

New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell announces new grant opportunities for local artists, arts groups

Speaking at Hatch Street Studies earlier today, Mayor Jon Mitchell and other leaders announced that \$1.2 million in funding is being made available to support local artists and art-related organizations.

Earlier this year the City launched a Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP) to distributed a portion of the federal grant that New Bedford received under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). With today's announcement, the SBAP will now allocate a portion of its funds exclusively to assist local artists and arts/culture organizations. The funding will be distributed under three separate initiatives: Wicked Cool Places, Art is Everywhere, and ARTnet; the New Bedford Economic Development Council (EDC) will be tasked with administering the respective grant processes through the NBEDC's arts & culture-focused arm, New Bedford Creative.

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

"Supporting arts, culture, and creativity is critical to catalyzing broader community and economic development," New Bedford EDC President Tony Sapienza said. "This important boost to support artists and art-related organizations will build the momentum of how the city is promoted to the region and the world – that this is a great place to live, work, and

visit.”

The NBEDC’s New Bedford Creative will administer direct grants through:

- (1) the existing Wicked Cool Places initiative, for creative placemaking and place-keeping projects;
- (2) the Art is Everywhere initiative, for arts-based economic development projects that advance diversity, equity, inclusion and access; and
- (3) A new program called ARTnet, which will support economic and professional assistance to help artists create sustainable business plans by providing working capital grants, business planning support, training workshops, and access to a network of creative-entrepreneur peers.

ARTnet holds particular promise for the arts community, as it is designed to help the City achieve three key goals in its Arts and Culture Plan:

- Incentivize creatives to live and create in the city with affordable workspace;
- Support community development and arts entrepreneurship;
- Establish a leadership group of artists.

Altogether, the three initiatives will help advance five major cultural strategies spelled out in the Arts and Culture Plan:

- Expand public art in New Bedford and utilize it as a tool for placemaking and enhancing the city’s identity as a cultural community;
- Strategically enhance and expand the diversity of programming;
- Increase arts funding, collaboration and resource-sharing to grow the operating capacity of arts and culture organizations and artists;
- Develop innovative arts programming to position New Bedford as an arts destination;
- Support community development and arts entrepreneurship.

Margo Saulnier, the NBEDC's director of creative strategies, will manage distributions of art-related grants and support. Saulnier has been with the NBEDC since October 2017 and during that time has managed the City's Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund. She also has facilitated the creation and implementation of the city's strategic arts and culture plan.

"New Bedford has an incredible pool of talented people with a deep attachment to the city and a fierce ambition to involve themselves in its civic and professional life," Saulnier said. "On their behalf, I'm thrilled to acknowledge this terrific investment in that pursuit. Those practicing art in all its forms will now have more opportunity to enrich us and make us a greater Destination New Bedford than ever."

Learn more on the City's ARPA website:
www.newbedford-ma.gov/arpa.