

Grant funding opportunity designed to burnish New Bedford's reputation as culturally unique in nation

New Bedford Creative is excited to launch the next chapter of meaningful and significant arts, culture and creativity funding in the City of New Bedford.

Beginning in April, individual artists, community members, cultural organizations, and project teams of nonprofit and/or for-profit status proposing projects in the city are eligible for an Art is Everywhere grant. This includes creative leaders, emerging artists, cultural institutions, businesses, and engaged community members. All are invited to apply and realize their vision throughout this city.

The criteria by which the projects will be judged and awarded is based on the fundamental belief that creativity can shape society for the better. Thus, projects should directly impact one or more current challenges facing residents, visitors and/or businesses in New Bedford's neighborhoods by mobilizing its arts, creativity and culture.



Emma York, 7th and 8th grade humanities teacher and Newspaper Club instructor at Our Sisters' School, checks in with students as they prepare to pitch their book reviews. Photo by Sawyer Pollit.

This may include imaginative solutions to expedite recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, means by which to strengthen the creative network throughout the city, or support the advancement of diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA) in all forms. In fact, projects that focus on DEIA outcomes will be prioritized.

Facilitated by New Bedford Creative and the New Bedford Economic Development Council, and funded by MassDevelopment/Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) and the Barr Foundation, this grant is one component of a broader "TDI Creative Cities" initiative to boost arts-based economic development and enrich urban life in the Commonwealth.

"These past couple years were unlike any other," states #NBCreative Strategist, Margo Saulnier. "Nevertheless, through it all New Bedford's community, and those practicing art in all its forms, repeatedly found cause and occasion to carry on

their collective mission to unite and move the city forward.”



PACE Headstart preschool teacher Margret picking up free supplies for her students at New Bedford Children's Creative Resource Center. Photo by Marissa Fay-Martin.

The Art Is Everywhere grant is a meaningful way to build on that success. Indeed, 2022 is the third and final year New Bedford is the recipient of this pilot program by MassDevelopment/TDI. In 2020, 3rd EyE Youth Empowerment was the first grant recipient and rose to the pandemic challenge – and also addressed systemic racism – with a monthly series of online pop-up events.

In 2021, six projects receiving grants represented the passion, diversity and commitment to enabling voices from the streets, classrooms and greater community of New Bedford to join a larger conversation about this historic city's past, present and future. The projects in 2021 included the following:

“Kaleidoscope – Art Through Your Eyes,” which showcased the contributions of the LGBTQ+ community in New Bedford. La Soul Renaissance presented a series of events “Um Frenti Unido- Um Prujeto di Memória Kultural,” with the Verdean Veterans Memorial Foundation and Cape Verdean Vets Hall. Artist, poet, educator and activist Iva Brito, along with award-winning Cape Verdean artist a’Ali DeSousa, captured how multicultural New Bedford residents used their artistic resources with the film documentary “Pandemic Renaissance – The Art of Surviving C-19.”

The children and students of the city were engaged in the “Art Is Everywhere” initiative in 2021 through three different projects. New Bedford Children’s “Creative Resource Center” brought early education professionals together to craft a cultural curriculum and have free access to upcycled innovative materials for their classrooms; the “SouthCoast Learning Trail” along Acushnet Avenue employed a community-based approach to cultivate early childhood development, matching artists to create temporary murals on business storefronts; and “Highlighting Diverse Stories” kicked it up to middle school where the students of Our Sisters School were literacy ambassadors for a new media age with published articles on TheScallop.org.

Following a triumphant two years, chapter three of Art Is Everywhere in New Bedford will give preference to projects that demonstrate the role of creative individuals and groups which envision solutions to broader community issues within an arts, culture or creative framework. To do so, Art Is Everywhere is offering grants for smaller scalable projects starting at \$1,000 to larger “Big Idea” grants up to \$20,000.

Selected projects will also be offered a one-year part-time membership for one team member to the Co-Creative Center (value of \$600) and the opportunity to participate in professional development and training.

Complete criteria, eligibility requirements and application can be found at New Bedford Creative's website NewBedfordCreative.org. The deadline to apply is before midnight on May 2, 2022.

"The arts, culture and creative community helped us persevere and confront the challenges we faced as one city," Saulnier says. "In 2022, it is our fervent intention that this good and necessary work continues."