

ARPA funding eligibility and guidelines for New Bedford artists now available

This week New Bedford Creative will begin introducing the means by which an unprecedented amount of support and funding will be made available to the City of New Bedford's arts and culture purveyors and producers.

As announced by Mayor Jon A. Mitchell at Hatch Street Studios in May 2022, a total of \$1.2 million in funding is being made available to support local artists and art-related organizations over the next three years.

The funds are part of the City of New Bedford's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) program. Under ARPA, passed by the federal government in March 2021, Massachusetts state, county, tribal and local entities were allocated federal aid to respond to the public health and economic impacts of the public health emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The artists that comprise New Bedford's thriving arts community are themselves small businesses," noted Mayor Mitchell. "Funding to accelerate their emergence from the pandemic represents a timely investment in our economy and will energize our cultural scene."

The New Bedford Economic Development Council's New Bedford Creative will administer direct grants through three separate initiatives: Art is Everywhere, Wicked Cool Places and ARTnet.

ARTnet is a new artist recovery and training network to help artists recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic by providing financial support, business planning, training workshops, and access to a network of creative-entrepreneur peers.

Art is Everywhere is a grant program that prioritizes creative solutions to expedite the recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic in New Bedford's neighborhoods. This grant was originally created in 2020 with funding by MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) and the Barr Foundation as one component of a broader "TDI Creative Cities" initiative to boost arts-based economic development.

Wicked Cool Places is the grant program for making or keeping a place where things are happening and people want to be that involve and impact residents, visitors and/or businesses in New Bedford's neighborhoods. This grant was originally created in 2019 with funding by the City of New Bedford's Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund, with additional support by Bristol County Savings Bank.

Criteria and eligibility guidelines for applying for New Bedford Creative ARPA funding opportunities is available at newbedfordcreative.org/grant-programs.

"Supporting New Bedford's arts and culture creators with this funding will help ensure not only immediate vibrancy but long-term vitality," says Margo Saulnier, Creative Strategist for New Bedford Creative. "The three pillars of the program each meet very different needs."

For example, ARTnet will include cohort-based learning in business and finance, 1-on-1 technical assistance and mentoring, and working capital grants for artists based in New Bedford. The majority of artists will be selected on the basis of their negative financial circumstances caused by the pandemic, and their readiness to benefit from the opportunity.

Meanwhile, the Art is Everywhere grant program criteria prioritizes creative solutions to expedite recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Projects must directly impact one or more current challenges facing residents, visitors and/or businesses in New Bedford's neighborhoods. Projects that

advance diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA) in all forms will be prioritized.

And finally, the Wicked Cool Places grant program intends to help advance New Bedford as one of the most culturally unique and creative cities in America. This grant aims to support placemaking or placekeeping projects that will directly involve and impact residents, visitors and/or businesses in New Bedford's neighborhoods.

"The ARPA investment in New Bedford's arts and culture begins today but really represents a foundation for tomorrow," states Tony Sapienza, Board President of the NBEDC. "It recognizes the commitment to the value of culture the City of New Bedford made when it established New Bedford Creative in 2019 to implement the citywide strategic arts and culture plan, and acknowledges the amazing role the arts has played in the city before the pandemic. And, the truly awesome efforts of artists to help us navigate the challenges of the past few years."

New Bedford Creative will be holding in-person information sessions, beginning Sunday, August 21, 3:00-5:00pm at Verdean Vets Hall, 561 Purchase St.; Tuesday, August 23, 5:30-7:00pm at CEDC, 1501 Acushnet Ave (Spanish translation available); Wednesday, August 24, 3:00-5:00pm at Hub128 – Discovery Language Academy, 128 Union St. (Spanish or Portuguese translation available); Thursday, August 25, 4:00-5:30pm at Immigrants Assistance Center, 58 Crapo St. (Portuguese translation available).

City of New Bedford artists can begin meeting the challenges of the future and explore ARPA funding opportunities now available by visiting newbedfordcreative.org/grant-programs. The cash awards and support programs have been carefully tailored to, as Margo Saulnier states, "help New Bedford artists realize their ambition and deepen their tremendous positive impact on the city."