannot release an award and/or grant funds until the NHPA/NEPA review is complete. If asked for additional information for a review, please indicate the timeline for determining grant activities and locations, if they are not yet finalized. In some cases, such as for permanent art installations at historic properties or advanced design (more advanced than early design development) affecting historic properties, you may be instructed to continue the review with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

[See here to learn more about the questions you will need to answer](#) for the review of a project impacted by the National Historic Preservation Act and/or the National Environmental Policy Act.

Accessibility

Federal regulations require that all NEA-funded projects be accessible to people with disabilities, including audiences, visitors, artists, performers, teaching artists, students, staff, and volunteers. Funded activities must be held in a physically accessible venue and program access and effective communication must be provided for participants and audience members with disabilities, including people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing, people who are blind, and people with physical, cognitive, sensory, and/or psychological disabilities.

If your project is recommended for funding, you will be asked to provide detailed information describing how you will make your project physically and programmatically accessible to people with disabilities:

- Buildings and facilities (including projects held in historic facilities) should be physically accessible. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Ground-level/no-step entry, ramped access, and/or elevators to project facilities and outdoor spaces;
 - Integrated and dispersed wheelchair seating in assembly areas;
 - Wheelchair-accessible box office, stage/backstage, meeting, and dressing rooms;
 - Wheelchair-accessible display cases, exhibit areas, and counters;
 - Accessible studio, classroom, and work spaces;
 - Accessible artist residency studios and living spaces, to include dining facilities and restrooms;
 - Wheelchair-accessible restrooms and water fountains; and
 - Directional signage for accessible entrances, restrooms, and other facilities; and
 - Accessible workspaces for employees.
- The programmatic offering should be accessible either as part of the funded activity or upon request, where relevant. This can include, but is not limited to providing:
 - Designation of an accessibility coordinator and publicly-available contact information (on website and promotional materials) for requesting accommodations;
 - Accessible and screen reader-compatible electronic materials, documents, websites, virtual platforms, and inclusion of alternative text for images;

- Accessible on-line application and grant systems (where relevant);
- Print materials in alternative formats, such as large-print brochures/labels/programs, braille, and electronic/digital formats;
- Accommodations for performances, tours, virtual streamed events, conferences, and lectures, such as sign language interpretation, real-time captioning, and audio description;
- Tactile art, signage, sculpture, and representations of two-dimensional artwork;
- Closed/open captioning and audio/visual description for video, film, television broadcasts;
- Transcripts of radio programs and podcasts;
- Auxiliary aids and devices such as assistive listening devices;
- Sensory-friendly programming, spaces, and approaches for people with sensory-processing issues and other neurological conditions;
- Accommodations for live and archived virtual events, including captioning, sign language interpreting, and audio/visual description; and
- Accommodations to integrate students with disabilities in arts learning programs.

See the Nondiscrimination Statutes in our "Assurance of Compliance" for additional information.

For technical assistance on how to make your project accessible, contact the Accessibility Office at accessibility@arts.gov, 202-682-5532 Voice; or the Civil Rights Office at civilrights@arts.gov, 202-682-5454 Voice; or see our online [Accessibility Resources](#).

Civil Rights

Nondiscrimination Policies

Projects may focus on reaching a particular group or demographic (such as race, color or national origin, including limited English proficiency); however, they may not be exclusionary under [Federal civil rights laws and policies](#) prohibiting discrimination. This extends to hiring practices, artist selection processes, and audience engagement. For additional information, refer to this archived webinar: [Things to Know Before You Apply: Federal Civil Rights and Your Grants Application](#).

The Office of Civil Rights at 202-682-5454 or civilrights@arts.gov investigates complaints about compliance with accessibility standards as well as other federal civil rights statutes. For inquiries about limited English proficiency, go to <http://www.lep.gov>, the [FOIA Reading Room](#), or contact the Office of Civil Rights at 202-682-5454 or civilrights@arts.gov.

Changes in Projects

Applicants must notify the NEA immediately of any significant changes in their project that occur after they have submitted their application. If the project or the organization's capacity

changes significantly before an award is made, the NEA may revise or withdraw the funding recommendation.

Grantees are expected to carry out a project that is consistent with the proposal that was approved for NEA funding. If changes in the project are required, the grantee must submit a request with justification for the change(s) through a proper REACH account for the award for review by the Office of Grants Management. **Approval is not guaranteed.** Detailed information is included in the NEA General Terms & Conditions.

Project Reporting and Evaluation

We ask all applicants to define what they would like to achieve, how they will evaluate the degree to which it is achieved, and, upon completion of the project, what they have learned from their experiences. Such feedback need not entail large-scale or expensive evaluation efforts. You should do what is feasible and appropriate for your organization and project. When a grant is completed, you must submit a final report and answer questions detailing your accomplishments, who benefited, and the resulting impact of your project as well as list the involvement of key partners, funders, and artists. We recognize that some projects involve risk, and we want to hear about both your successes and failures. Failures can provide valuable learning experiences, and reporting them will have no effect on your ability to receive NEA funds in the future.

All Our Town grantees will be assigned the agency's strengthening communities' objective. Before applying, review the [reporting requirements](#) for the agency's strengthening communities' objective. Given the nature of Our Town projects, benefits are likely to emerge over time and may not be fully measurable during the period of a grant. You will need to provide evidence of progress toward achieving improved strengthening of the community(ies) as appropriate to the project.

Crediting Requirement

Grantees must clearly acknowledge support from the NEA in their programs and related promotional material including publications and websites. Additional acknowledgment requirements may be provided later.

Administrative Requirements

Beyond the reporting requirements for all grantees, selected Our Town grantees may be asked to assist in the collection of additional information that can help the NEA determine the degree to which agency objectives were achieved. For example, Our Town grantees may be asked to participate in surveys or interviews, and/or may be asked to assist in publicizing and promoting these data collection efforts. You may be contacted to provide evidence of project accomplishments including, but not limited to, work samples, community action plans, cultural asset studies, programs, reviews, relevant news clippings, and playbills. Remember that you are required to maintain project documentation for three years following submission of your final report.

We may publish grantees' reports and products on our website. Note that all federal grantmaking agencies retain a royalty-free right to use all or a portion of grantees' reports and products for federal purposes.

Implementation of Title 2 CFR Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

This guidance from the federal government's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) establishes clarity and consistency of the pre- and post-award requirements applicable to federal grantees. Under the authority listed above, the NEA adopts the OMB Guidance in [2 CFR part 200 under §3255.1 Adoption of 2 CFR Part 200](#). This part gives regulatory effect to the OMB guidance and supplements the guidance as needed for the NEA.

General Terms & Conditions

Federal and agency requirements that relate to grants awarded by the NEA are highlighted in our [General Terms & Conditions](#) (GTC). The GTC incorporates the adoption of 2 CFR Part 200 by reference. The document also explicitly identifies where the NEA has selected options offered in the regulation, such as budget waivers and requirements for use of program income. It also includes agency requirements for cost share/matching funds, reporting requirements, amendment processes, and termination actions. Grantees must review, understand, and comply with these requirements. Failure to do so may result in having a grant terminated and/or returning funds to the National Endowment for the Arts, among other things.

Legal Requirements:

NOTE: This list highlights some of the significant legal requirements that may apply to an applicant or grantee, however, it is not exhaustive. More information regarding these and other legal requirements may be found at [Appendix A of our General Terms & Conditions](#) which sets forth the National Policy and Other Legal Requirements, Statutes, and Regulations that Govern Your Award. There may be other applicable legal requirements that are not listed here.

1. By law, the National Endowment for the Arts may support only those organizations that:
 - **Are tax-exempt.** Organizations qualifying for this status must meet the following criteria:
 1. No part of net earnings may benefit a private stockholder or individual.
 2. Donations to the organization must be allowable as a charitable contribution under Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.

For further information, go to the [Internal Revenue Service's \(IRS\) website](#).

- Organizations who have had their IRS status revoked are not eligible for National Endowment for the Arts support. It is your responsibility to ensure that your status is current at the time of the application and throughout the life of your award.
- **Compensate all professional performers and related or supporting professional personnel on National Endowment for the Arts-supported projects at no less than the prevailing minimum compensation.** (This requirement is in accordance with regulations that have been issued by the Secretary of Labor in [29 CFR Part 505](#). This part does not provide information on specific compensation levels.)
- **Ensure that no part of any National Endowment for the Arts-supported project will be performed or engaged in under working conditions which are unsanitary or hazardous or dangerous to the health and safety of the employees involved.**

2. **Some legal requirements apply to every applicant, for example:**

- **Compliance with the federal requirements** that are outlined in the Assurance of Compliance below.
- **[Debarment and Suspension procedures](#).** The applicant must comply with requirements set forth in Subpart C of 2 CFR 180, as adopted by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2 CFR Part 3254. Failure to comply may result in the debarment or suspension of the grantee and the National Endowment for the Arts suspending, terminating and/or recovering funds.
- **Federal Debt Status ([OMB Circular A-129](#)).** Processing of applications will be suspended when applicants are delinquent on federal tax or non-tax debts, including judgment liens against property for a debt to the federal government. An organization's debt status is displayed in the System for Award Management (SAM). New awards will not be made if an applicant is still in debt status as of September 1.
- **Labor Standards ([29 CFR Part 505](#)).** If a grant is awarded, the grantee must comply with the standards set out in Labor Standards on Projects or Productions Assisted by Grants from the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.
- **[The Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988](#)** (41 U.S.C. 8101 et seq. and 2 CFR Part 3256). The grantee is required to publish a statement regarding its drug-free workplace program as well as comply with other requirements.

3. **Some legal requirements apply depending upon what the grant is funding, for example:**

- If your project activities have the potential to impact any structure that is eligible for or on the National Register of Historic Places, adjacent to a structure that is eligible for or on the National Register of Historic Places, or located in an historic district, you will be asked to provide additional information about your project or take additional action so that the agency can review and comply with the [National Historic Preservation Act](#) (NHPA). NHPA also applies to any planning activities that may affect historic properties or districts. The additional agency review must be completed prior to any agency funds being released.

- If your project activities have the potential to impact the environment or environmentally sensitive resources, you will be required to provide information in accordance with the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA). The additional agency review must be completed prior to any agency funds being released.
 - If your contract is over \$2,000 and involves the construction, alteration, or repair of public buildings or public works, it must contain a clause setting forth the minimum wages to be paid to laborers and mechanics employed under the contract in accordance with [The Davis-Bacon and Related Acts](#) (DBRA).
4. **Some legal requirements apply depending upon who the Applicant is, for example:** [The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990](#) (25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.) applies to any organization that controls or possesses Native American cultural items, such as human remains or associated funerary objects and receives Federal funding, even for a purpose unrelated to the Act (25 USC 3001 et seq.).

Assurance of Compliance

By signing and submitting its application form on Grants.gov, the Applicant certifies that it is in compliance with the statutes outlined below and all related National Endowment for the Arts regulations and will maintain records and submit the reports that are necessary to determine compliance.

We may conduct a review of your organization to ensure that it is in compliance with these statutes. If the NEA determines that a grantee has failed to comply with these statutes, it may suspend or terminate the award, and/or recover funds. This assurance is subject to judicial enforcement.

The Applicant certifies that it does not discriminate:

- On the grounds of race, color, or national origin, in accordance with **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.), implemented by the National Endowment for the Arts at 45 CFR 1110.
- Solely on the grounds of disability, in accordance with **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** (29 U.S.C. 794), implemented by the National Endowment for the Arts at 45 CFR 1151, and the **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** ("ADA"), as amended, (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).
- On the basis of age, in accordance with the **Age Discrimination Act of 1975** (42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.) implemented by the National Endowment for the Arts at 45 CFR 1156.
- On the basis of sex, in any education program or activity, in accordance with **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972** (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.).

Applicant will inform the public that persons who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, sex, or age may file a complaint with the Director of Civil Rights at the National Endowment for the Arts.

Applicant will forward all complaints for investigation and any finding issued by a Federal or state court or by a Federal or state administrative agency to:

Director, Office of Civil Rights
National Endowment for the Arts
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506

Applicant shall maintain records of its compliance and submission for three (3) years. The Applicant will compile, maintain and permit access to records as required by applicable regulations, guidelines or other directives.

The Applicant must also certify that it will obtain assurances of compliance from all subrecipients and will require all subrecipients of National Endowment for the Arts funds to comply with these requirements.

The United States has the right to seek judicial or administrative enforcement of this assurance.

For further information and copies of the nondiscrimination regulations identified above, contact the Office of Civil Rights at 202-682-5454 or civilrights@arts.gov. For inquiries about limited English proficiency, go to <http://www.lep.gov>, the [FOIA Reading Room](#), or contact the Office of Civil Rights at civilrights@arts.gov or 202-682-5454.

Regulations Relating to Lobbying

For organizations applying for more than \$100,000 (31 U.S.C. 1352)

The Applicant certifies that:

- a) It has not and will not use federal appropriated funds to pay any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of a National Endowment for the Arts advisory panel or the National Council on the Arts, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of or modification to any federal grant or contract.
- b) If it has used or will use any funds other than federal appropriated funds to pay any person for influencing or attempting to influence any of the individuals specified above, the Applicant:
- c) Is not required to disclose that activity if that person is regularly employed by the Applicant. (Regularly employed means working for at least 130 days within the year immediately preceding the submission of this application.)
- d) Will complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," if that person is not regularly employed by the Applicant.

It will require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards of more than \$100,000 and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

Standards for Service

The NEA has set the following standards for serving applicants. We pledge to:

- Treat you with courtesy and efficiency.
- Respond to inquiries and correspondence promptly.
- Provide clear and accurate information about our policies and procedures.
- Provide timely information about funding opportunities and make guidelines available promptly.
- Promptly acknowledge the receipt of your application.
- Ensure that all eligible applications are reviewed thoughtfully and fairly.

We welcome your comments on how we're meeting these standards. Email webmgr@arts.gov, attention: Standards for Service.

For questions about these guidelines or your application, contact OT@arts.gov.

In addition, applicants may receive an invitation to participate in a voluntary survey to provide feedback on the grant application guidelines on our website and any experiences consulting with our staff.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated at an average of 26 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. We welcome any suggestions that you might have on improving the guidelines and making them as easy to use as possible. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: webmgr@arts.gov, attention: Reporting Burden. Note: Applicants are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number.

OUR TOWN: Contacts

If you have questions about how to complete your application, contact the staff at **OT@arts.gov** with your question or to set up a time to speak to staff. Due to the high volume of interest in Our Town, allow 24 to 48 hours for staff to return your inquiry.

If you have questions about SAM or Grants.gov:

- **SAM Federal Service Desk:** Call 1-866-606-8220 or see the information posted on the SAM website at **SAM User Help**.
- **Grants.gov Contact Center:** Call 1-800-518-4726, email **support@grants.gov**, or consult the information posted on the Grants.gov website at **Support**. The Grants.gov Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

OUR TOWN: FAQs

[Basics](#) | [Review Process](#) | [Other NEA Grants](#) | [Budget and Cost Share/Matching Funds](#) | [Eligible Partners](#) | [Local Government Entity](#) | [Letters of Endorsement/Statements of Support](#) | [Other](#)

[FAQs for Applicants & Awardees in Response to COVID-19 »](#)

BASICS

Q: What is "creative placemaking?"

A: Creative placemaking integrates arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities. Creative placemaking requires partnership across sectors, deeply engages the community, involves artists, designers and culture bearers, and helps to advance local economic, physical, and/or social change, ultimately laying the groundwork for systems change. This definition is intentionally open and broad because creative placemaking draws on all artistic disciplines, and can be deployed as a strategy to address a wide range of community issues or challenges from public health to safety, economic development to housing. For additional information on NEA's definition of creative placemaking, as well as the Our Town Program's Theory of Change and other resources, visit www.arts.gov/impact/creative-placemaking.

Q: What is the success rate for applicants?

A: Based on numbers from previous years, Our Town applications have a success rate of roughly 20%.

Q: If we received an Our Town grant last year, can we apply again this year?

A: Yes, you may apply to the Our Town category for FY 2024 for a **distinctly different project, or a distinctly different phase of the project**, from that which was funded.

Q: How long can my grant period be?

A: Your grant period may be up to two years in length, and may start on July 1, 2024, or any time thereafter. If your project is part of a multi-year initiative, you may describe the broader vision but your application, including the budget, should reflect only the activities or phases of work that will occur within the grant period.

Q: Will projects in small towns and rural areas be competitive?

A: Yes. We are seeking a diverse range of applicants and encourage communities of all sizes to apply.

Q: Can we apply for a project that addresses impacts of COVID-19?

A: Yes. The Our Town program seeks to leverage creative placemaking and innovative partnerships in responding to evolving and emerging local community needs. These may

include efforts to support artists and cultural organizations in addressing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, artist unemployment, racial inequity, and other needs that may not be clear at this specific time.

REVIEW PROCESS

Q: How will the projects be evaluated?

A: Congress specified in our authorizing legislation that "artistic excellence and artistic merit" are the criteria by which all applications must be evaluated. For more detailed information about how artistic excellence and artistic merit apply to Our Town projects, see the "**Review Criteria**" (LINK) in the guidelines.

Q: How can I demonstrate artistic excellence for my proposed project?

A: Artistic excellence is evaluated based on the material and work samples submitted with the application. This includes the quality of the artists, culture bearers, design professionals, organizations, works of art, activities, and/or services that the project will involve; and their relevance to the community in which the project takes place. If artists are not yet selected, a description of the process and criteria for selection will enable panelists to assess artistic excellence.

Q: Who reviews and selects grantees?

A: All applications will be reviewed according to the review criteria of artistic excellence and artistic merit by an advisory panel composed of qualified peer experts, including at least one knowledgeable layperson, representing a range of multidisciplinary art, design, and economic and community development fields. Panel recommendations are forwarded to the National Council on the Arts, which then makes recommendations to the Chair of the NEA. The Chair reviews the Council's recommendations and makes the final decision on all grant awards. **A list of past Our Town panelists** is available on the website (see the Design discipline).

Q: Can staff help me with my application?

A: Members of Design and Creative Placemaking staff are available to answer specific questions about the application materials and forms. However, we do not review full proposals or provide edits to text or budgets in advance of the application deadline. Email **OT@arts.gov** with any questions.

OTHER NEA GRANTS

Q: Can my organization apply to receive funding from both the Our Town and Grants for Arts Projects or Challenge America categories?

A: Yes. You may apply to other NEA funding opportunities, including Grants for Arts Projects or Challenge America, in addition to Our Town. In each case, the request must be for a **distinctly different project or a distinctly different phase of the same project**, with a different period of performance and costs.

BUDGET, COST SHARE, AND MATCHING FUNDS

Q: Do all cost share/matching funds need to be committed in advance of the submission deadline?

A: No, but we ask you to designate on the budget form funding that is committed versus funding that is being proposed or sought. Designate committed funding with a (*) after the source.

Q: Can funds raised prior to the project be used as part of the cost share/match?

A: Yes. However, cost share/matching funds must be spent on eligible activities included as part of the proposed project, during the proposed period of performance.

Q: Can cost share/matching funds be in-kind?

A: Yes. No formula exists for how much of the required cost share/match can be in-kind. However, reviewers tend to look very carefully at any project with a budget that shows a cost share/match that is largely in-kind; generally, some cash cost share/match is preferred. In all cases, cost share/matching funds are evaluated in the context of the project and the community. Remember, if you use in-kind contributions as part of your cost share/match, you need to maintain proper documentation. For help in doing this, see our **sample format** for recording in-kind (third party) contributions.

Q: Can federal funds such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) or Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funding count toward the cost share/match?

A: No. Even though these funds may come through your state, the original source is federal. No cost share/matching funds can be from federal sources and these should not appear in your Our Town project budget as either income or expenses.

Q: Can community infrastructure costs be considered part of the cost share/match for something like a streetscape project?

A: Costs that pertain strictly to preparing a site specifically for the art or design work, such as slabs or pedestals, landscaping that's necessary for the art work or landscaping that is the art work (e.g., a mosaic tiled walkway with landscaping that is required for the work) are allowable. Installation of street lighting or wayfinding signage are not allowed. Costs to prepare the street, including purchase of property, building appropriate access, infrastructure, etc., are not allowable and can't be used for cost share/match.

Q: Are artists' or consultants' fees eligible expenses?

A: Yes. Fees for individuals involved in the project are eligible, such as fees for artists, performers, designers, architects, facilitators, or other consultants. All fees must be incurred during the period of support.

Q: Is rent for space for an event an eligible expense?

A: Yes, but not for a party or reception.

Q: Can overhead be funded?

A: You may claim administrative costs or overhead as direct costs under "3. Other expenses" on the Project Budget form. (This assumes that there is a basis for justifying the costs as direct costs.) You also may use a federally negotiated indirect cost rate to account for overhead.

Q: Can salaries for administration or additional fundraising be funded?

A: Salaries, contract fees, and stipends for administration and project management are allowed, as well as fund raising specifically for the approved project.

Q: Does sharing the funding between the two required partners count as subgranting or regranting?

A: No. Subgranting is defined as regranting funds to an individual or organization for activities that are conducted independently of your organization and for the benefit of the subgrantee's own program objectives.

Q: Does anything need to be done to formalize the financial relationship between the two required partners?

A: When a grantee partners with another organization that will directly support project costs tied to the federal award, the grantee must ensure a contractual agreement is in place that outlines the relationship and responsibilities of each partner. In addition, the partner's accounts and documentation will be subject to review if audited by the NEA or the grantee's own auditors.

ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

Q: Can a private foundation or corporate entity serve as a partner?

A: Partnerships must involve at least two primary partners as defined by these guidelines: a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and a local government entity. One of the two primary partners must be a cultural (arts or design) organization. Only the two primary partners can serve as lead applicants, but additional partners across all sectors are encouraged.

Q: Can a local government arts agency apply and fulfill the role of the cultural organization and the government agency?

A: Yes, but it would still need a nonprofit organization to serve as the other primary partner.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITY

Q: Can a city/town/ county apply for more than one project?

A: Yes. Since FY 2021, we have eliminated the limit of only two applications per community. Multiple applications may be submitted from within the same geographic area. However, if more than one application is submitted from a single lead applicant, local government, or within the same geographic area, the capacity of the lead applicant, local government, or geographic area to carry out and sustain multiple Our Town projects will be considered in the review of applications.

Q: Can a tribal government entity apply?

A: Yes, federally recognized tribal governments qualify as local governments.

Q: Can a regional government entity apply as a primary partner?

A: No, regional government entities do not qualify as local governments and may not apply as a primary partner.

Q: Do public school districts or community colleges qualify as a local government entity?

A: Local education agencies (school districts) and local government-run community colleges are eligible to represent a local government entity they serve. Note that a letter of endorsement from the highest ranking official for the local government is required regardless of who the local government partner is, e.g., the superintendent of a school district cannot send the letter.

Q: Does a city council or alderman office qualify as a local government entity?

A: No. City council or aldermen's offices do not qualify as local government entities. In the case of city governments, the local government entity partner should be a department within city government (i.e. department of public health, etc.).

Q: Does a state university qualify as a local government entity?

A: No, as with all state level entities, a state university does not qualify as a local government entity under the Our Town guidelines. If the state university has nonprofit status designated by the IRS, however, it may serve as the required nonprofit partner on an Our Town project.

Q: Does a quasi-local government organization, such as a Business Improvement District (BID) or Chamber of Commerce, qualify as a local government entity?

A: No. Business improvement districts and chambers of commerce do not qualify as local government entities.

Q. Does a U.S. territory qualify as a local government entity?

A: If no local government exists, the territory government can qualify as the local government. In these cases, the territory's state arts agency also may serve as the local government primary partner. However, all grant funds must be passed on to the other partners.

LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT/STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

Q: If we have a local government entity on board as a partner, do we still need a letter of endorsement from the highest ranking official for the local government?

A: Yes. A letter of endorsement from the highest ranking official for the local government is required.

Q: Can you guide us as to what the letter of endorsement should contain? Do you have a template that we can use?

A: We do not have a template. However, the document should be a one-page formal

endorsement letter, on appropriate letterhead, from the highest ranking official for the local government (e.g., mayor, county executive, or tribal leader). This letter should reflect the official's familiarity with and support for the project.

Many local government structures exist. Provide in your letter a sentence explaining why this official is the leader of the local government. For example, "In the Village of XYZ, our city manager is the highest-ranking government official."

Q: We are applying with the local government as lead applicant. Should we submit an endorsement letter from the highest ranking official for the local government, or a statement of support from the nonprofit organization?

A: You are required to submit both.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of statements of support that we can submit?

A: Yes. You may submit up to 10 letters of support. We encourage you to be selective in listing only the partners or individuals that are critical to the project's success, not those that are solely funding sponsors or project beneficiaries. If you are working with multiple agencies within a community, only one statement is necessary. Keep statements to one page each.

OTHER

Q: My organization received American Rescue Plan (ARP) or CARES funding. Can we also apply to Grants for Arts Projects?

A: Yes. However, you need to be sure that there are no overlapping costs. If your ARP or CARES and Grants for Arts Projects applications include items such as salaries, fees, or facilities costs, make sure those costs don't overlap, i.e., occur at the same time.

Q: Can our organization use funds we received from the Small Business Administration (SBA) or other federal agencies as cost share/match for an NEA grant?

A: No. Federal funds are not allowed to be used as cost share/match for federal grants (2 CFR §200.306). In addition, the NEA's enabling legislation does not allow any federal funds to be used as cost share/match for its grants. This includes the Paycheck Protection Program and Shuttered Venues Operators Grants (SVOG) from the SBA, as well as other federal funding, including funding from:

- Corporation for National and Community Service (e.g., AmeriCorps)
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- National Park Service
- National Science Foundation
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Education (e.g., 21st Century Community Learning Centers)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Or an entity that receives federal appropriations such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting or Amtrak

Note that organizations are eligible to apply for NEA funding even if they have applied for and received funding from the SBA, provided the organization isn't double-claiming any individual's salary. Recipients will be required to keep documentation to show which employees are being paid from each funding source so that the government isn't paying more than 100 percent of a salary. Applicants with additional questions about SBA programs should contact the SBA directly as we are unable to provide guidance on programs other than our own.

Q: Should the application address how my organization will respond if our project activities end up being affected by COVID-19?

A: This is not a requirement, but you can provide a very brief description of any contingency plans in the Project Description narrative. The Project Description is where you should address all of the [Review Criteria](#), and it may be useful for the panel's assessment of your organization's ability to carry out the project (see the criteria under artistic merit).

Q: What if my organization ends up not being able to carry out the project activities in our application due to COVID-19?

A: If you are recommended for a grant, you will have an opportunity to request changes (e.g., a time extension, a modification to project activities) at that stage of the process. If you receive a grant, you will have the opportunity to request project changes later in the process, as outlined in the [How to Manage Your Award Handbook](#).

We will work with you to try to accommodate changes to your project, but approval is not guaranteed. If you need to request a change, please contact your NEA specialist to discuss what is possible.

Q: How should my organization formulate its project if we're not sure when in-person gatherings will be possible due to COVID-19? Will it be possible to make project changes if needed later in the process?

A: You should do your best to complete information within the application to the best of your knowledge.

If you are recommended for a grant, you will have an opportunity to request changes (e.g., a time extension, a modification to project activities) at that stage of the process. If you receive a grant, you will have the opportunity to request project changes later in the process, as outlined in the [How to Manage Your Award Handbook](#).

We will work with you to try to accommodate changes to your project, but approval is not guaranteed. If you need to request a change, contact your NEA specialist to discuss what is possible.

Q: What are some examples of measurement tools you'd like to see?

A: You should propose measurement tools that are feasible and appropriate for your organization and project. You will be asked to address the anticipated results in your application. If you receive a grant, you will be asked to provide evidence of those results at the end of your project. Given the nature of Our Town projects, benefits are likely to emerge over time and may not be fully measurable during the period of a grant. You will need to provide evidence of progress toward achieving improved strengthening of the community(ies) as appropriate to the project. We recognize that some projects involve risk, and we want to hear about both your successes and failures. Failures can provide valuable learning experiences, and reporting them will have no effect on your ability to receive NEA funds in the future. Beyond the reporting requirements for all grantees, selected Our Town grantees may be asked to assist in the collection of additional information that can help the NEA determine the degree to which agency objectives were achieved. For example, Our Town grantees may be asked to participate in surveys or interviews, and/or may be asked to assist in publicizing and promoting these data collection efforts. You may be contacted to provide evidence of project accomplishments including, but not limited to, work samples, community action plans, cultural asset studies, programs, reviews, relevant news clippings, and playbills. Remember that you are required to maintain project documentation for three years following submission of your final report.

Q: Can federally recognized tribes apply?

A: Yes. In keeping with federal policies of **Tribal Self Governance** and **Self-Determination**, we may provide support for a project with a primary audience restricted to enrolled members of a federally recognized tribe. Applicants (federally recognized tribal governments, nonprofits situated on federally recognized tribal lands, or other nonprofits whose mission primarily serves federally recognized tribal enrollees) should consult with **our staff** to verify their eligibility before preparing an application.

Q: Can non-federally recognized tribes apply?

A: Yes, as long as the applicant is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), U.S. organization. Projects for non-federally recognized tribes and indigenous groups may be supported, but project participation can't be restricted to only tribal members.

Q: Can Native Hawaiian groups apply?

A: Yes, as long as the applicant is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), U.S. organization. Projects for Native Hawaiians may be supported, but project participation can't be restricted to only Native Hawaiians.