

[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[GRANTS](#)[NEWS](#)[LIFETIME HONORS](#)[PUBLICATIONS](#)[ARTISTIC FIELDS](#)[CONTACT](#)[Home](#) » [Grants](#) » [Apply for a Grant](#) » [Grants for Organizations](#) » [Our Town](#)

GRANTS

OUR TOWN: Grant Program Description

Our Town is the National Endowment for the Arts' creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, we support projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. Successful Our Town projects ultimately lay the groundwork for systemic changes that sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into local strategies for strengthening communities. These projects require a partnership between a local government entity and nonprofit organization, one of which must be a cultural organization; and should engage in partnership with other sectors (such as agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development). Matching grants range from \$25,000 to \$200,000, with a minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount.

FY 2020 marks the 10 year anniversary of the Our Town program. We are looking for projects that reflect a new and catalytic way of working, and demonstrate the potential for sustained support and recognition for arts, design, and cultural strategies as integral to every phase of community development.

Projects

We encourage applications for artistically excellent projects that:

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

- Connect communities, people, places, and economic opportunity via physical spaces or new relationships.

The National Endowment for the Arts plans to support a variety of projects across the country in urban, rural, and tribal communities of all sizes.

Project Types

Our Town projects must integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that **strengthen communities** by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. Projects may include activities such as:

Arts Engagement:

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

Cultural Planning:

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

Design:

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

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

Artist and Creative Industry Support:

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

Please view our [Tips for a Successful Our Town Application webinar](#), and review the list of grants on our website to see the [types of projects](#) that have been funded recently through Our Town. The online storybook '[Exploring Our Town](#)' has illustrative examples of Our Town grant projects and insights into doing creative placemaking for practitioners. You also may download our free publication [How to Do Creative Placemaking](#), and look at [additional creative placemaking resources](#) on our website. Applications on projects resulting from [Mayors Institute on City Design](#) and [Citizens Institute on Rural Design](#) are encouraged.

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

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

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

- A project involving or occurring near a district, site, building, landscape, structure or object that is at least 50 years old or older and therefore included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (please note that in some instances, buildings or structures may be included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places that are less than 50 years old).
- The commissioning and installation of temporary or permanent outdoor furnishings such as benches or market structures or art such as a sculpture or mural.
- An arts festival in a park.
- Design planning and services for projects that may involve a historic site, structure, or district.

This review and approval process may take up to several months to complete and may delay your project's start date. The results of the review may impact our ability to make a grant award/our ability to release grant funds. If you are recommended for an award which may have historic preservation or environmental concerns (NHPA/NEPA), you will be notified and asked to provide additional information. Your thorough and complete information for all project activities and locations will expedite the review. The NEA cannot release an award and/or grant funds until the historic preservation and environmental review is complete.

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

Required Partnerships

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

1. Nonprofit organization
2. Local government entity

One of these two primary partners must be a cultural (arts or design) organization. **The highest ranking official of the local government is required to submit a formal statement of support designating the project as the one of the up to two applications being submitted for the local government.** See "**How to Prepare and Submit an Application**" for more information.

Additional partners are encouraged and may include an appropriate variety of entities such as arts organizations and artists, design professionals and design centers, state level government agencies, foundations, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, real estate developers, business leaders, community organizations, councils of government, rural or regional planning organizations, transportation agencies, special districts, educational organizations, as well as public and governmental entities; and should engage in partnership with other sectors (such as agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development).

You may find it helpful to contact your local or regional arts agency as you begin the process of identifying partners within your community.

Strengthening Communities

Through Our Town projects, the National Endowment for the Arts Endowment intends to achieve the following objective: *Strengthening Communities: Provide opportunities for the arts to be integrated into the fabric of community life.*

Our Town project outcomes may include:

- **Economic Change:** Economic improvements of individuals, institutions, or the community including local business growth, job creation/labor force participation, professional development/training, prevention of displacement, in-migration, and tourism.
- **Physical Change:** Physical improvements that occur to the built and natural environment including beautification and/or enhancement of physical environment, new construction, and redevelopment (including arts, culture, and public space).
- **Social Change:** Improvements to social relationships, civic engagement and community empowerment, and/or amplifying community identity including civic engagement, collective efficacy, social capital, social cohesion, and community attachment.
- **Systems Change:** Improvements to community capacity to sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into strategies for advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes including partnerships with other sectors, civic and institutional leadership, replication or scaling of innovative projects, long term funding, training programs, and permanent staff positions.



OUR TOWN BASICS

- [Grant Program Description](#)
- [Required Partnerships](#)
- [Strengthening Communities Objective](#)
- [We Do Not Fund](#)
- [Application Calendar](#)
- [Award Information](#)
- [Applicant Eligibility](#)
- [Application Review](#)
- [Award Administration](#)
- [Other Information](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Contacts](#)

TO APPLY: OUR TOWN

- [How to Prepare and Submit an Application](#)
- [Part 1: Submit to Grants.gov](#)
- [Part 2: Submit to Applicant Portal](#)
 - [Prepare Application Material \(PDF\)](#)

OUR TOWN RELATED MATERIALS

- [Our Town Guidelines Webinar \(6/24/19\)](#)
 - [Tips for a Successful Our Town Application](#)
- [Creative Placemaking Resources](#)
- [Exploring Our Town Case Studies](#)
- [Program Evaluation Resources](#)
- [Online Tutorial: Using the Grant Application Form \(GAF\)](#)
- [Sample Application Narratives](#)
- [NEA's Historic Preservation Review Process](#)
- [Accessibility Checklist](#)

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[Site Map](#) | [Site Policies](#) | [USA.gov](#)

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