

Our Town

GRANT PROGRAM DETAILS

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Our Town

Introduction

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is proud to support the nation’s arts sector with grant opportunities so that together we can help everyone live more artful lives.

“Artful lives” is an inclusive concept encompassing everything from the creation, presentation, and consumption of art, to active arts engagement by all people through making, teaching, and learning in our everyday lives. The arts contribute to our individual well-being, the well-being of our communities, and to our local economies. The arts are crucial to helping us make sense of our circumstances from different perspectives.

Arts and cultural activities are supported by a vast ecosystem that includes artists, arts workers, audiences, learners, communities, foundations, and organizations at the local, state-wide, regional, and national level. As a federal agency, the NEA holds a unique place within this ecosystem: we are the only arts funder in the United States—public or private—that provides access to the arts in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. jurisdictions. Each year, we award thousands of grants nationwide for catalytic work in the arts, including grants to first-time applicants.

Our Town Program Description

Arts, culture, and design are essential to building strong communities where all people can thrive. Through Our Town, the NEA is proud to support creative placemaking projects that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities over the long term. The program demonstrates the ways in which artists, culture bearers, and designers can help to:

- **Elevate** or bring new attention to key community assets and issues, voices of residents, local history, or civic 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 approaching a new opportunity, overcoming a challenge, or problem-solving;
- **Connect** communities, people, places, and economic opportunity through physical spaces or new partnerships and relationships; or
- **Honor** traditions shaped by the lived experience of a community’s residents, such as music, dance, design, crafts, fashion, cuisine, and oral expression.

Our Town projects engage a wide range of local stakeholders in efforts to advance local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes in communities. Competitive projects are responsive to unique local conditions, develop meaningful and substantive engagement in communities, advance artful lives, may disrupt “business as usual”, and lay the groundwork for long-term systems change. Key indicators of 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 civic practices or professional development training programs for artists, designers, or culture workers.

The program requires applicants to demonstrate committed leadership from the local level and evidence of a diverse group of local stakeholders engaged in the proposed project. To be eligible for funding, applicants must demonstrate a [required partnership](#) between a nonprofit organization and a local governmental or quasi-governmental entity, and the arts, culture, or design experience necessary to carry out the project. Applications that do not include this required partnership or experience will be ineligible and will not be reviewed.

We welcome applications from a variety of [eligible organizations](#), including first-time applicants; from organizations serving communities of all sizes, including rural, urban, and tribal communities; and from organizations with small, medium, or large operating budgets. The Our Town program funds projects that aim to strengthen communities, and activities may engage any artistic discipline(s).

Grants range from \$25,000 to \$150,000, with a minimum nonfederal cost share/match equal to the grant amount.

Required Partnerships

Our Town requires committed, collaborative partners to ensure expertise can be brought to bear on the project, community engagement with stakeholders is strong, and local policy barriers are minimized to sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into approaches to strengthen community over the long-term.

All applications are submitted by one organization and require at least one partner organization. The applicant/partner pair must include 1) a nonprofit organization and 2) a local governmental or quasi-governmental entity. If neither of those is an arts, design, or cultural entity, then an additional arts, design, or cultural partner is also required. See the [“Eligibility”](#) section of these guidelines for more details.

Projects

Our Town proposals must demonstrate a specific role for arts, culture, and design as part of strategies for strengthening local communities, ultimately centering equity and laying the groundwork for long-term systems change tailored to community needs and opportunities. Projects should be place specific and rooted within the community’s unique identity.

Our Town projects are intended to be catalytic. Our Town projects are art and design-centric, community projects intended to benefit that specific community. Projects may support new activities, or new phases of a previously funded or ongoing project, as well as establish new or deepen existing cross-sector partnerships. Projects may work to advance a specific local economic, physical, or social change. Or, a project may aim to address systems change directly at an emerging or more advanced stage of development. Our Town projects are as much about

the community-engagement process as they are about any artistic product (work of art, performance, design plan, series of workshops, report, etc.). Artistic products should appear as collaborative strategies in projects to accomplish a wider community goal; in other words, they should serve as a means to achieve a broader community-identified end.

Projects should focus on community-identified or supported goals and may include collaborative strategies such as the following:

- Planning activities such as artist/designer-facilitated community planning, cultural planning, cultural district planning, creative asset mapping, or public art planning, that incorporate artists and culture bearers as key project leads.
- Design processes including, design of artist spaces, design of cultural facilities, or public space design.
- Supporting the creative economy through creative business development or professional artist/designer development.
- Creating opportunities for community building and arts engagement through artist residencies, arts festivals, community co-creation of art, performances, and public art. These activities may honor traditions and customs shaped by the lived experiences of a community's residents. Proposals should emphasize how these activities will advance community goals beyond the completion of the artistic product.

For more information, review the list of recently funded Our Town grants on the [Applicant Resources](#) page.

Competitive Projects

Competitive proposals will address elements as stated in the [review criteria](#), through activities that:

- Clearly identify local characteristics of a community and aim to understand, address, and/or develop a response to a facet of life in that community;
- Demonstrate a specific role for the arts, culture, and design to strengthen the local community;
- Pilot new arts, culture, and design activities that are led by a diverse range of local partners;
- Establish new or deepen existing authentic, cross-sector partnerships that engage area residents, local governmental or quasi-governmental entities, and community-based nonprofit partners;
- Advance inclusive community engagement and community-desired outcomes for a place;
- Lay the groundwork for long-term systems change that sustains the integration of arts, culture, and design into strategies for strengthening communities over the long term;

- Demonstrate alignment with the NEA’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

For Fiscal Year 2025, we are particularly interested in arts, culture, or design projects that address health/well-being, transportation/infrastructure, or climate-related challenges within a community. View past Our Town projects that address these fields on the Our Town [Applicant Resources](#) page.

Proposals requesting support for a stand-alone effort or work (i.e., a piece of public art, a mural, a festival (recurring or new), a performance (single or series), or an arts-focused youth camp or class), are not competitive in the Our Town portfolio. Competitive projects may include any of these arts activities, but also will articulate a process that engages partners across different sectors and demonstrates how any specific arts, design, or cultural activities aim to support changes at the local level.

- An Our Town project may seek to make space for diverse community voices. Strategies might include coordinated efforts with city leadership and nonprofit partners for an arts festival that brings attention to community narratives or cultural heritage; artist-led workshops where themes of place and home are explored; or creative asset mapping that engages a range of area residents and builds understanding of a community’s arts and cultural infrastructure.
- An Our Town project could focus on examining and addressing a community’s history. Strategies might include an artist working with community leaders to use arts-based activities to imagine solutions to community issues; intentional outreach efforts with local officials, healers, teachers, parents, elders, and culture bearers to inform community stories and messages about a place; or community-engaged redesign of public space to support greater cross-cultural activities and spur cultural tourism.
- An Our Town project might offer opportunities for a community to understand a universal challenge such as mental health, climate change, or transportation access. Strategies could involve community leaders and members working together to develop, select, and execute a work of public art that brings awareness to how a challenge shows up in the specific community; an artist-in-residence program where artists are paired with scholars and local organizations entities to create arts-based solutions to a challenge that can be carried out by community members; or a series of artist-led pop-up activities in unconventional spaces that raise awareness of a challenge across physically and socially isolated neighborhoods.
- An Our Town project could develop a model for the integration of arts and culture into other areas of community life. Strategies might include creative business development that provides greater visibility to a local craft tradition; investments in creative business and/or professional artist development that bolster a local economy; community, local business, and area public servants engaged in cultural district planning; artist mentorship programs that culminate with festivals or performances to bring together community residents and shore up local arts ecosystems.

Learning Community and Technical Assistance

To ensure Our Town funded projects are as successful as possible in all communities, we offer additional assistance beyond grant funds. The Creative Placemaking Technical Assistance (CPTA) program supports grantees in a variety of ways including learning communities, one-on-one coaching, peer-based learning, webinars, training sessions, toolkit resources, and many other offerings. As part of the Our Town program, grantees may be required to participate in the technical assistance program at no cost to the grantee while executing their projects at the local level.

Compliance Reminders

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. Please note the following:

- **Civil Rights Laws and Policies:** As a reminder, in the federal funding context, a focus on a particular group or demographic may be permissible, but exclusion is not. This extends to hiring practices, artist selection processes, and audience engagement. Your application should make it clear that project activities are not exclusionary. Please review the Assurance of Compliance, as well as [NEA Civil Rights guidance](#) on our website, including this archived webinar: [Things to Know Before You Apply: Federal Civil Rights and Your Grants Application](#).
- **Accessibility:** Federal laws and regulations require that all NEA-funded projects be accessible to people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities may be audiences, visitors, artists, performers, teaching artists, students, staff, and volunteers. Funded activities should be held in a physically accessible venue, and program access and effective communication should be provided for participants and audience members with 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.
- **National Historic Preservation Act and/or National Environmental Policy Act Review:** Recommended projects are subject to the [National Historic Preservation Act \(NHPA\)](#) and/or the [National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#) compliance review. See more information about NHPA/NEPA review in the [Award Administration](#) section of these guidelines.

Application Calendar

	Important Dates
Guidelines Posted	Late April
Part 1: Grants.gov	August 1, 2024 by 11:59 pm ET
Part 2: NEA Applicant Portal Opens	August 8, 2024 at 9:00 am ET
Part 2: NEA Applicant Portal Closes	August 15, 2024 at 11:59 pm ET
Panel Review	Fall/Winter 2024
National Council on the Arts Meeting	Late March 2025
Notifications	April 2025
Earliest project start date	July 1, 2025

Before applying, your organization must create and maintain up-to-date registrations with Login.gov, the System for Award Management (SAM) at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), and [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). Registering and maintaining accounts with Login.gov, SAM.gov, and Grants.gov is always FREE. See the [“How to Apply”](#) section of these guidelines 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 SAM.gov, Grants.gov, or NEA systems, as determined by the NEA. To be considered for this exception, you must provide documentation of a SAM.gov, 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 a SAM, Grants.gov, or NEA 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.

Please do not seek information on the status of your application before the notifications date that is listed above.

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

Award Information

All funded projects must adhere to federal rules and regulations. Before applying, be sure to familiarize yourself with the requirements of managing a federal grant by reviewing the [Award Administration](#) section, as well as the General Terms and Conditions and reporting requirements found in [Manage Your Award](#).

Grant Amounts

Grants range from \$25,000 to \$150,000.

We will award very few grants at or above the \$100,000 level; these will be only for projects of significant scale and impact. **Requests below the minimum award amount of \$25,000 will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed.**

Cost Share and Matching Funds

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. For example, if you are requesting the lowest grant amount of \$25,000, you must show a minimum of \$25,000 in cost share/matching funds, and your total project expenses must be at least \$50,000. 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 incurred during your period of performance. Costs associated with other federal funds, whether direct or indirect (e.g., flow down through a state arts agency or pandemic relief funds), cannot be included in your Project Budget. **Costs incurred before the earliest project start date of July 1, 2025, cannot be included in your budget or cost share/match.**

Period of Performance

Our support of a project may start on or after July 1, 2025.

Grants awarded under these guidelines generally may cover a period of performance of up to two years. **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.** Scale your project accordingly.

Any planning costs that are included as part of the project budget must be incurred during your established period of performance. No pre-award costs are allowable in the Project Budget.

Project costs that are incurred before July 1, 2025, will be removed from the Project Budget.

A grantee may not receive more than one NEA grant for the same activities during the same period of performance.

Unallowable Activities/Costs

The activities and costs listed below are **not** allowable, and should not be included as part of your project or budget. This includes activities/costs covered by cost share/matching funds.

Unallowable Activities

- General operating support
- Support for a full season of programming
- Direct grants to individuals
- Direct grants to individual elementary or secondary schools (charter, private, or public), local education agencies, or school districts (Local education agencies, individual schools, and/or school districts may participate as ADDITIONAL PARTNERS in projects for which another eligible organization applies.)
- Projects that replace arts instruction provided by an arts specialist
- Generally, courses/coursework 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 no curatorial, juried, or editorial judgment has been applied to the selection of artists or art works
- Social activities such as receptions, parties, galas, community dinners, picnics, and potlucks
- Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any associated costs are unallowable; generally, this includes activities at venues such as bars, wineries, and breweries where the consumption of alcohol/social activity is the primary purpose of the venue
- Awards to individuals or organizations to honor or recognize achievement
- Commercial (for-profit) enterprises or activities, including arts markets, 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 allowable. 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

Certain Unallowable 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
- Purchase and/or use of gift cards and gift certificates to support project costs
- Gifts and prizes, including cash prizes as well as other items (e.g., electronic devices, gift certificates) with monetary value
- Stipends/fees to individuals who are incarcerated
- Contributions and donations to other entities, including donation drives
- 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.

Eligibility

All applications are submitted by one organization (the eligible applicant) and require one partner organization (the required partner). **The applicant-partner pair must include 1) a nonprofit organization and 2) a local governmental or quasi-governmental entity.** The pair will provide leadership for the project. Additional partners across all sectors are encouraged.

As a program of the NEA, Our Town seeks to support projects that clearly center arts, culture, and design. As such, **if neither the nonprofit organization nor the local governmental entity have the requisite arts, culture, or design expertise necessary to carry out the project, a third partner with that arts, culture, or design expertise is required.** If this applies to your application, a letter of commitment from this third partner is required, reflecting the partner’s familiarity with and role in the project. Applications requiring this additional partner that are submitted without documented, committed involvement by an arts, culture, or design partner will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed.

Eligible Applicant

The applicant organization must meet the eligibility requirements, and will submit the application and assume full responsibility for the grant.

ELIGIBLE
<p>The following are eligible to apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3), U.S. organizations • Nonprofit institutions of higher education • Units of local government • Federally recognized tribal communities or tribes
NOT ELIGIBLE
<p>The following are not eligible to apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals • Applications through a fiscal sponsor/agent • State and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) • Regional Arts Organizations (RAOs)

To be eligible, **the 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 completed a three-year history of programming prior to the application deadline.
 - Programming must have started in or before August 2021.

- 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.
- You will be asked to provide examples of previous programming in the application.
- Programming is not required to have taken place during consecutive years.
- Organizations that previously operated as a program of another institution may include arts programming it carried out while part of that institution for its three-year history.
- Be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM, www.sam.gov), have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), 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 a UEI.

Required Partner

Note that some types of organizations can only serve as a required partner and not as the eligible applicant:

If the eligible applicant is a...	They must have a...
<p>Nonprofit organization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization ● Nonprofit institution of higher education 	<p>Local government partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A unit of local government ● A quasi-government entity ● Federally recognized tribal communities or tribes
If the eligible applicant is a...	They must have a...
<p>Local government entity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Units of local government ● Federally recognized tribal communities or tribes 	<p>Nonprofit partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization ● Nonprofit institution of higher education

Definitions

Nonprofit organization: tax-exempt 501(c)(3) U.S. organizations

Nonprofit institution of higher education: public (state and county/community level) and private universities and colleges with nonprofit status, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Predominately Black Institutions, and Hispanic Serving Institutions

Units of local government: departments of parish, town, village, or county governments, local arts agencies, or tribal communities or tribes

- For U.S. Territories, if no local government exists, the territory government can serve as the local government.
- Local education agencies or school districts **are not** eligible to serve as required local government or quasi-government applicants or required partners for Our Town applications.
 - Individual schools, school districts, and local education agencies are welcome as **additional partners** in an Our Town application, but cannot fulfill the local government entity role in the required partnership.
 - If you seek to do work primarily with school age youth, schools, school districts, and/or local education agencies, an application through the NEA's Grants for Arts Projects is likely a better fit for your project. Please see the [Grants for Arts Projects guidelines](#) for more information.
 - **If you have additional questions related to a project with K-12 schools and the Our Town program, please contact OT@arts.gov prior to submitting your application.**

Quasi-government entity: includes any entity that has been officially designated by a municipal or tribal government to carry out a function of that government on its behalf. This may include regional governments, special districts, housing authorities, public utility commissions, city council or alderman offices, rural or regional planning organizations, or business improvement districts, among other entities.

- If a quasi-government entity has 501(c)(3) status, it may function as a nonprofit applicant organization and would need a local government partner and may also need an arts, design, or cultural partner.
- **Note that if a quasi-government entity is included in your application as the local government required partner, you must upload documentation with your application that establishes the authorized role this entity has to operate on behalf of the local government.** Contact OT@arts.gov with any questions regarding the required documentation to upload with your application.

Additional Partnerships

Additional partners are strongly encouraged. Additional partners can come from across all sectors (private, nonprofit, public) and from any field (arts, non-arts), and can include organizations such as community foundations, local schools, or other partners that can help to advance the project's goals.

Application Restrictions

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

An organization may serve as the eligible applicant on two (2) 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 an eligible applicant or within the same geographic area, the capacity of the applicant organization or geographic area to carry out and sustain multiple Our Town projects will be considered in the review of the applications.

Other NEA Funding Opportunities

You may apply to other NEA Fiscal Year 2025 funding opportunities, including Grants for Arts Projects *or* Challenge America, as well as Research Grants in the Arts 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 or pending applications with activities and/or periods of performance that will overlap with you proposed Our Town project, contact Our Town staff (OT@arts.gov) 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.

Other Eligibility Considerations

Parent and Related Organizations (Independent Components)

Exceptions to the application limit are made only for parent organizations that have separately identifiable and independent components (e.g., a university campus that has a presenting organization and a radio station); this includes city or county governments.

A parent organization that comprises separately identifiable and independent components (e.g., a university campus that has a presenting organization and a radio station) may submit an application for each such component. In addition, a parent organization also may submit one application on its own behalf for a **project that is different from any project submitted in an application by its independent component(s)**.

The application for the independent component must be for a project of the component. For example, if a university campus submits an application for its art museum as an independent component, the project must be for the art museum. The art museum cannot be used as a passthrough entity for projects from other areas of the university.

Independent Component Eligibility

An eligible independent component must be a unit that is both programmatically and administratively distinct from the parent organization. To qualify as an eligible independent component, it should be equivalent to a stand-alone institution. The independent status is demonstrated by the component's:

- Unique mission, separate and distinct from the parent entity;

- Separate, dedicated staff, with duties specific to the mission of the component;
- Independent board, mostly consisting of members not associated with the parent entity. The board should generally function with substantial oversight and management of the component;
- Separate budget, maintained by the component; and
- Three-year history of arts programming undertaken by the component.

A parent organization should consult with our staff to verify the eligibility of its component before preparing an application. If an application is submitted by a parent organization on behalf of a component that is determined by the NEA not to be independent and separate from the parent organization, then that application may be allowed as the parent's single application.

The following **do not qualify** as eligible independent components:

- Academic departments of colleges and universities
- Programs, initiatives, and projects of organizations
- Collaboratives or consortiums of multiple organizations

For example:

- An art museum on a university campus serves the general public and does not grant degrees. The museum board, not the university trustees, manages the museum's budget, staff, and programming. In this example, the art museum essentially is a stand-alone organization and qualifies as an independent component.
- A symphony association sponsors a youth orchestra in addition to its professional orchestra. Some symphony musicians serve as faculty for the youth orchestra; there is some overlap of membership between the symphony trustees and the youth orchestra's advisory board; and the executive director for the symphony association serves as CEO for both the professional and youth orchestras. In this case, while the youth orchestra may be an important program of the symphony association, it is not equivalent to a separate institution and therefore does not qualify as an independent component.

Additionally, the parent organization must meet the eligibility requirements for all applicants. A related organization that performs grant administration duties for a parent organization (e.g., a college foundation that administers grants awarded to a college and its components) may submit applications for components and the parent organization in lieu of such applications being submitted by the parent. The related organization must meet the eligibility requirements for all applicants.

Fiscal Sponsorship

We do not fund unincorporated or for-profit entities or individuals that engage nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) U.S. organizations; units of state or local government; or federally recognized tribal communities or tribes to apply for grants on their behalf. **An ineligible organization (i.e.,**

one without its own nonprofit status) may not use a fiscal sponsor/agent for the purpose of submitting an application.

If your organization does not have its own nonprofit status, you may still participate in a project submitted by another organization that meets our eligibility criteria, but you may not apply on your own.

What is a fiscal sponsor/agent?

A fiscal sponsor/agent is an entity that oversees the fiscal activities of another organization, company, or group of independent artists or projects. These activities may include bookkeeping, filing of W2s or 1099s, daily banking, or grant preparation.

The key to avoiding the appearance of fiscal sponsorship is the involvement of your organization. This might include:

- Producing or co-producing.
- Partnering on creative direction or development.
- Organizing workshops, public showings, or distribution of work.
- Providing social networking strategies or web implementation.

You can provide evidence of your organization's involvement in your application, on your website, through announcements and evaluations of public events, and with archival documentation. We may review your website and other materials in addition to your application to determine the eligibility of the project.

While an organization that serves as a fiscal sponsor/agent may not apply for projects on behalf of the entities or individuals that it may sponsor as part of its mission and programs, it may apply for its own programs and productions. In this case, the organization must clearly demonstrate that it is applying only for its own programmatic activities.

How to Apply

Submitting an application is a multi-step process:

- **Register** with [Login.gov](https://login.gov), System for Award Management (SAM) at SAM.gov, 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. A direct link to the Grants.gov Opportunity Package is included further down on this page.
- **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).

Login.gov, 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.

Grant Opportunity Package

Access the Grant Opportunity Package for Part 1 with the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organization Form on Grants.gov by clicking on the link below:

[CLICK HERE](#)

Funding Opportunity Number: 2024NEA01OT

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 a Grants.gov Workspace](#).

Application Questions and Instructions

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

Application Review

Review Criteria

Applications are reviewed on the basis of the following criteria:

Artistic Excellence

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

- Quality of the artists, culture bearers, design professionals, organizations, works of art, activities, artistic process, 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.

Artistic Merit

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.
- Evidence of deep and authentic community engagement in planning for and participating in the project.
- Potential for the project activities to support artful lives or 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. Indicators of systems change 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 leadership and nonprofit partners, as well as engagement across other sectors.
- Potential to serve and/or reach individuals or communities whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by factors such as geography, race or 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 and plans to engage project participants in these efforts.
- 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 applicant, local government, or within the same geographic area, the capacity of the applicant organization, 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 2025.

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, and other risk or capacity assessments, as needed.

Award Administration

Award Notices

Grant decisions for the Our Town category are expected to be announced in April 2025.

Note that the announcement is likely to take the form of a preliminary congratulatory note with a tentative funding amount and 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 Reports for Previous NEA Awards

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.

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.

Before applying, review the Our Town reporting requirements for the NEA's [Final Descriptive Reports](#). In your application, you will identify the strategies you expect to employ to strengthen your community through the arts. 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 indicate areas in which your project made progress toward achieving systems change as appropriate to the project.

Administrative Requirements

As part of this program, Our Town grantees may be required to participate in the technical assistance program at no cost to the grantee while executing their projects at the local level. The Creative Placemaking Technical Assistance (CPTA) program supports grantees in a variety of

ways including learning communities, one-on-one coaching, peer-based learning, webinars, training sessions, toolkit resources, and many other offerings.

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, including documentation of project expenditures, 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.

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

All NEA projects are 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 requiring NHPA/NEPA review are:

- A project involving or occurring at or near a place that is 50 years old 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 takes time to complete and may delay your project's start date, and our ability to make a grant award; and/or 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 review, include thorough and complete information for all project activities and locations. The NEA cannot release grant funds until the NHPA/NEPA review is complete. If asked for additional information during a review, you must provide the timeline for determining grant activities and locations, if they are not yet finalized.

For some projects, such as permanent art installations or advanced design work (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 must answer](#) for the review of a project subject to the National Historic Preservation Act and/or the National Environmental Policy Act.

Accessibility

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and NEA's implementing regulation require that all NEA-funded projects be accessible to people with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities may be 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.

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) must be physically accessible. The following are some examples, but are not an exhaustive list:
 - Ground-level/no-step entry, ramped access, and/or elevators to project facilities and outdoor spaces;
 - Wheelchair-accessible box office, stage/backstage, meeting, and dressing rooms;
 - Wheelchair-accessible restrooms and water fountains;
 - Directional signage for accessible entrances, restrooms, and other facilities; and
 - Accessible workspaces for employees.
- The programmatic activities must be accessible either as part of the funded activity or upon request, where relevant. The following are some examples, but they are not an exhaustive list:
 - Accommodations for performances, tours, virtually streamed events, conferences, and lectures, such as sign language interpretation, real-time captioning, and audio description;
 - Print materials in alternative formats, such as large-print brochures/labels/programs, braille, and electronic/digital formats;
 - Accessible and screen reader-compatible electronic materials, documents, websites, and virtual platforms, and inclusion of alternative text for images;

- Closed/open captioning and audio/visual description for video, film, television broadcasts, and virtual events;
- Auxiliary aids and devices, such as assistive listening devices.

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; or the Civil Rights Office at civilrights@arts.gov, 202-682-5454; or see our online [Accessibility Resources](#).

Civil Rights

Projects may focus on reaching a particular group or demographic (such as gender, disability, economic status, 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. Your application should make it clear that project activities are not exclusionary. Please review the [Assurance of Compliance](#), as well as [NEA Civil Rights guidance](#) on our website, including this archived webinar: [Things to Know Before You Apply: Federal Civil Rights and Your Grants Application](#).

The NEA's 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 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 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 submitting an application. If the project or the organization's capacity to carry out the project 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 funding by the NEA. If changes to the award 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's [General Terms & Conditions](#) for Grants to Organizations. **Only the NEA Office of Grants Management is authorized to amend or change an NEA award. Written and/or verbal approval of proposed project changes from any other NEA office does not constitute an approved change to an award.**

Crediting Requirement

Grantees must clearly acknowledge NEA support of the grant project in their programs and related promotional material, including publications and websites. Additional acknowledgment requirements may be provided later. The NEA does not fund general operating support, so you must ensure that the NEA is only credited with funding the grant project and not your entire organization or its operations.

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.

Freedom of Information Act Notice

Disclosure Notice: The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) may share a copy of awarded grant applications and/or related materials submitted to the NEA by the applicants, with the public or other third parties, where required or permitted by law.

General Terms & Conditions

Federal government-wide and agency-specific 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 requirements for cost share/matching funds, reporting requirements, amendment processes, and termination actions. **Grantees must review, understand, and comply with these requirements.** Failure to comply with the GTCs for an award may result in termination of a grant award, and/or returning funds to the NEA, among other consequences.

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 NEA 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. More information on Debarment and Suspension procedures can be found in the [General Terms and Conditions](#), under the “Other National Policies” heading.
- **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 of the year in which you apply.
- **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 to 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). More information on DBRA can be found in the [General Terms and Conditions](#), under the “Other National Policies” heading.
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 the applicant 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. The applicant’s assurance of compliance 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), as amended 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**, as amended (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**, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.).

The 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.

The 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, NEA Office of Civil Rights
Email: civilrights@arts.gov

The 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 of compliance.

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.
- e) 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 are meeting these standards. Email: webmgr@arts.gov, attention: Standards for Service.

For questions about these guidelines or your application, see [Agency Contacts](#). 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. This includes 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.

OMB No. 3135-0112 Expires 10/31/2025

Frequently Asked Questions

[Basics](#) | [Review Process](#) | [Other NEA Grants](#) | [Budget and Cost Share/Matching Funds Required Partnership](#) | [Local Government Entity](#) | [Letters of Commitment](#) | [Other](#)

Basics

What is “creative placemaking?”

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.

What percentage of applications receive funding?

Based on application numbers from previous years and contingent upon available funding, roughly 20% of applications to the Our Town program receive funding each year.

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

Yes, you may apply to the Our Town category for FY 2025 for a **distinctly different project or a distinctly different phase of the project** than was funded in your previous Our Town grant.

How long can my period of performance (grant period) be?

Your period of performance may be up to two years in length, and may start on or after July 1, 2025. 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 period of performance. Two-year periods of performance are reserved for projects that require a two-year timeline and should not be used to repeat a single year project.

Will projects in small towns and rural areas be competitive?

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

Can we apply for a project that addresses the ongoing impacts of COVID-19?

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.

How is Our Town different than Grants for Arts Projects (GAP) funding?

Our Town is distinct from GAP funding in several ways. 1) Our Town requires a partnership between a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and a local government or quasi-government entity that together, through meaningful roles, provide leadership for the project. 2) Our Town supports arts, design, and cultural projects that aim to strengthen communities at the local level and impact longer-term systems change. If offered a grant through the Our Town program, you will be asked to report on the impact your project had on the local community. 3) Our Town projects are multi-layered, cross-sectoral efforts that are as much about the process as the product—think “who are we?”, “why does this matter?”, “how do we get there?”, in conjunction with “what will we do/make/present?”.

Review Process

How will the projects be evaluated?

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](#)" in the guidelines.

How can I demonstrate artistic excellence for my proposed project?

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.

Who reviews and selects grantees?

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).

Can staff help me with my application?

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

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

Yes. An organization may apply to other NEA funding opportunities, including Grants for Arts Projects or Challenge America, as well as Research Grants in the Arts, in addition to Our Town.

In each case, the application must be for a **distinctly different project or a distinctly different phase of the same project**, with a different period of performance and costs. You cannot charge the same activities/costs to two different awards at the same time (this applies to both the applicant organization and any partner organizations). If you apply for the exact same project or same phase of the same project in Our Town and another program, you will be asked to withdraw one of the proposals.

Budget and Cost Share/Matching Funds

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

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.

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

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.

Can cost share/matching funds be in-kind?

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 must maintain proper documentation. For help in doing this, see our [sample format](#) for recording in-kind (third party) contributions.

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

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.

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

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 generic municipal street lighting or wayfinding signage is not allowed. Costs to prepare the street, including purchase of property, building appropriate access, infrastructure, etc., are also not allowable and can't be used for cost share/match.

Are artists' or consultants' fees allowable expenses?

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

Is rent for space for an event an allowable expense?

Yes, but not for a party, reception, or other social event.

Can overhead be funded?

You may claim administrative costs or overhead as direct costs under 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 or a de minimis indirect cost rate to account for overhead.

Can salaries for administration or additional fundraising be funded?

Salaries, contract fees, and stipends for administration and project management are allowed, as well as fundraising specifically to raise the required minimum cost share/match for the approved project. All other fundraising costs are unallowable.

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

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. You may include project-specific costs and/or contributions from your partners, as needed.

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

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.

Required Partnership

Can a private foundation or corporate entity serve as a required partner?

No. Partnerships must involve at least two entities as defined by these guidelines: a nonprofit organization and a local government or quasi-government entity. If one of the two required partners is not a cultural (arts or design) organization, then the project must include at least

one additional partner that is. However, additional partners across all sectors are encouraged, and a private foundation or corporate entity could serve as an additional partner.

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

Yes, but it would still need a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to serve as the required partner.

Local Government Entity

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

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 applicant or within the same geographic area, the capacity of the applicant, partners, or geographic area to carry out and sustain multiple Our Town projects will be considered in the review of applications.

Can a tribal government entity apply?

Yes, federally recognized tribes and tribal communities are eligible applicants. Tribes and tribal communities submitting applications to Our Town would meet the local government half of the required partnership and would need a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to serve as their required partner.

Can a regional government entity apply?

No, regional government entities do not qualify as eligible applicants, however, a regional government entity could possibly meet the requirement for a local government or quasi-government entity as a required partner for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization applicant. For example, in areas where the county government serves as the local government (i.e. there is no town or city government level below that of the county, or areas where the city/county government are the same thing), the county government can serve as the local government required partner. Please contact OT@arts.gov if you have a question about the eligibility of a specific regional government entity.

Do local schools, public school districts, or K-12 education authorities qualify as a local government entity?

No. Under the Our Town program, local schools, school districts, and K-12 education authorities may be additional project partners, but do not qualify as either the local government or quasi-government entity for the purposes of Our Town program eligibility.

Do community colleges qualify as a local government entity?

No, public community colleges, similar to other institutes of higher education, are considered nonprofit entities under the Our Town program and can serve as the nonprofit half of the required partnership. Community colleges may also serve as additional partners on a project.

Can a city council or alderman office apply?

No. City council or aldermen's offices are considered quasi-governmental entities under the Our Town guidelines and are not eligible to serve as the applicant organization. However, as a quasi-government entity they can serve as the required partner for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization applicant. If a city council or alderman's office is serving as the required partner in your Our Town application, a letter of support and engagement articulating their role in the project is required.

Does a state university qualify as a local government entity?

All public and private institutions of higher education can qualify as the nonprofit organization (either as applicant or required partner) in an Our Town application. No state level entities qualify as a local government or quasi-government entity (applicant or required partner) under the Our Town guidelines. State universities and state government entities can always serve as an additional partner.

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

If no local government exists, the territory government can qualify as the local government applicant or required partner. If you are thinking of applying with a U.S. territory as the local government entity, please contact the Our Town team at OT@arts.gov with any questions about eligibility.

Letter of Commitment

What letters of commitment are required for the application?

A letter of commitment from the required project partner, and if needed, the arts, culture, or design partner, are required for the Our Town application. Letters from additional partners are encouraged. You may include up to ten (10) total statements of support for your project. A letter of commitment from the highest-ranking local government official is encouraged, but not required.

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

We do not have a template. However, the document should be a one-page formal letter, on appropriate letterhead, from the required partner, and the arts, culture, or design partner, (if needed). This letter(s) should reflect the partner's familiarity with and role in the project. For verification purposes, the letter should come from leadership of the partnering entity and include their name, phone number, and email address at the partner organization.

Is there a limit to the number of letters of commitment that we can submit?

Yes. You may submit up to ten (10) total letters of commitment. 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. Keep letters to one page each.

Other

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?

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 other federal funds to be used as cost share/match for its grants. This includes the funding from other federal agencies, including:

- 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 other federal agencies, provided the organization isn't double-claiming any individual's salary or other costs. 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 other federal grant programs should contact the other agency directly as we are unable to provide guidance on programs other than our own.

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

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. In the project's final descriptive report, 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.

Can federally recognized tribes apply?

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.

Can non-federally recognized tribes apply?

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.

Responsible Conduct of Program Evaluation and Research

As a federal agency, we are committed to the responsible conduct of research. The NEA requires applicants to comply with all applicable laws and regulations governing the conduct of research in the United States for projects supported with NEA funding.

If you are recommended for a grant and your project includes *program evaluation and/or research activities that involve directly collecting information from program participants*, the NEA may conduct a review of your project to ensure that it complies with our general guidance regarding the responsible conduct of research.

Data collection activities conducted under an award are the sole responsibility of the recipient organization. The NEA's support of the project does not constitute approval of those data collection procedures. Accordingly, data collected from respondents/participants will be conducted by the awardee or at the awardee's direction, and any NEA-funded researchers collecting data from respondents/participants may not represent to those subjects that such data are being collected on behalf of the NEA.

Many projects under the Our Town program include some type of informal evaluation, such as conducting anonymized surveys of audiences about their satisfaction with a program, or even basic field observations of program participants such as counting the number of audience members or tickets sold. These types of activities are often exempt from a program evaluation ethics review. Furthermore, data collection activities related to completion of the Final Descriptive Report (FDR) are exempt from a program evaluation ethics review. Examples of questions on the FDR are [available here](#).

Whether formal or informal, however, evaluation activities of arts programs occurring within schools or school districts must be done under the rules and regulations governing those institutions or jurisdictions.

On the other hand, some grantees want to conduct more formal program evaluation and/or research as part of their grant. Program evaluation may require an ethics review, especially if the activities will be completed during the grant's period of performance and will use funding from the grant or its match (if applicable). Examples include activities that require asking program participants to provide sensitive and/or confidential information about themselves, and/or that involve systematic studies to assess a program's benefits for participants.

If you are recommended for an award that may require a program evaluation ethics review, you will be notified and asked to provide additional information. This may include providing more detail on such factors as: the purpose and nature of any research or evaluation activities; when data will be collected for these purposes; the source of funding to support these activities, the steps taken to comply with applicable laws and regulations; steps taken to obtain permissions (including but not limited to the acquisition of existing data) from all appropriate entities or individuals (including but not limited to minors or other sensitive populations) for conducting the proposed evaluation activities; and evidence of ethics training in the conduct of human subjects research.

Costs of submitting research proposals to Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are allowable if the activity occurs during the award's period of performance; however, the grantee must provide evidence that the applicant has consulted with its preferred IRB or IRBs. If you receive an award, we may withhold funds until IRB approval is demonstrated and evidence of ethics training in the conduct of human subject's research is provided for all individuals engaged in research activities that include human subjects. Such evidence can take the form of an active, unexpired certificate of completion of a training module. The NEA does not specify or endorse any specific educational programs. The NEA will not reimburse costs for ethics training.

The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) provides additional guidance and resources for learning about the responsible conduct of research, including decision charts for assessing whether a project needs an ethics review, a set of free training modules (which can be used to provide evidence of ethics training for an NEA application), and a database of registered IRBs. The [National Science Foundation](#) and the U.S. Department of Education also have resources related to IRB and human subjects' protections.

Additional information for regarding systematic evaluation studies can be found here: <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/resources-program-evaluation-and-performance-measurement>.

A program evaluation review and approval process may take up to several months to complete and may delay your project's start date and the NEA's ability to make a grant award or the ability to release award funds. Thorough and complete information for all project activities will expedite our process for approving the release of funds. The NEA may withhold award funds until the program evaluation review is complete.

Contacts

We encourage you to review the materials in these guidelines for information about the Our Town program including allowable activities/costs, required partnerships, and examples of successful projects in recent funding cycles.

If you cannot find an answer to your question in these guidelines, please reach out to Our Town staff at OT@arts.gov. Note: Our staff experience a high volume of inquiries related to the program; correspondence will be returned as promptly as possible.

Login.gov, SAM, and Grants.gov Help

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

- **Login.gov Help:** Call 844-875-6446, consult the information posted in their [Help Center](#), or use their [online form](#) to submit a question.
- **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.