

## Our Town

CFDA No. 45.024  
2011NEAOT

Statement of Interest Deadline: March 1, 2011  
Invitation to Apply Issued: March 25, 2011  
Formal Application Deadline: April 25, 2011

## Frequently Asked Questions

## Grant Program Description

Art works to improve the lives of America's citizens in many ways. Communities across our nation are using smart design and leveraging the arts to create livable, sustainable neighborhoods with enhanced quality of life, increased creative activity, distinct identities, a sense of place, and vibrant local economies. The NEA defines these efforts as *Creative Placemaking*:

"In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired."

Ann Markusen, Markusen Economic Research Services  
Anne Gadwa, Metris Arts Consulting  
From *Creative Placemaking*

Through *Our Town*, based on the availability of funding, the National Endowment for the Arts will provide a limited number of grants, ranging from \$25,000 to \$250,000, for creative placemaking projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places with the arts at their core. *Our Town* will invest in creative and innovative projects in which communities, together with their arts and design organizations and artists, are looking to increase their livability, and specifically are seeking to:

- Improve their quality of life.
- Encourage creative activity.
- Create community identity and a sense of place.
- Revitalize local economies.

A key to the success of creative placemaking involves the arts in partnership with a committed governmental leadership and the philanthropic sector. All *Our Town* applications must reflect a partnership that will provide leadership for the project. These partnerships must involve at least two organizations: one a nonprofit design or cultural organization, and one a government entity. Additional partners are encouraged and may include an appropriate variety of entities such as foundations, arts organizations and artists, nonprofit organizations, design professionals and design centers, educational institutions, developers, business leaders, and community organizations, as well as public and governmental entities. Federal agencies cannot be monetary partners.

In addition, each *Our Town* project must have:

- A systemic approach to civic development with a persuasive vision for change.
- Clearly defined civic development goals and objectives that recognize and enhance the role the arts play at the center of community life.
- An action plan aligned with the project vision and civic development goals.
- A funding plan that is appropriate, feasible, indicates strong community support, and includes a well-conceived sustainability strategy.

Funding under *Our Town* is **not** available for:

- Projects that do not involve a partnership of at least two organizations (one a nonprofit design or cultural organization, and one a government entity) that are willing to provide leadership for the project.
- Activities that are not tied directly to long-term civic development goals.
- Projects where the arts, design, or cultural activity are not core to the project's plan.
- Capacity building initiatives for artists that are not integral to a broader civic development strategy.
- Construction, purchase, or renovation of facilities. (Predevelopment, design fees, and community planning are eligible; however, no Arts Endowment or matching funds may be directed to the costs of physical construction or renovation or toward the purchase costs of facilities or land.)
- Subgranting or regranteeing.
- Financial awards to winners of design competitions.

Note: The *Grants for Arts Projects* guidelines provide additional information on what **we do not fund**; see "Administrative Requirements" for more information.

## Projects

Each project should represent the distinct character and quality of its community.

The Arts Endowment plans to support a variety of diverse projects, across the country in urban and rural communities of all sizes. Projects may include planning, design, and arts engagement activities such as:

### Planning

- The **development of plans for cultural and/or creative sector growth**. This includes activities such as planning for arts/cultural districts and creative industry hubs/districts/clusters, cultural asset mapping, and other cultural planning activities.
- The **engagement of artists and/or arts organizations** in place-based planning such as community engagement activities.

### Design

- The **use of design to enhance/revitalize public spaces**. This includes design activities such as charrettes, competitions, community engagement, and the development of design specifications for streetscapes, pedestrian bridges, sustainable parks, and landscapes, or for the renovation, restoration, or adaptive reuse of existing structures to be used as cultural facilities or for mixed use purposes (e.g., for affordable housing for artists and others, artist studios, or live/work space).

### Arts Engagement

- **New arts activities to foster interaction among community members, arts organizations, and artists**, including festivals, outdoor exhibitions, innovative programming, performances in public spaces, and activities that encourage the activation of existing cultural and community assets and facilities.
- The **commissioning and/or installation of new art to improve public spaces**. This includes the commissioning of permanent and/or temporary site-specific public art such as murals and sculptures, sculpture gardens, and waterfront art.

All phases of a project -- planning, development, design, and implementation -- are eligible for support. Applicants generally should limit their projects to a single phase.

If relevant to your project, you will be required to provide information in accordance with the **National Environmental Policy Act** and/or the **National Historic Preservation Act**. See here for more information.

Through *Our Town* projects, the Arts Endowment intends to achieve the following outcome: *Livability: American communities are strengthened through the arts*. Applications should reflect the results expected to be achieved by the project. If a grant is received, grantees also will be asked to provide evidence of those results.

The anticipated long-term results for Livability projects are measurable community benefits, such as growth in overall levels of social and civic

engagement; arts- or design-focused changes in policies, laws, and/or regulations; job and/or revenue growth for the community; and changes in in-and-out migration patterns. Given the nature of Livability projects, benefits are likely to emerge over time and may not be fully measureable during the period of a grant. If a grant is received, at the end of the project grantees will need to provide evidence of progress toward achieving improved livability as appropriate to the project. Before applying, please review the **reporting requirements for Livability**.

## Evaluation

Grantees will be required to participate in an evaluation of *Our Town* (see "Administrative Requirement" for more information).

## Award Information

### Grant Amounts and Matching Funds

The Arts Endowment anticipates awarding approximately 35 grants, based on the availability of funding.

Organizations must request a grant amount at one of the following levels: \$25,000, \$50,000, \$100,000, \$150,000, \$200,000, or \$250,000.

All grants require a nonfederal match of at least 1 to 1.

### Period of Support

The Arts Endowment's support of a project may start anytime between July 1 and December 31, 2011. A grant period is not expected to exceed one year.

No pre-award costs are allowable in the Project Budget. Project costs that are incurred before the project start date will be removed from the Project Budget.

## Applicant Eligibility

Partnerships involving a minimum of two organizations (one a nonprofit design or cultural organization, and one a governmental entity) are required of all applications. Additional partners are welcomed.

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

Eligible lead applicants are:

- County or local (city, town, village) governments. Each application must include a statement from the nonprofit design or cultural organization serving as the required partner reflecting its support for and involvement in the project.
- A public entity or a nonprofit tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Each application must include a statement from the relevant government that reflects its support for and involvement in the project.

A government arts agency can serve as both the government entity and the cultural organization. However, these organizations must have at least one additional nonprofit partner. Potential partners for any project may include an appropriate variety of entities such as foundations, arts organizations and artists, nonprofit organizations, design professionals and design centers, educational institutions, developers, business leaders, and community organizations, as well as public and governmental entities. Federal agencies cannot be monetary partners.

The designated fifty state and six jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) and their regional arts organizations (RAOs) may serve as partners, but not lead applicants, in *Our Town* projects. However, all grant funds must be passed on to the other partners.

To be eligible, the lead applicant organization must:

- For an organization other than a county or local government, have a three-year history of programming prior to the application deadline.
- Meet the Arts Endowment's "**Legal Requirements**," including nonprofit, tax-exempt status, as detailed in the FY 2012 *Grants for Arts Projects* guidelines,

- at the time of application.
- Have submitted acceptable Final Report packages by the due date(s) for all Arts Endowment award(s) previously received.

All applicants must have a DUNS number ([www.dnb.com](http://www.dnb.com)) and be registered with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR, [www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov)) and maintain an active CCR registration until the application process is complete, and should a grant be made, throughout the life of the award.

*Mayors' Institute on City Design 25th Anniversary Initiative* grantees may apply for *Our Town*, but must come in with a different phase of a project or a different project from that which was funded.

Each county or local government -- whether applying directly or as part of a partnership with some other lead organization -- is limited to one Statement of Interest and, if invited to apply, one application. Each government must coordinate internally to ensure that only one application per government is submitted. The chosen project from a municipality or region must be identified by a formal endorsement letter from the mayor or county executive. For example, ABC City may submit or be a partner in only one application -- not one through the mayor's office and another through the parks and recreation department. Governments with multiple applications will not be considered.

An application in response to this announcement does not preclude an organization from applying under other Arts Endowment funding opportunities including *Grants for Arts Projects*. In each case, the request must be for a **distinctly different project, which includes a distinctly different phase of a project**.

## How to Prepare and Submit a Statement of Interest

The application begins with a three-page Statement of Interest submitted through Grants.gov, the federal government's online application system, no later than March 1, 2011. Following review of these statements, selected organizations will be invited, by March 25, 2011, to submit formal applications. Formal applications must be submitted through Grants.gov and will be accepted through April 25, 2011. The application requirements will be the same as those for the *Art Works* category in the FY 2012 *Grants for Arts Projects* guidelines.

Before you submit through Grants.gov for the first time, you must be registered. This is a multi-step process for which you should allow at least two weeks. Registration must be completed before you can apply. See "**Get Registered**" for details.

Your Statement of Interest document can be a maximum of three pages. Label the top of page one with your organization's name, address, and the name, phone number, and e-mail of the contact person for the project. Label the top of pages two and three with the name of your organization. **Leave a margin of at least one inch at the top, bottom, and sides of all pages. Do not reduce type below 12 point font size.** Excess pages will be removed and will not be reviewed.

The document should begin with a one-page formal endorsement letter from the mayor or county executive. For applications from groups other than county or local governments, describe the relationship with the government and its involvement in the project. For verification purposes, include the name, phone number, and e-mail of a contact person with the county or local government. For applications from county or local governments, describe the relationship with the nonprofit design or cultural organization serving as the required partner and its support for and involvement in the project. For verification purposes, include the name, phone number, and e-mail of a contact person with the design or cultural organization.

Follow the cover letter with up to two pages detailing your project. Use the boldfaced language below as headings for each item and organize your response a), b), c), etc. For example, "**Budget**. The ABC city requests..."

Include information on:

- Budget.** State the amount that you are requesting (\$25,000, \$50,000, \$100,000, \$150,000, \$200,000, or \$250,000). Provide a general outline of the project budget, and describe community funding support for the project and your sustainability strategy. Remember that all grants require a nonfederal match of at least 1 to 1, which must be reflected in your total project budget. For

example, if you request a \$50,000 grant, the total eligible project costs must be at least \$100,000 and you must provide at least \$50,000 toward the project from nonfederal sources. If you are invited to submit a formal application, you will be required to provide a detailed budget.

- b. **Major project activities.** Be as specific as possible about the activities that will take place during the project period. Discuss your action plan and the creative placemaking strategies that will be implemented (including the approach to civic development), the anticipated impact on the community's livability, and, if possible, how the project can serve as a model for other communities. Include information on the location(s) of the proposed activity and any special resources that will be used.
- c. **Outcome(s) and Measurements.** Discuss how your project directly addresses the NEA outcome for *Livability: Strengthening communities through the arts*. You may also address a secondary NEA outcome (Creativity, Engagement, or Learning) and/or any additional outcomes of your own that you have established for the project.

Detail the performance measurements that you will use to provide evidence that the NEA outcome was achieved.

- d. **Schedule** of key project dates by month or quarter.
- e. **Partners, key organizations, individuals, and works of art** that will be involved in the project. List the partners for the project and note whether they are committed to or merely proposed for the project. (If you are invited to submit a formal application, you will be required to provide commitment letters from each listed partner.) Provide details on the required partners (a nonprofit design or cultural organization and one government entity) and how they will work together to provide leadership for the project. Describe the responsibilities of your other partners and the resources that all partners will provide. Indicate any artists, design professionals, other individuals, or nonprofit or commercial organizations that will be involved in the project, and note whether they are committed to or merely proposed for the project. Where relevant, describe their involvement in the development of the project to date. Describe the process and criteria for the selection of artists, design professionals, organizations, and, where relevant, artworks. Where key individuals or organizations remain to be selected, describe the procedures that you plan to follow and the qualifications that you seek.
- f. The **target community**. Discuss the anticipated engagement with the target community. If actual figures or reasonable estimates can be secured, indicate the number of people the project will serve. Ensure that your estimates are consistent with the information that you provide on the NEA Organization & Project Profile form. Have you worked with this target community before? Has the target community been involved in the planning for and implementation of the project? Describe any underserved groups or areas that will benefit.
- g. Discuss how the **National Environmental Policy Act** and/or the **National Historic Preservation Act** may impact the project and the status of any documentation that may be required for the project to move forward. If you are invited to submit a formal application, you will be required to provide documentation that the project is in compliance.
- h. **Plans for promoting, publicizing, and/or disseminating** the proposed project, as appropriate.
- i. **Plans for documenting, evaluating, and disseminating** the project results, as appropriate.
- j. If this is a continuing project, **evidence of impacts achieved** for the community. Include any social, cultural, and/or economic impact data so far collected and analyzed.
- k. If your organization received a *Mayors' Institute on City Design 25th Anniversary Initiative* grant and your *Our Town* request is for a different phase of the same project, provide as a fourth page a status report on the current project and state when completion is expected.

If any of this activity is included in a current NEA application or award, include the applicable application or award number. NOTE: Organizations may not receive more

than one Arts Endowment grant for the same expenses. There can be no overlapping project costs within the submitted budget with other federally sponsored projects.

**The Statement of Interest must be submitted as a PDF (portable document format) file.** If you don't already have software to convert your file to PDF, there are many low-cost and free software packages that can do this. To learn more, go to **PDF Conversion Programs**. Do not create a PDF of your electronic document by scanning. Do not embed images or non-printable media files (video and/or sound) in your PDF document. Please do not enable any document security settings or password-protect the PDF file you submit to us. The Statement of Interest should be no more than 1 MB.

Do not send work samples or supplementary material with your Statement of Interest; they will not be reviewed.

Go to the **instructions for submitting the Statement of Interest through Grants.gov**.

## Application Review

Applications are reviewed on the basis of artistic excellence and artistic merit.

The following are considered during the review of Statements of Interest and, in more detail, during the review of applications:

The **merit** of the project, which includes the

- Potential of the project to achieve results consistent with the NEA outcome for *Livability: Strengthening communities through the arts*. This includes the potential:
  - To contribute to the livability of the community and integrate design and the arts into the fabric of community life.
  - For lasting impact and, as appropriate, the ability to serve as a model for other communities.
  - Impact on the community, artists, design professionals, and arts organizations.
- Appropriateness of the proposed performance measurements and their ability to provide evidence that the NEA Livability outcome was achieved.
- Quality of the proposed partnership, including the required partners, and engagement of the private and public sectors in support of the project.
- Appropriateness of the project to the distinct character and qualities of the community.
- Extent to which the project engages the public in planning for and participating in the project.
- Appropriateness of the project to the organization's mission.
- As appropriate, plans for documentation, evaluation, and dissemination of the project results.
- Ability to carry out the project based on such factors as the:
  - Appropriateness of the budget and its community funding support and sustainability strategy.
  - Quality and clarity of the project goals and design.
  - Resources involved.
  - Qualifications of the project's personnel.
  - Readiness to meet requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and/or the National Historic Preservation Act, where relevant.
  - Likelihood that the project will be completed within the proposed period of support.
- Where appropriate, potential to reach underserved populations such as those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability.

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

- Quality of the artists, design professionals, arts organizations, works of art, or services that the project will involve, as appropriate.

## What Happens to Your Application

All applications are reviewed by an advisory panel. Panel recommendations are forwarded to the National Council on the Arts, which then makes recommendations to the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Chairman 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 June 2011.

## Award Administration

### Crediting Requirement

Grantees must clearly acknowledge support from the National Endowment for the Arts in their programs and related promotional material including publications and Web sites. Organizations that receive grants may be provided with specific requirements for acknowledgment of this initiative.

### Administrative Requirements

Before submitting an application, organizations should review the *Grants for Arts Projects* guidelines and *General Terms & Conditions* for detailed information on legal requirements, financial reviews and audits, and other administrative matters that pertain to this announcement.

Grantees will be required to participate in an evaluation of *Our Town* that may include:

- Collection of baseline and post-project profile data about the grantee's community.
- Use of standard definitions and reports to track and analyze data about the effectiveness and impact of the initiative.
- Participation in surveys, site visits, and interviews, and assistance in publicizing and promoting those data collection efforts as necessary.

## Agency Contacts

If you have questions, please contact the staff at [OT@arts.gov](mailto:OT@arts.gov) or 202/682-5091.

## Reporting Burden

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated at an average of 4 hours per response for Statements of Interest and 32 hours per response for Formal Applications including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The Arts Endowment welcomes 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: Office of Guidelines & Panel Operations, Room 620, National Endowment for the Arts, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20506-0001. 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.

January 2011

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